AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
Old and New Testament:
WHEREIN
EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS; THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED AT LARGE, IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER HEADS; THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED
WITH
PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS:
BY MATTHEW HENRY,
LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

A NEW EDITION:
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WITH THE
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE
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AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

ON THE

FOUR FIRST BOOKS

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT;

NAMELY,

ST. MATTHEW,  
ST. MARK,  
ST. LUKE, AND  
ST. JOHN.
THE PREFACE TO THE FOUR EVANGELISTS, AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE one half of our undertaking upon the New Testament is now, by the assistance of Divine grace, finished, and presented to the reader, who, it is hoped, the Lord working with it, may hereby be somewhat helped in understanding and improving the sacred history of Christ and his apostles, and in making it, as it certainly is, the best exposition of our creed, in which these inspired writers are summed up; which is intimated by that Evangelist, who calls his gospel, A Declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Luke 1. 1.

And as there is no part of scripture which it concerns us more to be well established in the belief of, so there is none which the generality of christians are more conversant with, or speak of more frequently. It is therefore our duty, by constant pains in meditation and prayer, to come to an intimate acquaintance with the true intent and meaning of these narratives, what our concern is in them, and what we are to build upon them, and draw from them; that we may rest in such a knowledge of them as that which we had, when in our childhood we were taught to read English out of the translation, and Greek out of the originals, of these books. We ought to know them as the physician does his dispensatory, the lawyer his books of reports, and the sailor his chart and compass; that is, to know how to make use of them in that we apply ourselves to as our business in this world, which is, to serve God here, and enjoy him hereafter, and both in Christ the Mediator.

The great designs of the christian institutes, (which these books are the fountains and foundations of,) were, to reduce the children of men to the fear and love of God, as the commanding, active principle of their observance of him, and obedience to him; to show them the way of their reconciliation to him, and acceptance with him; and to bring them under obligations to Jesus Christ as Mediator; and thereby to engage them to all instances of devotion toward God, and justice and charity towards all men, in conformity to the example of Christ, in obedience to his law, and in pursuance of his great intentions. What therefore I have endeavoured here, has been with this view, to make these writings serviceable to the faith, holiness, and comfort of good christians.

Now that these writings, thus made use of to serve these great and noble designs, may have their due influence upon us, it concerns us to be well established in our belief of their divine original. And here we have to do with two sorts of people. Some embrace the Old Testament, but set that up in opposition to the New, pleading that if that be right this is wrong; and these are the Jews. Others, though they live in a christian nation, and by baptism wear the christian name, yet, under pretence of freedom of thought, despise christianity, and, consequently, reject the New Testament, and therefore the Old, of course.

I confess it is strange, that any now who receive the Old Testament should reject the New; since, beside all the particular proofs of the divine authority of the New Testament, there is such an admirable harmony between it and the Old. It agrees with the Old, in all the main intentions of it, refers to it, builds upon it, shows the accomplishment of its types and prophecies, and thereby is the perfection and crown of it. Nay, if it be not true, the Old Testament must be false; and all the glorious promises which shine so brightly in it, and the performance of which was limited within certain periods of time, must be a great delusion; which we are sure they are not; and therefore must embrace the New Testament to support the reputation of the Old.

That in the Old Testament which the New Testament lays aside, is, the peculiarity of the Jewish nation, and the observances of the ceremonial law; both which certainly were of divine appointment; and yet the New Testament does not at all clash with the Old; for,

1. They were always designed to be laid aside in the fulness of time. No other is to be expected than that the morning-star should disappear when the sun rises; and the latter parts of the Old Testament often speak of the laying aside of these things, and of the coming in of the Gentiles.

2. They were very honourably laid aside, and rather exchanged for that which was more noble and excellent, more divine and heavenly. The Jewish church was swallowed up in the christian, the Mosaic ritual in evangelical institutions. So that the New Testament is no more the undoing of the Old, than the sending of a youth to the university is the undoing of his education in the grammar-school.
PREFACE.

3. Providence soon determined this controversy, (which is the only thing that seemed a controversy between the Old Testament and the New,) by the destruction of Jerusalem, the desolations of the temple, the dissolution of the temple-service, and the total dispersion of all the remains of the Jewish nation; with a judicial defeat of all the attempts to incorporate it again, now for above 1600 years; and this, according to the express predictions of Christ, a little before his death. And, as Christ would not have the doctrine of his being the Messiah much insisted on, till the great conclusive proof of it was given by his resurrection from the dead; so the repeal of the ceremonial law, as to the Jews, was not much insisted on, but their keeping up the observation of it was connived at, till the great conclusive proof of its repeal was given, by the destruction of Jerusalem, which made the observation of it for ever impracticable. And the manner in which the Jews, considered as a people, even notwithstanding the prosperity of particular persons among them, continue under to this day, is a proof, not only of the truth of Christ's predictions concerning them, but that they lie under a greater guilt than that of idolatry, (for which they lay under a desolation of 70 years,) and that can be no other than crucifying Christ, and rejecting his gospel.

Thus evident it is, that in our expounding of the New Testament, we are not undoing what we did in expounding the Old; so far from it, that we may appeal to the law and the prophets for the confirmation of the great truth which the gospels are written to prove—That our Lord Jesus is the Messiah promised to the fathers, who should come, and we are to look for no other. For though his appearing did not answer the expectation of the carnal Jews, who looked for a Messiah in external pomp and power, yet it exactly answered all the types, prophecies, and promises of the Old Testament, which all had their accomplishment in him; and even his ignominious sufferings, which are the greatest stumbling-block to the Jews, were foretold concerning the Messiah; so that if he had not submitted to them, we had failed in our proof; so far it is from being weakened by them. Bishop Kidder's Demonstration of the Christian's Messiah, has abundantly made out this truth, and answered the cavils (for such they are, rather than arguments) of the Jews against it, above any in our language.

But when Christianity and the New Testament are more virulently and daringly attacked by some within their own bowels, than by those upon their borders. Never were Moses and his writings so arraigned and ridiculed by any Jews, or Mahomet and his Alcoran by any Mussulmen, as Christ and his gospel by men that are baptized and called Christians; and this, not under colour of any other divine revelation, but in contempt and defiance of all divine revelation; and not by way of complaint, that they meet with that which shocks their faith, and which, through their own weakness, they cannot get over, and therefore desire to be instructed in, and helped in the understanding of, and the reconciling of them to the truth which they have received; but by way of resolute opposition, as if they looked upon it as their enemy, and were resolved by all means possible to be the ruin of it; though they cannot say what evil it has done to the world, or to them. If the pretence of it has transported many in the church of Rome into such corruptions of worship and cruelties of government as are indeed the scandal of human nature, yet, instead of being thereby prejudiced against pure Christianity, they should the rather appear more vigorously in defence of it, when they see so excellent an institution as that is in itself, so basely abused and misrepresented.

They pretend to a liberty of thought in their opposition to Christianity, and would be distinguished by the name of Freethinkers. I will not here go about to produce the arguments which, to all that are not wilfully ignorant and prejudiced against the truth, are sufficient to prove the divine original and authority of the doctrine of Christ. The learned find much satisfaction in reading the apologies of the ancients for the christian religion, when it was struggling with the polytheism and idolatry of the Gentiles. Justin Martyr and Tertullian, Lactantius and Minuinius Felix, wrote admirably in defence of Christianity, when it was further sealed by the blood of the Martyrs.

But its patron's and advocates in the present day have another sort of enemies to deal with. The antiquity of the pagan theology, its universal prevalence, the edicts of princes, and the traditions and usages of the country, are not now objected to Christianity; but I know not what imaginary freedom of thought, and an uncleaught privative of human nature, are assumed, not to be bound by any divine revelation whatsoever.

Now it is easy to make out

1. That those who would be thought thus to maintain a liberty of thinking, as one of the privileges of human nature, and in defence of which they will take up arms against God himself, do not themselves think freely, nor give others leave to do so. In some of them, a resolute indulgence of themselves in vicious courses which they know the gospel, if they admit it, will make very uneasy to them, and a secret enmity to a holy, heavenly mind and life, forbid them all free thought; for so strong a prejudice have their lusts and passions laid them under against the laws of Christ, that they find themselves under a necessity of opposing the truths of Christ, upon which these laws are founded. Perit judicium, quando res transit in affectum—The judgment is overthrown, when opinion is referred to the affections. Right or wrong, Christ's bonds must be broken, and his cords cast from them; and therefore, how evident soever the perverseness be, the conclusion must be denied, if it tend to fasten these bands and cords upon them; and where is the freedom of thought then? While they promise themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overmade, of the same is he brought in bondage.

In others of them, a reigning pride and affectation of singularity, and a spirit of contradiction, those lusts of the mind, which are as insidious and imperious as any of the lusts of the flesh and of the world, forbid a freedom of thinking, and enslave the soul in all its inquiries after religion. These can no more think freely, who resolve they will think by themselves, than those can, who resolve to think with their neighbours.

Nor will they give others liberty to think freely; for it is not by reason and argument that they go about to convince us, but by jest and banter, and exposing Christianity and its serious professors to contempt. Now, considering how natural it is to most men to be jealous for their reputation, this is as great an imposition as can possibly be; and the unthinking are as much kept from freethinking by the fear of being ridiculed in the club of those who set up for oracles in reason, as by the fear of being cursed, excommunicated, and anathematized, by the counsel of those who set up for oracles in religion. And where is the freethinking then?

2. That those who will allow themselves a true liberty of thinking, and will think seriously, cannot but embrace all Christ's sayings as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance. Let the corrupt bias of the
carnal heart toward the world, and the flesh, and self (the most presumptuous idol of the three) be taken away, and let the doctrine of Christ be proposed first in its true colours; as Christ and his apostles have given it us, and in its true light, with all its proper evidence, intrinsic and extrinsic; and then let the capable see for themselves the rational powers and faculties, and by the operation of the Spirit of grace, who always works faith in all that believe, even the high thought, when once it becomes a free thought, freed from the bondage of sin and corruption, will, by a pleasing and happy power, be capitivated, and brought into obedience to Christ; and when he thus makes it free, it will be free indeed.

Let any one who will give himself leave to think impartially, and be at the pains to think closely, read Mr. Baxter's Reasons for the Christian Religion; and he will find, both that it goes to the bottom, and lays the foundation deep and firm, and also that it brings forth the top-stone in a believer's consent to God in Christ, to the satisfaction of any that are truly concerned about their souls and another world. The proofs of the truths of the gospel have been excellently well methodized, and enforced likewise, by Bishop Simpson in his Discourses on the New Testament; by Dr. Whitby, in his General Preface to his Commentary on the New Testament; and of late by Mr. Ditton, very argumentatively, in his discourse concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and many others have herein done worthily. And I will not believe any man who rejects the New Testament and the christian Religion, to have thought freely upon the subject, unless he has, with humility, seriousness, and prayer to God for direction, deliberately read these or the like books, which, it is certain, were written both with liberty and clearness of thought.

For my own part, if my thoughts were worth any one's notice, I do declare, I have thought of this great concern, with all the liberty that a reasonable soul can pretend to, or desire; and that the result is, that the more I think, and the more freely I think, the more fully I am satisfied that the christian Religion is the true religion, and that which, if I submit my soul sincerely to it, I may venture my soul confidently upon.

For when I think freely,

First, I cannot but think that the God who made man a reasonable creature by his power, has a right to rule him by his law, and to oblige him to keep his inferior faculties of appetite and passion, together with the capacities of thought and speech, in due subjection to the superior powers of reason and conscience. And when I look into my own heart, I cannot but think that this was it which my Maker designd, seeing that he could, for the sake of a holy, and that herein he intended to support his own dominion in me.

Secondly, I cannot but think that my happiness is bound up in the favour of God, and that his favour will, or will not, be toward me, according as I do, or do not, comply with the laws and ends of my creation. I am accountable to this God; and that from him my judgment proceeds, not only for this world, but for my everlasting state.

Thirdly, I cannot but think that my nature is very unlike what the nature of man was, as it came out of the Creator's hands; that it is degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude. I find in myself a natural aversion to my duty, and to spiritual and divine exercises, and a propensity to that which is evil; such an inclination toward the world and the flesh, as amounts to a propensity to backslide from the living God.

Fourthly, I cannot but think that I am therefore, by nature, thrown out of the favour of God; for though I think he is a gracious and merciful God, yet I think he is also a just and holy God, and that I am become, by sin, both odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice. I should not think freely, but very partially, if I should think otherwise. I think I am guilty before God, have sinned, and come short of glorifying him, and of being glorified with him.

Fifthly, I cannot but think that, without some special discovery of God's will concerning me, and good will to me, I cannot possibly recover his favour, be reconciled to him, or be so far restored to my primitive rectitude, as to be capable of serving my Creator, and answering the ends of my creation, and becoming meet, for every thing that is holy. And therefore there is need to me, that God, of his infinite love, would not only, by his grace, cleanse me to be new creatures, but by the same grace, give me a heart to serve him, and to draw me thereto. Not only, that I may be obedient, but more particularly, that I may love, and so be willing and able to obey.

Sixthly, I cannot but think that the way of salvation, both from the guilt and from the power of sin, by Jesus Christ, and his mediation between God and man, as it is revealed by the New Testament, is admirably well fitted to all the exigencies of my case, to restore me both to the favour of God and to the government and enjoyment of myself. Here I see a proper method for the removing of the guilt of sin, (that I may not die by the sentence of the law,) by the all-sufficient merit and righteousness of the Son of God in our nature; and, for the breaking of the power of sin, (that I may not die by my own disease,) by the all-sufficient influence and operation of the Spirit of God upon our nature. Every malady has herein its remedy, every defect in grace is hereby redressed, and in such a way as advances the honour of all the divine attributes, and is suited and adapted to human nature.

Seventhly, I cannot but think that what I find in myself of natural religion, does evidently bear testimony to the christian religion; for all that truth which is discovered to me by the light of nature, is confirmed, and more clearly discovered, by the gospel; the very same thing which the light of nature gives me a confused sight of, (like the sight of men as trees walking,) the New Testament gives me a clear and distinct sight of. All that good which is pressed upon me by the law of nature, is more fully discovered to me, and I find myself much more strongly bound to it, by the gospel of Christ, the engagements it lays upon me to my duty, and the encouragements and assistance it gives me in my duty. And this is further confirmed to me, that there, just there, where natural light leaves me at a loss, and unsatisfied—tells me that hitherto it can carry me only; but no further—the gospel takes me up, helps me out, and gives me all the satisfaction I can desire; and that is especially in the great business of the satisfying of God's justice for the sin of man. My own conscience asks, Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? Will he be pleased with thousands of rams? But I am still at a loss: I cannot frame a righteousness from any thing I am, or have, in myself, or from any thing I can do for God or present to God, wherein I dare appear before him; but the gospel comes and tells me, that Jesus Christ has made my soul an offering for sin, and God has declared himself well pleased with all believers in him; and this makes me easy.

God! Eightly, I cannot but think that the proofs by which God has attested the truth of the gospel, are the most proper that could be given in a case of this nature—That the power and authority of the Redeemer the kingdom of grace should be exemplified to the world, not by the highest degree of the pomp and
authority of the kings of the earth, as the Jews expected, but by the evidences of his deification in the king-
dom of nature; which is a much greater dignity and authority than any of the kings of the earth ever pre-
tended to, and is no less than divine. And his miracles, being generally wrought upon men, not only upon
their bodies, as they were mostly when Christ was here upon earth, but, which is more, upon their minds,
as they were mostly after the pouring out of the Spirit in the gift of tongues and other supernatural endow-
ments, were the most proper confirmations possible of the truth of the gospel, which was designed for the
making of men holy and happy.

Nay, I cannot but think that the methods taken for the propagation of this gospel, and the wonder-
ful success of those means, which are purely spiritual and heavenly, and destitute of all secular advan-
tages and supports, plainly show that it was of God, for God was with it, and it; could never have spread
as it did, in the face of so much opposition, if it had not been accompanied with a power from on high.
And the preservation of christianity in the world to this day, notwithstanding the difficulties it has strug-
gled with, is to me a standing miracle for the proof of it.

Lastly, I cannot but think that the gospel of Christ has had some influence upon my soul, has had such
a command over me, and been such a comfort to me, as is a demonstration to myself, though it cannot be
so to another, that it is of God. I have tasted in it, that the Lord is gracious; and the most sublime dis-
putants cannot convince one who has tasted honey, that it is not sweet.

And now I appeal to Him who knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, that in all this I think
freely, (if it be possible for a man to know that he does so,) and not under the power of any bias. Whether
we have reason to think that those who without any colour of reason, not only usurp, but monopolize, the
character of Freethinkers, do so, let those judge, who easily observe that they do not speak sincerely, but
industriously disseminate their notions; and one instance I cannot but notice, of their unfair dealing with
their readers—that when, for the diminishing of the authority of the New Testament, they urge the varia-
ous readings of the original, and quote an acknowledgment of Mr. Gregory of Christ Church, in his phi-
losophical Disquisition for the New Testament, and that Mr. Eusebius of Caesarea, and Dr. Baronius of
Rome, and Dr. Quiett, and other such authors, have immediately followed, as the sense of that learned man
upon it, That this is an invincible reason for the scriptures' part, &c.

We then receive the books of the New Testament as our oracles; for it is evident that that excellent
notion of Dr. Henry More's is true, that "they have a direct tendency to take us off from the animal life,
and to bring us to the divine life."

But while we are thus maintaining the divine original and authority of the New Testament, as it has
been received through all the ages of the church, we find our cause not only attacked by the enemies we
speak of; but, in effect, betrayed by one who makes our New Testament almost double to what it really
is, adding to it the Constitutions of the Apostles, collected by Clement, together with the Apostolical Canons,
and making those to be of equal authority with the writings of the Evangelists, and preferable to the
Epistles. By enlarging the lines of defence thus, without either cause or precedent, he gives great
advantage to the invaders.

Those Constitutions of the Apostles have many things in them very good, and may be of use, as other
human compositions. But to pretend that they were composed, as they profess themselves to be, by the
twelve apostles in concert at Jerusalem, I Peter, saying this, I Andrew, saying that, &c. is the greatest
imposition that can be practised upon the credulity of the simple.

1. It is certain, there were a great many spurious writings which, in the early days of the church, went
under the names of the apostles and apostolical men: so that it has been always complained of as imposi-
tible to find out any thing but the canon of scripture, that could with any assurance be attributed to them.
Baronius himself acknowledges it, Cam apostolorum nomine tam facta quam dicta referantur esse ete
possit; nee sic quid de illis a verbo sincerissime scripturibus narratione in integrum et incorruptum reman-
serit, in desolationem plane quandam animum dejechit posse unquam aequi quot verum certumque
substitue—Since so many of the acts and sayings ascribed to the apostles are found to be spurious, and even
the narrations of faithful writers respecting them are not free from corruption, we must desist of ever
being able to arrive at any absolute certainty about them. Ad. An. Christ. 44. sect. 42, &c. There were
Acts of the apostles of Andrew, of the apostle, Philip, Peter, Thomas; a Gospel under the name of Thad-
dee; another of Barnabas, another of Bartholomew; a book concerning the infancy of our Saviour,
another concerning his nativity, and many the like, which were all rejected as forgeries.

2. These Constitutions and Canons, among the rest, were condemned in the primitive church as apocry-
phal, and therefore justly rejected; because, though otherwise good, they pretended to be what really
they were not, dictated by the twelve apostles themselves, as received from Christ. If Jesus Christ gave
them such instructions, and they gave them in such a solemn manner to the church, as is pretended, it is
unaccountable that there is not the least notice taken of any such thing done or designed in the Gospels,
the Acts, or any of the Epistles.

Those who have judged the most favourably of those Canons and Constitutions, have concluded that they
were compiled by some officious persons under the name of Clement, toward the end of the second cen-
tury, above 150 years after Christ's ascension, out of the common practice of the churches; that is, that,
the compilers were most acquainted with, or had respect for; when at the same time we have reason to think
that the far greater number of christian churches which by that time were planted, had Constitutions of
their own, which if they had had the haphazard to be transmitted to posterity, would have recommended
themselves as well as these, or better. But as the legislators of old put a reputation upon
their laws, by pretending to have received them from some deity or other, so church-governors studied to
beget a reputation also, by laying the apostolical name or other at the head of their catalogue of
bishops. (See Bishop Stilligre's Lexicon, p. 302.) and reputation to their Canons and Constitutions, by
fatherng them upon the apostles.

But how can it be imagined that the apostles should be all together at Jerusalem, to compose this book of
Canons with so much solemnity, when we know that their commission was to go into all the world, and
to preach the gospel to every creature. Accordingly, Eusebius tells us that Thomas went into Parthia,
Andrew into Scythia, John into the lesser Asia; and we have reason to think that after their dispersion
they never came together again, any more than the planters of the nations did after the Most High had
separated the sons of Adam.

* Whiston.—Ed.
I think that any one who will compare these Constitutions with the writings which we are sure were given by inspiration of God, will easily discern a vast difference in the style and spirit. What is the chaff to the wheat?

* * * Where are ministers, in the style of the true apostles, called priests, high priests? Where do we find in the apostolical age, that age of suffering, of the placing of the bishop in his throne? Or of readers, "singers, and porters, in the church?"

I fear the collector and compiler of those Constitutions, under the name of Clement, was conscious to himself of dishonesty in it, that he would not have them published before all, because of the mysteries contained in them; nor were they known or published till the middle of the fourth century, when the confiscation had been well approved. I cannot see any mysteries in them, that they should be concealed, if they had been genuine; but I am sure that Christ bids his apostles publish the mysteries of the kingdom of God upon the house-tops. And St. Paul, though there are mysteries in his Epistles, much more sublune than any of these Constitutions, charges that they should be read to all the holy brethren. Nay, these Constitutions are so wholly in a manner taken up, either with moral precepts, or rules of practice in the church, that if they had been what they pretend, they had been most fit to be published before all. And though the Apocalypse is so full of mysteries, yet a blessing is pronounced upon the readers and hearers of that prophecy. We must therefore conclude that, whenever they were written, by declining the light they owned themselves to be apocryphal, that is, hidden or concealed; that they durst not mingle themselves with what was given by divine inspiration; to allude to what is said of the ministers, (Acts 5. 12.) Of the rest durst no man join himself to the apostoles, for the people magnified them.

So that even by their own confession they were not delivered to the churches with the other writings, when the New Testament Canon was solemnly sealed up with that dreadful sentence passed on those that add unto these things.

And as we have thus had attempts made of late upon the purity and sufficiency of our New Testament, by additions to it, so we have likewise had from another quarter a great contempt put upon it by the papal power. The occasion was this:

The Father Quesnel, a papist, but a Jansenist, near thirty years ago, published the New Testament in French, in several small volumes, with Moral Reflections on every verse, to render the reading of it more profitable, and meditation upon it more easy. It was much esteemed in France, for the sake of the piety and devotion which it appeared in, and it had several impressions. The Jesuits were much disgusted, and solicited the pope for the condemnation of it, though the author of it was a papist, and many things in it countenanced popish superstition.

After much struggling about it in the court of Rome, a bull was at length obtained, at the request of the French king, from the present pope, Clement XI., bearing date September 8, 1713, by which the said book, with what title or in what language soever it is printed, is prohibited and condemned; both the New Testament itself, because in many things varying from the vulgar Latin, and the Annotations, as containing divers propositions, (above a hundred are enumerated,) scandalous and pernicious, injurious to the church and its customs, impious, blasphemous, savouring of heresy. And the propositions are such as these—"That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the effectual principle of all manner of good, is necessary for every good action; for without it nothing is done, nay, nothing can be done"—"That it is a sovereign grace, and is an operation of the Almighty hand of God"—"That when God accompanies his word with the internal power of his grace, it operates in the soul the obedience which it demands"—"That faith is the first grace, and the fountain of all others"—"That it is in vain for us to call God our Father, if we do not cry to him with the spirit of love"—"That there is no God, nor region of his life where he is no charity"—"That the catholic church comprehends the angels and all the elect and just men of the earth, of all ages"—"That it has the Word incarnate for its Head, and all the saints for its members"—"That it is profitable and necessary at all times, in all places, and for all sorts of persons, to know the holy Scriptures"—"That the holy obscurity of the word of God is no reason for the laity not reading it"—"That the Lord's day ought to be sanctified by reading books of piety, especially the holy Scriptures"—And "that to forbid christians from reading the Scriptures, is to prohibit the use of light to the children of light." Many such positions as these, which the spirit of every good christian cannot but rech a true and good, are condemned by the pope's bull as impious and blasphematic. And this bull, though strenuously opposed by a great number of the Bishops in France, who were well affected to the notions of Father Quesnel, was yet received and confirmed by the French king's letters patent, bearing date at Versailles, February 14, 1714, which forbid all manner of persons, upon pain of exemplary punishment, so much as to keep any of those books in their houses; and adjudge any that should hereafter write in defence of the Propositions condemned by the pope, as disturbers of the peace.

It was registered the day following, February 15, by the Parliament of Paris, but with divers provisos and limitations.

By this it appears that popery is still the same thing that ever it was, an enemy to the knowledge of the Scriptures, and to the honour of divine grace. What reason have we to bless God, that we have liberty to read the Scriptures, and have helps to understand and improve them; which we are concerned diligently to make a good use of, that we may not provoke God to give us up into the hands of those powers that would use us in like manner.

I am willing to hope that those to whom the reading of the Exposition of the Old Testament was pleasant, will find this yet more pleasant; for this is that part of Scripture, which does most plainly testify of Christ, and in which gospel-grace which appears unto all men, bringing salvation, shines most clear. This is the New Testament milk for babes, the rest is strong meat for strong men. By these, therefore, let us be nourished and strengthened, that we may be pressing on toward perfection; and that, having laid the foundation in the history of our blessed Saviour's Life, Death, and Resurrection, and the first preaching of his gospel, we may build upon it by an acquaintance with the mysteries of godliness, to which we shall be further introduced in the Epistles.

I desire I may be read with a candid, and not a critical, eye. I pretend not to gratify the curious; the top of my ambition is, to assist those who are truly serious, in searching the Scriptures daily. I am sure—
it is designed, and hope it is calculated, to promote piety toward God, and charity towards our brethren; and that there is not only something in it which may edify, but nothing which may justly offend, any good Christian.

If any receive spiritual benefit by my poor endeavours, it will be a comfort to me; but let God have all the glory, and that free grace of his which has employed one that is utterly unworthy of such an honour, and enabled one thus far to go on in it, who is utterly insufficient for such a service.

Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto in it, and humbly depend upon the same good hand of my God to carry me on in that which remains, to gird my loins with needful strength, and to make my way perfect; and for this I humbly desire the prayers of my friends. One volume more, I hope, will include what is yet to be done; and I will both go about it, and go on with it, as God shall enable me with all convenient speed; but it is that part of the Scripture, which, of all others, requires the most care and pains in expounding it. But I trust, that as the day, so shall the strength be.

M. H

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THAT which has been just offered to the reader, was the reverend author's first draught of a Preface to this volume. He intended to revise it, if God had allowed him a return home from his late journey. But though, by the afflicting stroke of his sudden death, it wants the advantage of his last hand, yet serious readers will be well pleased to have his first sentiments on those important heads which there come under his consideration; especially since it contains his dying testimony to the Christian Religion, the Canon of the New Testament, and the general usefulness of the sacred scriptures, on occasion of those debates which have been lately started, and made the most considerable noise in the world.

The Exposition itself, as far as the Acts of the Apostles goes, was entirely committed to the press before he left the City. The reader will perceive his intentions for the rest of the Holy Bible. But the sovereign providence of God, in whose hands our times are, has called this faithful and diligent servant to rest from his labours, and finish well himself, before he could finish this, and several other great and pious designs he had for the service of God and his church.

However, it may be acceptable to such as have often entertained themselves and their families with what is already extant, to let them know that we are not without hopes yet of seeing Mr. Henry's Exposition of the remainder; though it cannot be expected to be altogether so copious and complete as that which he himself prepared for the public. He drew up, several years ago, an Exposition of the Epistles to the Romans, which he had designed to transcribe with little alteration, for the beginning of his next volume, and was earnestly solicited to print it by itself, before he had thoughts of writing upon the whole Bible. For the rest, there are copies of his Expositions, both in public and private, taken from him by judicious writers; wherein, though they may not be of equal length, yet Mr. Henry was used to express himself with like propriety, the same pious spirit, and uncommon skill in the Scriptures. There is encouragement to hope that the revising and preparing of these for the press will be undertaken (if God give life and health) by an intimate friend of the excellent Author, whose long acquaintance with his spirit and manner renders him the most proper person for that service; and his endeared affection will incline him to take the pains necessary for ushering them into the world. This course is apprehended to be much better than either to leave such a work unfinished, when it is already advanced so far, or to attempt the continuation of the design with a quite different set of thoughts, and another sort of style and method, that it may be as much Mr. Henry's as possible. But a reasonable time must be allowed before this can be expected. I pray God long to spare the valuable life of that dear friend of the Author, and every way furnish him for this good work, and all others he may undertake for the good of God's church.

John Evans.
We have now before us,
I. The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; so this second part of the holy Bible is entitled: The new Covenant; so it might as well be rendered; the word signifies both. But when it is (as here) spoken of as Christ's act and deed, it is most properly rendered a Testament, for he is the Testator, and it becomes of force by his death; (Heb. 6. 16, 17.) nor is there, as in covenants, a previous treaty between the parties, but what is granted, though an estate upon condition, is owing to the will, the free-will, the good-will, of the Testator. Thus all the grace contained in this book is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour; and unless we consent to him as our Lord, we cannot expect any benefit by him as our Saviour. This is called a New Testament, to distinguish it from that which was given by Moses, and was now antiquated; and to signify that it should be always new, and should never wax old, and grow out of date. These books contain, not only a full discovery of that grace which has appeared to all men, bringing salvation, but a legal instrument by which it is conveyed to, and settled upon, all believers. How carefully do we preserve, and with what attention and pleasure do we read, the last will and testament of a friend, who has therein left us a fair estate, and, with it, high expressions of his love to us! How precious then should this Testament of our blessed Saviour be to us, which secures to us all his unsearchable riches? It is his Testament; for though, as is usual, it was written by others, (we have nothing upon record that was of Christ's own writing,) yet he dictated it; and the night before he died, in the institution of his supper, he signed, sealed, and published it, in the presence of twelve witnesses. For, though these books were not written for some years after, for the benefit of posterity, in perpetuum rei memoriam, as a perpetual memorial, yet the New Testament of our Lord Jesus was settled, confirmed, and declared, from the time of his death, as a nuncupative will, with which these records exactly agree. The things which St. Luke wrote, were things which were most surely believed, and therefore well known, before he wrote them; but when they were written, the oral tradition was superseded and set aside, and these writings were the repository of that New Testament.

This is intimated by the title which is prefixed to many Greek Copies, Τє κανον λεγεν "Αποστε—The whole of the New Testament, or All the things of. In it is declared the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation, Acts 20. 27. As the law of the Lord is perfect, so is the gospel of Christ, and nothing is to be added to it. We have it all, and are to look for no more.

II. We have before us The Four Gospels. Gospel signifies good news, or glad tidings; and this history of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners, is, without doubt, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth; the angel gave it this title, (Luke 2. 16.) Ευαγγελιζασαι— I bring you good tidings; I bring the gospel to you! And the prophet foretold it, Isa. 52. 7.—61. 1. It is there foretold, that in the days of the Messiah good tidings should be preached. Gospel is an old Saxon word; it is God's spell or word; and God is so called because he is good, Deus optimus—God most excellent, and therefore it may be a good spell, or word. If we take spell in its more proper signification for a charm (carmen,) and take that in a good sense, for what is moving and affecting, which is apt lenire dolorem—to calm the spirits, or to raise them in admiration or love, as that which is very amiable we call charming, it is applicable to the gospel; for in it the charmer charmer visibly, though to deaf adders, Ps. 58. 4, 5. Nor (one would think) can any charms be so powerful as those of the beauty and love of our Redeemer. The whole New Testament is the gospel. St. Paul calls it his gospel, because he was one of the preachers of it. Oh that we may each of us make it ours by our cordial acceptance of it, and subjection to it! But the four books which contain the history of the Redeemer, we commonly call The Four Gospels, and the inspired penmen of them Evangelists, or Gospel-writers; not, however, very properly, because that title belongs to a particular order of ministers, that were assistants to the apostles; (Eph. 4. 11.) He gave some apostles and some evangelists. It was requisite that the doctrine of Christ should be interwoven with, and founded upon, the narrative of his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection; for then it appears in its clearest and strongest light. As in nature, so in grace, the most happy discoveries are those which take rise from the certain representations of matters of fact. Natural history is the best philosophy; and so is the sacred history, both of the Old and New Testament, the most proper and grateful vehicle of sacred truth. These four gospels were early and constantly received by the primitive church, and read in christian assemblies, as appears by the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenæus, who lived little more than a hundred years after the ascension of Christ; they declared that neither more nor fewer than four were received by the church. A Har-
mony of these four evangelists was compiled by Tatian about that time, which he called, ἶα KA πατρίον — The Gospel out of the four. In the third and fourth centuries there were gospels forged by divers sects, and published, one under the name of St. Peter, another of St. Thomas, another of St. Philip, &c. But they were never owned by the church, nor was any credit given to them; as the learned Dr. Whitby shews. And he gives this good reason why he should adhere to these written records, because, whatever the pretenses of tradition may be, it is not sufficient to preserve things with any certainty, as appears by experience. For, whereas Christ said and did many memorable things, which were not written, (John 20. 30.—21. 25.) tradition has not preserved any one of them to us, but all is lost except what was written; that therefore is what we must abide by; and blessed be God that we have it to abide by; it is the sure word of history.

II. We have before us the Gospel according to St. Matthew. The penman was, by birth, a Jew, by calling a publican, till Christ commanded his attendance, and then he left the receipt of custom, to follow him, and was one of those that accompanied him all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was taken up, Acts 1. 21, 22. He was therefore a competent witness of what he has here recorded. He is said to have written this history about eight years after Christ’s ascension. Many of the ancients say that he wrote it in the Hebrew, or Syriac, language; but the tradition is sufficiently disproved by Dr. Whitby. Doubtless, it was written in Greek, as the other parts of the New Testament were; not in that language which was peculiar to the Jews, whose church and state were near a period, but in that which was common to the world, and in which the knowledge of Christ would be most effectually transmitted to the nations of the earth; yet it is probable that there might be an edition of it in Hebrew, published by St. Matthew himself, at the same time that he wrote it in Greek; the former for the Jews, the latter for the Gentiles, when he left Judea, to preach among the Gentiles. Let us bless God that we have it, and have it in a language which we understand.

ST. MATTHEW, I.

CHAP. I.

This evangelist begins with the account of Christ’s parentage and birth, the ancestors from whom he descended, and the manner of his entry into the world, to make it appear that he was indeed the Messiah promised; for it was foretold that he should be the son of David, and should be born of a virgin; and that he was so, is here plainly shewn; for here is, 1. His pedigree from Abraham in forty-two generations, three fourteens, v. 1. 17. II. An account of the circumstances of his birth, so far as was requisite to shew that he was born of a virgin, v. 18. 25. Thus methodically is the life of our blessed Saviour written, as lives should be written, for the clearer proposing of the example of them.

1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. 2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; 3. And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; 4. And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; 5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; 6. And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon; of her that had been the wife of Urias; 7. And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abi; and Abi begat Asa; 8. And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; 9. And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; 10. And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; 11. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon: 12. And after they were brought to Babylon; Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; 13. And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; 14. And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; 15. And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Mathan; and Mathan begat Jacob: 16. And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Concerning this genealogy of our Saviour, observe. I. The title of it. It is the book (or the account, in the Hebrew word aether—a book, sometimes signifies,) of the generation of Jesus Christ, of his ancestors, according to the flesh; or, It is the narrative of his birth. It is a breach review—a book of Genesis. The Old Testament begins with the book of the generation of the world, and it is its glory that it does so; but the glory of the New Testament herein excels, that it begins with the book of the generation of him that made the world. And, as this outgoings were of old, from Genesis, (Mic. 5. 2) and none can declare that generation; but, as Man, he was sent forth in the fulness of time, of a woman, and it is that generation which is here declared.

II. The principal intention of it. It is not an

* See a vindication of the opposite opinion in Dr. Campbell’s Preface to his Translation of this Gospel. — Ed.
endless or needless genealogy; it is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men commonly are. Scripture, good, forever, and sound, need no amending pedigrees. It is like a pedagogue given in evidence, to prove a title, and make out a claim; the design is to prove that our Lord Jesus is the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, and therefore of that nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. Abraham and David were, in their day, the great trustees of the promise relating to the Messiah. The frames of the tables of the law are made to Abraham and his seed, of the dominion, to David and his seed; and they who would have an interest in Christ, as the Son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed, must be faithful, loyal subjects to him as the Son of Abraham, by whom all the families of the earth are to be ruled. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him, (Gen. 12: 3.—22. 18.) and to David, Matthew 2: 6. and about 2000 years. So long has it been generally supposed, that it is a question whether any person in the world can legally prove himself to be a son of Abraham; however, it is certain that none can prove himself to be either a son of Aaron, or a son of David, so that the priestly and kingly office must either be given up, as lost forever, or be lodged in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Christ is here first called the Son of David, because under that title he is the true and sole Messiah, and to that office the Jews. They who owned him to be the Christ, called him the Son of David, ch. 15. 22.—20. 31.—21. 13. This, therefore, the Evangelist undertakes to make out, that he is not only a Son of David, but that Son of David on whom the government was to be; not only a Son of Abraham, but that Son of Abraham, who was to be the Father of mercy.

In calling Christ the Son of David, and the Son of Abraham, he shows that God is faithful to his promise, and will make good every word that he has spoken; and this, 1. Though the performance be long deferred. When God promised Abraham a Son, who should be the great blessing of the world, perhaps he expected it should be his immediate son; but it proved to be one at the distance of forty-two generations. Therefore, if God's promise is to be believed, we must be content with a promise that is so dispersed and dispersed, from the Jews. They who owned him to be the Christ, called him the Son of David, ch. 15. 22.—20. 31.—21. 13. This, therefore, the Evangelist undertakes to make out, that he is not only a Son of David, but that Son of David on whom the government was to be; not only a Son of Abraham, but that Son of Abraham, who was to be the Father of mercy.

2. Though it begin to be despised of. 'This Son of David, and Son of Abraham, who was to be the Glory of his Father's house, was born then when the seed of Abraham was a despised people recently become tributary to the Roman yoke, and when the house of David was buried in obscurity; for Christ was to be a Root out of a dry ground.' Note, God's time for the performance of his promise, is, when it labours under the greatest improbabilities.

III. The particular series of it, drawn in a direct line from Abraham downward, according to the genealogies recorded in the beginning of the books of Chronicles, (as far as those go,) and which here we see the use of.

Some particulars we may observe in this genealogy.

1. Among the ancestors of Christ, who had brethren, generally, he descended from a younger brother; such Abraham himself was, and Jacob, and Judah, and David, and Nathan, and Rhesa; to show that though he descended from human and earthly princes, from the primogeniture of his ancestors, but from the will of God, who, according to the method of his providence, exalts them of low degree, and puts more abundant honour upon that part which lacked.

2. Among the sons of Jacob, beside Judah, from whom Shiloh came, notice is here taken of his brethren; Joseph and his brethren. The mention is made of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, and of Esau, the son of Isaac, because they were shut out of the church; whereas all the children of Jacob were taken in, and though not fathers of Christ, were yet patriarchs of the church, (Acts 7. 8.) and therefore are mentioned in this genealogy, for the encouragement of the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, intimating to them that they have an interest in Christ, and stood in the church.

3. Phares and Zara, the twin-sons of Judah, are likewise both named, though Phares only was Christ's ancestor, for the same reason that the brethren of Judah are taken notice of; some think because the birth of Phares and Zara had something of allegory in it. Zara put out his hand first, as the first-born, but drawing it in, Phares got the birth-right. The Jewish church, like Zara, was the first-born, and was proved to be a rightful inheritor, but Phares, the Gentile church, like Phares, took possession of the inheritance, and in the name of the Gentiles, the promise which was made to Abraham were fulfilled. Moreover, the seed of Zara is mentioned, because this son of Jacob, was the progenitor of the foremen of the tribes of Israel, (Num. 1. 10.) so that Isaac was the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Phares and Zara, and therefore Isaac is placed before Jacob in his genealogy; as Abraham is before Isaac, and David is before Abraham, and therefore we are to read Isaac, as Abraham, and not as Jacob, the son of Isaac.

4. There are four women, and but four, named in this genealogy; two of them were originally strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, Rahab a Canaanitish harlot, besides, and Ruth the Moabitess; for in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew; those that are strangers and foreigners are welcome, in Christ, to the citizenship of the saints. The other two were adulteresses, Tamar and Bathsheba; which was a further mark of humiliation put upon our Lord Jesus, that not only he descended from such, but that his descent from them is particularly remarked in his genealogy, as being a notice to himself, and to every succeeding age, that he was made perfect through humiliation, (Heb. 2. 9.) and that the likeness of sinful flesh, (Rom. 8. 3.) and taken even great sinners, upon their repentance, into the nearest relations to himself. Note, we ought not to upbraud people with the scandals of their ancestors; it is what they cannot help, and has been the lot of the best, even of our Master himself. David's begetting Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias, is taken notice of. (2. Kings 11.) To shew that crime that was committed by David, being repented of, was so far from hindering the promise made to him, that it pleased God by this very woman to fulfil it.

5. Though divers kings are here named, yet none is expressly called a king, but David, (v. 6.) David the king; because with him the covenant of royalty was made, and to him the promise of the kingdom of the Messiah was given as well as to Joseph, and therefore with him thethrone of his father David, Luke 1. 32.

6. In the pedigree of the kings of Judah, between Joram and Ozias, (v. 8.) there are three left out, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah; and therefore when it is said, Joram begat Ozias, it is meant, according to the usage of the Hebrew tongue, that Ozias was lineally descended from him, as it is said to Hezekiah, that the sons which he should beget should be carried to Babylon, whereas they writing under the Mosaic law, added several Jews, who were not through mistake or forgetfulness that these three were omitted, but, probably, they were omitted in the genealogical tables that the Evangelist consulted, which yet were admitted as authentic. Some give this
reason for it.—It being Matthew's design, for the sake of memory, to reduce the number of Christ's ancestors to three fourteen, it was requisite that in this period three should be left out, and none more fit than they who were the immediate progeny of the patriarchs, who introduced the idolatry of Ahab into the house of David; for which this brand is set upon the family, and the iniquity thus visited to the third and fourth generation. Two of these three were apostates; and such God commonly sets a mark of his displeasure upon in this world; they all three had their heads brought to the grave by God. 7. Some observe what a mixture there was of good and bad, in the succession of these kings; as for instance, (v. 7, 8.) wicked Roboam begat wicked Abia; wicked Abia begat good Asa; good Asa begat good Josaphat; good Josaphat begat wicked Joram. Grace does not run in the blood, nor does reigning sin. God's grace is his own, and he gives or withholds it as he pleases. 8. The captivity in Babylon is mentioned as a remarkable period in this line, v. 11, 12. All things considered, it was a wonder that the Jews were not lost in that captivity, as other nations have been; but this intimates the reason why the streams of that people were kept to run pure through that dead sea, because from them, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. 9. Of such blessings, Christ himself, Isa. 65. 8, 9. It was with an eye to him they were restored, and the desolations of the sanctuary were looked upon with favour for the Lord's sake, Dan. 9. 17. 10. Josias is here said to beget Jechonias and his brethren; (v. 11.) by Jechonias is meant Jehoiakim, who was the first-born of Josias; but when it is said, (v. 12.) that Jechonias begat Salathiel, that Jechonias was the son of that Jehoiakim who was carried into Babylon, and there begat Salathiel, (as Dr. Whitby shews,) and when Jechonias is said to have been childless, (Jer. 22. 30.) it is explained thus; No man of his seed shall prosper. Salathiel is here said to beget Zorobabel, whereas Salathiel begat Pedahaz, and he begat Zorobabel (1 Chron. 3. 1.) but as before, the grandson is often called the son; Pedahaz was likely, died in his father's life-time, and so his son Zorobabel was called the son of Salathiel. 11. The line is brought down not to Mary, the mother of our Lord, but to Joseph, the husband of Mary; (v. 16.) for the Jews always reckoned their genealogies by the males; yet Mary was of the same tribe and family with Joseph, so that, both by the mother and by this supposed father, he was of the house of David; yet his interest in that dignity is derived by Joseph, to whom really, according to the flesh, he had no relation, to shew that the kingdom of the Messiah is not founded in a natural descent from David. 12. The centre in whom all these lines meet, is Jesus, who is called Christ, v. 16. This is the character which God has given him, a greatly expected, and to whom the patriarchs had an eye when they were so desirous of children, that they might have the honour of coming into the sacred line. Blessed be God, we are not now in such a dark and cloudy state of expectation as they were then in, but see clearly what these prophets and kings saw as through a glass darkly. And we may have some idea of the approach of Christ, a greater honour than that of which they were so ambitious; for they who do the will of God, are in a more honourable relation to Christ, than those who were akin to him according to the flesh, ch. 12. 50. Jesus is called Christ, that is, the Anointed, the same with the Hebrew name Messiah. He is called Messiah the Prince, (Dan. 9. 25.) and often God's Anointed, (Ps. 2. 2.) Under this character he was expected; Art thou the Christ—the Anointed one? David, the king, was anointed; (1 Sam. 16. 13.) so was Aaron, the priest, (Lev. 3. 12.) and Eliasha, the prophet, (1 Kings 19. 16.) and the succeeding kings also; but being appointed to, and qualified for, all these offices, is therefore called the Anointed—anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows; and from this name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, all his followers are called Christians, for they also have received the anointing. Lastly. The general summary of all this genealogy was placed in v. 17, where it is summed up in three fourteen, signalized by remarkable periods. In the first fourteen, we have the family of David rising, and looking forth as the morning; in the second, we have it flourishing in its meridian lustre; in the third, we have it declining and growing less and less, dwindled into the family of a poor carpenter, and then Christ shines forth out of it, the Glory of his people Israel. 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19. Then Joseph her husband, being an only, not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23. Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us. 24. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto his wife: 25. And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name Jesus. The mystery of Christ's incarnation is to be adored, not prayed into. If we know not the way of the Spirit in the formation of common persons, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of the blessed child, (Eccles. 11. 5.) much less do we know how the blessed Jesus was formed in the womb of the blessed virgin. When David admires how he himself was made in secret, and curiously wrought, (Ps. 139. 13—16.) perhaps he speaks, in spirit, of Christ's incarnation. Some circumstances attending the birth of Christ we find here, which are not in Luke, though it is more largely recorded there. Here we have, v. 17. I. Mary's espousals to Joseph. Mary, the mother of our Lord, was espoused to Joseph, not completely married, but contracted; a purpose of marriage solemnly declared in words de futuro—that regarded the future, and a promise of it made if God per
in his breast, between that jealousy which is the rage of man, and is cruel as the grave, on the one hand, and that affection which he has for Mary, on the other.

Observe. 1. The extremity which he studied to avoid. He was not willing to make her a public example. He might have done it; for, by the law, a betrothed virgin, if she play the harlot, was to be stoned to death, Deut. 22, 23, 24. But he was not willing to take the advantage of the law against her: if she be guilty, yet it is not known, nor shall it be known from him. How different was the spirit which Joseph displayed from that of Judah, who in a similar case hastily passed that severe sentence, "Bring her forth and let her be burnt!" Gen. 38, 24. How good is it to think on things, as Joseph did here! Were there more of deliberation in our censures and judgments, there would be more of mercy and moderation in them. Bringing her to punishment, is here called making her a public example; which shews what is the end to be aimed at in punishments—giving warning to others: it is in terrorem—that calamities may befall, and the simple will beware.

Some persons of a rigorous temper would blame Joseph for his clemency, but it is here spoken of to his praise; because he was a just man, therefore he was not willing to expose her. He was a religious, good man; and therefore inclined to be merciful as God is, and to forgive as one that was forgiven. In the case of a betrothed damsel, if she were found in the field, the law charitably supposed that she cried out, (Deut. 22, 26,) and she was not to be punished. Some charitable construction or other Joseph will put upon this matter; herein he is a just man, tender of the good name of one who never before had done any thing to blemish it. Note, It becomes us, in many cases, to be gentle toward those that come under suspicion of having offended, to hope the best concerning them, and make the best of them and what at first appears bad, in hopes it may prove better. Summum jus summa injuria—The rigour of the law is (sometimes) the height of injustice. That court of conscience which moderates the rigour of the law, we call a court of equity. Those who are found faulty were perhaps overtaken in the fault, and are therefore to be restored with the spirit of meekness.

2. The petition he found out for avoiding this calamity. He was minded to put her away privily, that is, to give a bill of divorce into her hand before two witnesses, and so to hush up the matter among themselves. Being a just man, a strict observer of the law, he would not proceed to marry her, but resolved to put her away; and yet, in tenderness for her, determined to do it as privately as possible. Note, the necessary censures of those who have offended, ought to be managed without noise. The court of equity is the spirit. Christ himself shall not strive nor cry. Christian love and christian prudence will hide a multitude of sins, and great ones, as far as may be done without having fellowship with them.

IV. Joseph's discharge from this perplexity by an express sent from heaven; (v. 20, 21.) While he thought on these things, and knew not what to determine, God graciously directed him, and made him a clear way out of the difficulty. Note, Those who would have direction from God, must think on things themselves, and consult with themselves. It is the thoughtful, not the unthinking, whom God will guide. When he was at a loss, and had carried the matter as far as he could in his own thoughts, then God came in with advice. Note, God's time to come in with instruction to his people, is when they are nonplussed, and at a loss; God's comforts most delight the soul, in the multitude of its perplexed thoughts.
The message was sent to Joseph by an angel of the Lord; probably, the same angel that brought to Mary the tidings of the conception—the angel Gabriel. Now that the intercourse with heaven, by angels, with which the patriarchs had been dignified, but which had been long disused, begins to be revived; for when the First-Begotten is to be brought into the world, the angels are ordered to attend his motions. How far God may now, in an invisible way, make use of the ministration of angels, for extricating his people out of their straits, we cannot say; but this we know, that this is the manner of his dispensation: by spirits for their good. This angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, when he was aslepp, as God sometimes spake unto the fathers. When we are most quiet and composed, we are in the best frame to receive the notices of the divine will. The Spirit moves on the calm waters. This dream, no doubt, carried its own evidence along with it, that it was of God, and not the production of a vain fancy.

Now, 1. Joseph is here directed to proceed in his intended marriage. The angel calls him, Joseph, thou son of David: he puts him in mind of his relation to David, that he might be prepared to receive this surprising intelligence of his relation to the Messiah, who, every one knew, was to be a descendant from David. Sometimes, when great honor is to be conceived of these who have small estate, they care not for accepting them; but are willing to drop them; it was therefore requisite to put this poor carpenter in mind of his high birth; 

1. Value thyself. Joseph, thou art that son of David, through whom the line of the Messiah is to be drawn. We may thus say to every true believer; 

2. Fear not, thou son of Abraham, thou child of God; forget not the dignity of thy birth, thy new birth. 

But fear not to take Mary thy wife; so it may be read. Joseph, suspecting she was with child by whoredom, was afraid of taking her, lest he should bring upon himself either guilt or reproach. No, saith God, Fear not; the matter is not so. Perhaps Mary had told him that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, and he might have heard what Elisabeth said to Zechariah, (Luke 1. 42.) when she called her the mother of her Lord for thy wife; so it may be read. But from whatever cause his fears arose, they were all silenced with this word, Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from our fears, and to have our doubts resolved, so as to proceed in our affairs with satisfaction.

2. He is here informed concerning that Holy Thing, with which his espoused wife was now pregnant. That which is conceived in her, is of a divine original. He is so far from being in danger of sharing in an impurity by marrying her, that he will thereby share in the highest dignity he is capable of. Two things he is told, 

1. That she had conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; that is, of the power of heaven, the Holy Spirit, who produced the world, now produced the Saviour of the world, and prepared him a body, as was promised him, when he said, Lo, I come, Heb. 10. 5. Hence he is said to be made of a woman, (Gal. 4. 4.) and yet to be that second Adam, that is, the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15. 47. He is the Son of God, and yet so far partakes of the substance of his father, as they who are called his brothers, Luke 1. 3. This is requisite that his conception should be otherwise than by ordinary generation, that so, though he partook of the human nature, yet he might escape the corruption and pollution of it, and not be conceived and shapen in iniquity. History tells us of some who vainly pretended to have conceived by a divine power, as the mother of Alexander; but none ever really did so, except the mother of our Lord. His name in this, as in other things, is, Wonderful. We do not read that the Virgin Mary did herself proclaim the honour done her; but she hid in her heart, and therefore God sent an angel to attest it. Those who seek not their own glory shall have the honour that comes from God; it is reserved for the humble.

(2.) That she should bring forth the Saviour of the world; (v. 21.) She shall bring forth a Son; what he shall be, is, he is, 

1. In the name that shall be given to her Son; This shall be called Jesus, a Saviour. Jesus is the same name with Joshua, the termination only being changed, for the sake of conforming it to the Greek. Joseph is called Jesus, (Acts 7. 45. Heb. 4. 8.) from the Seventy. There were two of that name under the Old Testament, who were both illustrious types of Christ; Joshua, who was Israel's Captain at their first settlement in Canaan; and Jesus, who was their High-Priest at their second settlement after the captivity, Zech. 6. 11, 12.

Christ is our Joshua; both the Captain of our salvation, and the High-Priest of our profession, and, in both, our Saviour;—a Joshua who comes in the stead of Moses, and does that for us, which the law could not do, in that it was weak. Joshua had been called Hoshea, but Moses prefixed the first syllable of the name to Joshua, and so made it Jehovshua, (Num. 14. 8.) when he was told that the Messiah, who was to bear that name, should be Jehovshua; he is therefore able to save to the uttermost, neither is there salvation in any other.

2. In the reason of that name; For he shall save his people from their sins; not the nation of the Jews only, (he came to his own, and they received him not;) but all who were given him by the Father's grace, and all who have given themselves to him, are his own. He is a King who protects his subjects, and, as the Judges of Israel of old, works salvation for them. Note, Those whom Christ saves, he saves from their sins; from the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, from the dominion of sin by the Spirit of his grace. In saving them from sin, he saves them from wrath and the curse, and all misery here and hereafter; he does this, not from sin and misery, but from their sins; but from their sins; to purchase for them, not a liberty to sin, but a liberty from sins, to redeem them from all iniquity; (Tit. 2. 14.) and so to redeem them from among men, (Rev. 14. 4.) to himself, who is separate from sinners. So that those who leave their sins, and give up themselves to Christ as his people, are interested in the Saviour, and the great salvation which he hath wrought out, Rom. 11. 26.

V. The fulfilling of the scripture, in all this. This evangelist, writing among the Jews, more frequently observes this than any other of the evangelists. Here, the Old-Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in our Lord Jesus; by which it appears, that this was He that should come, and we are to look for no other; for this was He to whom all the posterity of the people of God were promised, (v. 15. 16.) and this promise was fulfilled in the birth of Christ, was that promise of a sign which God gave to king Ahaz, (Isa. 7. 14.) Behold, a virgin shall conceive; where the prophet, encouraging the people of God to hope for the promised deliverance from Semmacherib's invasion, directs them to look forward to the Messiah, who was to come of the people of the Jews, and the house of David; whence it is easy to see how the people and that house were afflicted, yet neither the one nor the other could be abandoned to ruin, so long as God had such an honour, such a blessing, in reserve for them. The deliverances which God wrought for the Old-Testament church, were types and figures of the great salvation by Christ; and if God will do the greater, he will not fail to do the less.
The prophecy here quoted is justly ushered in
with a Behold, which commands both attention and
admirations; for we have here the mystery of god-
liness, which was hid in ages past, but is now
manifested in the flesh. The word Alam signifies a virgin, in the strictest sense, such as Mary professes herself to be, Luke 1. 34. I know
not a man; nor had it been any such wonderful
thing as it was intended for, if it had been otherwise. It
is said, that the beginning of the Messiah
should be born of a virgin, when it was said that he
should be the Seed of the woman; so the Seed of
the woman, as not to be the seed of any man. Christ
was born of a virgin, not only because his birth was
to be supernatural, and altogether extraordinary,
but because it was to be spotless, and pure, and
without any stain of sin. Christ would be born, not
of an Empress or Queen, for he appeared not in outward
pomp or splendor, but of a virgin, to teach us spiritual
purity, to die to all the delights of sense, and so to
keep ourselves unspotted from the world and the flesh,
that we may be presented chaste virgins to Christ.

2. The truth proved by this sign, is, that he is the
Son of God, and the Mediator between God and man;
for they shall call his name Immanuel; that is, he
shall be Immanuel; when it is said He shall be called,
it is meant, he shall be, the Lord our Righteousness.
Immanuel signifies God with us; a mysterious name,
but very precious; God incarnate among us, and so
God reconcilable to us, at peace with us, and taking us
into covenant and communion with himself. The
people of the Jews had God with them, in types and
shadows, dwelling between the cherubim; but never
so as when the Word was made flesh—that was the
blessed Shechinah. What a happy step is hereby
taken toward the settling of a peace and correspond-
ence between God and man, that the two natures
are thus brought together in the person of the Me-
diator; by this he became an unexceptionable Re-
ference, a Days-Man, fit to lay his hand upon them
both, since he partakes of the nature of both. Be-
hold, in this, the deepest mystery, and the richest
eracy, that ever was. By the light of nature, we
see God as a God above us; by the light of the law,
we see him as a God against us; but by the light of
prophecy, we see him, and that as God with us; in
our own nature, and (which is more) in our inter-
est. Herein the Redeemer commended his love.
With Christ's name Immanuel we may compare the
name given to the gospel church. (Ezek. 48. 35.)
Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there; the Lord
of hosts is with us.

Nor is it improper to say that the prophecy which
foreshadowed what he should be called Immanuel, was
fulfilled in this sense, as well as in that, in which he
was called Jesus; for if he had not been Immanuel—
God with us, he could not have been Jesus—A
Saviour; and herein consists the salvation he brought
out, in the bringing of God and man together. This
was what he designed, to bring God to be with us,
which is our great happiness, and to bring us to be
with God, which is our great duty.

1. Joseph's obedience to the divine precept; (v.
24.) brought him forth in accordance with the
dream made upon him, he did as the Lord had bidden him,
thinking it was contrary to his former sentiments and intentions; he took unto his wife; he did it speedily, without delay, and cheerfully, without dispute; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Extraordinary direction like this we are not now to expect; but God has still ways of making known his mind in doubtful
cases, by hints of providence, debates of conscience,
and advice of faithful friends; by each of these, ap-
plying the general rules of the written word, we
should, therefore, in all the steps of our life, parti-
cularly the great turns of it, such as this of Joseph's,
who direction from God, and we shall find it safe and
comfortable to do as he bids us.

VII. The accomplishment of the divine promise;
(v. 25.) She brought forth her first-born son. The
circumstances of it are more largely related, Luke
2. 1, &c. Note, That which is conformed of the
Holy Ghost never proves abortive, but will certainly
be brought forth in its season. What is of the will
of the flesh, and of the will of man, often miscarries;
but if Christ be formed in the soul, God himself has
begun the good work which he will perform; what
is conceived in grace, will, no doubt, be brought forth
in glory.

It is here further observed, 1. That Joseph, though
he solemnized the marriage with Mary, his espoused
wife, kept at a distance from her while she was
with child of this holy thing; he knew her not till
she had brought him forth. Much has been said
concerning the perpetual virginity of the mother of
our Lord; Jerome was very angry with Helvidius
for denying it. It is certain that it cannot be proved
from scripture. Dr. Whitby inclines to think, that
when it is said, Joseph knew her not till she had
brought forth her first-born, it is intended that, af-
terward, the reason ceasing, he lived with her, ac-
cording to the law, Exod. 21. 10. 2. That Christ
was the First-Born; and so he might be called,
though his mother had not any other children after
him, according to the language of scripture. Nor
was it without a mystery that Christ is called her
First-Born, for he is the First-born of every crea-
ture, that is, the Heir of all things; and he is the
First-Born among many brethren, that in all things
he may have the pre-eminence. 3. That Joseph
called his name Jesus, according to the direction
given him by God; he was called Jesus Saviour, which was intended in his giving him the
name Jesus, we must accept of him to be our Savi-
or, and, in concurrence with that appointment, we
must call him Jesus, our Saviour.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have the history of our Saviour's infancy,
where we find how early he began to suffer, and that in
him the word of righteousness was fulfilled, before him
began he was called God's Favourer. His birth
brought forth many wise men's solicitor inquiry after Christ, v. 1. 2. 8. 11. Their devout attendance on him, when they found out
where he was, v. 9. 12. III. Christ's flight into Egypt, to avoid the cruelty of Herod, v. 13. 14. IV. The bar-
barous murder of the infants of Bethlehem, v. 16. 18. V. Christ's return out of Egypt into the land of Israel
again, v. 19. 23.

1. NOW when Jesus was born in Beth-
lehem of Judaea in the days of Herod
the king, behold, there came wise men
from the east to Jerusalem, 2. Saying
Where is he that is born King of the Jews?
For we have seen his star in the east, and
are come to worship him. 3. When He-
rod the king had heard these things, he
was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
4. And when he had gathered all the chief
priests and scribes of the people together,
he demanded of them where Christ should
be born. 5. And they said unto him, In
Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written
by the prophet. 6. And thou Bethle-
hem, in the land of Juda, art not the least
among the princes of Juda: for out of

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thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. 7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. 8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

It was a mark of humiliation put upon the Lord Jesus, that though he was the Desire of all nations, yet his coming into the world was little observed and taken notice of; his birth was not regarded: herein he emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. If the son of God must be brought into the world, one might justly expect that he should be received with all the ceremony possible; that crowns and sceptres should immediately have been laid at his feet, and that the high and mighty princes of the world should have been his humble servants; such a Messiah as this the Jews expected, but was not content with the homage of the world, and the world knew him not; nay, he came to his own, and his own received him not; for having undertaken to make satisfaction to his Father for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man, he did it by denying himself in, and despoothing himself of, the honours undoubtedly due to an incarnate Deity; yet, as afterward, so in his birth, some rays of glory out of the darkness that shone; as the greatest instances of his abasement. Though there was the hiding of his power, yet he had beams coming out of his hand, (Hab. S. 4.) enough to condemn the world, and the Jews especially, for their stupidity.

The first who took notice of Christ after his birth, were the shepherds, (Luke 2. 15, &c.) who saw and heard glorious things concerning him, and made them known abroad, to the amazement of all that heard them, v. 17, 18. After that, Simeon and Anna spake of him, by the Spirit, to all that were disposed to heed what they said, Luke 2. 38. Now, one would think, these hints should have been taken by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they should with both arms have embraced the long-looked-for Messiah; but, for aught that appears, he continued nearly two years after at Bethlehem unheeded. Those who have been of these wise men came. Note, Nothing will awaken those that are resolved to be regardless. Oh the amazing stupidity of these Jews! And no less, that of many who are called Christians! Observe,

I. When this enquiry was made concerning Christ; it was in the days of Herod the King. This Herod was an Edomite, made king of Judea by Augustus and Antonius, the then chief rulers of the Roman state, a man made up of falsehood and cruelty; yet he was complimented with the title of Herod the Great. Christ was born in the 35th year of his reign, and notice is taken of this, to shew that the scripture was now departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet; and therefore now was the time for Shiloh to come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be, witness the wise men, Gen. 49. 10.

II. Who and what these wise men were; they are here called Melchizedek—Magicians. Some take it in a good sense; the Magi among the Persians were their philosophers, and their priests; nor would they admit any one for their king who had not first been enrolled among the Magi; others think they dealt in unlawful arts; the word is used of Simon, the sorcerer, (Acts 8. 9, 11.) and of Elymas, the sorcerer, (Acts 13. 6.) nor does the scripture use it in any other sense; and then it was an early int

stance and presence of Christ’s victory over the Devil, when those who had been so much his devotees, became the early adorers even of the infant Jesus; so soon were trophies of his victory over the powers of darkness erected. Well, whatever sort of wise men they were before, now they began to be wise men indeed when they set themselves to inquire of Christ.

This we are sure of, 1. That they were Gentiles, and not belonging to the commonwealth of Israel. The Jews regarded not Christ, but these Gentiles inquired him out. Note, Many times those who are nearest to the means, are furthest from the end. See ch. 8. 11, 12. The respect paid to Christ by these Gentiles was a happy presage and specimen of what would follow, when those who were after off should be made nigh by Christ. 2. That they were scholars, they dealt in arts, curious arts; good scholars should be good Christians, and then they complete their learning when they learn Christ. 3. That they were men of the east, who were noted for their soothsaying. Isa. 2. 6. Arabia is called the land of the east, (Gen. 23. 6.) and the Arabians are called, Men of the east, Judg. 8. 3. The presents which they brought were of all sorts, of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. If the Arabians had done homage to David and Solomon as types of Christ. Jethro and Job were of that country. More than this we have not to say of them. The traditions of the Romish church are frivolous, that they were in number three, (though one of the ancients says that they were fourteen,) that they were kings, and that they lie buried in Canaan, there called the three kings of Colch; we coveted not to be wise above what is written.

III. What induced them to make this inquiry. They, in their country, which was in the east, had seen an extraordinary star, such as they had not seen before; which they took to be an indication of an extraordinary person born in the land of Judea, over which land this star was seen to hover, in the nature of a comet, or a meteor rather, in the lower regions of the air; this differed so much from any thing that was common, that they concluded it to signify something uncommon. Note, Extraordinary appearances of God in the creatures, should put us upon inquiring after his mind and will therein; Christ foretold signs in the heavens. The birth of Christ was notified to the Jewish shepherds by an angel, to the Gentile philosophers by a star; to the Jews it was by a visible sign, to the Gentiles in a mysterious way they were best acquainted with. Some think that that very light which the shepherds saw shining round about them the night after Christ was born, was the very same which, to the wise men who lived at such a distance, appeared as a star; which we cannot easily admit, because the star they had seen in the east, they saw a great while after, leading them to the house where Christ lay; it was a candle set up on purpose to guide them to Christ. The idolaters worshipped the stars as the host of heaven, especially the eastern nations, whence the planets have the names of their idol-gods; we read of a particular star they had in veneration, Amos 5. 26. Thus the stars that had been missed, came to be put to the right use, to lead men to Christ, and so serve as instruments of his salvation. Some think this star put them in mind of Balaam’s prophecy, that a star should come out of Jacob, pointing at a scripture that shall rise out of Israel; see Numb. 24. 17. Balaam came from the mountains of the east, and was one of their wise men. Others impute their inquiry to the general expectation entertained at that time, in those eastern parts, of some great prince to appear, (Titus, in his history, (Lch. v.) takes notice of it;) Plutarchus persusius inerat, antiquus sorcerorum litteris continentis, eo osido tempore forte, ut valescere Oriens,
But though Herod, an Edomite, was troubled, one would have thought Jerusalem should rejoice greatly to hear that her King comes; yet, it seems, all Jerusalem, except the few there that waited for the Conolation of Israel, were troubled with Herod, and were apprehensive of 1 know not what ill consequences of the birth of this new King; that it would involve them in war, or restrain their lusts; they, for their parts, desired no King but Herod; no, not the Messiah himself. Note, The slaying of Sin is foolishly preferred by many to the glorious liberty of the children of God, only because they apprehend some present difficulties attending that necessary revolution of the government in the soul. Herod and Jerusalem were thus troubled, from a mistaken notion that the kingdom of the Messiah would clash and interfere with the secular powers; whereas the Messiah that proclaimed him King, plainly promis ed that his kingdom should begin in the power of this lower world. Note, The reason why the kings of the earth, and the people, oppose the kingdom of Christ, is, because they do not know it, but err concerning it.

V. What assistance they met with in this inquiry from the scribes and the priests, v. 4—6. Nobody can pretend to tell where the King of the Jews is born, this, but Herod expected he should be born. The persons he consulted were, the chief priests, who were now teachers by office; and the scribes, who made it their business to study the law; their minds must keep knowledge, but then the people must inquire the law at their mouth, Mal. 2. 7. It was generally known that Christ should be born at Bethlehem; (John 7. 42.) but Herod would have counsel’s opinion upon it, and more especially where it was no secret, and, that he might be the better satisfied, he had them altogether, all the chief priests, and all the scribes; and deni als of them what was the place, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, where Christ should be born! Many a good question is put with an ill design, so was this by Herod.

The priests and scribes need not take any long time to give this answer to this question; nor do they differ in their opinion, but agree, that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, here called Bethlehem of Judah, to distinguish it from another city of the same name in the land of Zebulun, Josh. 19. 15. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread; the fittest place for him to be born in, who is the true Manna, the bread which came down from heaven, which was given for the life of the world. The proof they produce is taken from Mic. 5. 2. where it is foretold, that though Bethlehem should be but as among the thousands of Judah, (so it is in Micah,) no very populous place, yet it shall be found not the least among the princes of Judah; (so it is here;) for Bethlehem’s honour lay not, as that of other cities, in the multitude of the people, but in the magnificence of the princes it produced. Though, upon some accounts, Bethlehem was little, yet herein it was the prince of the cities of Israel, that the Lord should count, when he wrote, the people, that this Man, even the Man Jesus Christ was born there, Ps. 87. 6. Out of thee shall come a Governor, the King of the Jews. Note, Christ will be a Saviour to those only who are willing to take him for their Governor. Bethlehem was the city of David, and David the glory of Bethlehem; there, therefore, must David’s Son and Successor be born. There was a famous well at the gate of Bethlehem, by the gate, which David longed to drink of; (2. Sam. 23. 15.) in Christ we have not only bread enough and to spare, but may come and take also of the water of life freely. Observe here, how Jews and Gentiles compare notes about Jesus Christ. The Gentiles know the time of it by a star; the
Jews knew the place of it by the scriptures; and so, they are capable of informing one another. Note, It would contribute much to the increase of knowledge, if we did thus mutually communicate what we know. Men grow rich by bartering and exchanging, so, if we have knowledge to communicate to others, they will be ready to communicate to us; thus many shall discourse, shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

VII. The bloody project and design of Herod, occasioned by this inquiry, v. 7. 8. Herod was now an old man; had reigned thirty-five years; this King was but newly born, and not likely to enterprise any thing considerable for many years; yet Herod is jealous, and his courtiers frown, and Herod's head cannot endure to think of successors, much less of rivals; and therefore nothing less than the blood of this infant King will satisfy him; and he will not give himself liberty to think that, if this new-born Child should be indeed the Messiah, in opposing him, or making any attempts upon him, he would be found fighting against God, than which nothing is more vain, nothing more dangerous. Passion has got the mastery of reason and conscience.

Note, Now, 1. See how cunningly he laid the project; (v. 7, 8.) He privily called the wise men, to talk with them about this matter. He would not openly own his fears and jealousies; it would be his disgrace to let the wise men know them, and dangerous to let the people know them. Siners are often tormented with secret fears, which they keep to themselves. Herod learns of the wise men the time when the star appeared, that he might take his measures accordingly; and then employs them to inquire further, and bids them bring him an account. All this might look suspicious, if he had not covered it with a shew of religion; that I may come and worship him also. Note, The greatest wickedness often conceals itself under a mask of piety. Absalom cloaks his rebellious project with a vow.

2. See how strangely he was befuddled and infatuated in this, that he trusted it with the wise men, and did not choose some other managers, that would have been true to his interests. It was but seven miles from Jerusalem; how easily might he have sent spies to watch the wise men, who might have as soon have found out the Child as they would have. Note, God can hide his own people from the eye of the church's enemies, by those methods by which they might easily destroy the church; when he intends to lead princes away spoiled, his way is to make the judges fools.

9. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. 11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. 12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
II. We should be glad of every thing that will shew us the way to Christ. This star was sent to meet the wise men, and to conduct them into the presence-chamber of the King; by this master of the ceremonies they were introduced, to have their audience. Now God fulfils his promise of meeting those that are disposed to rejoice, and work righteousness, (Isa. 64. 5.) by sending this their precept.

Let the righteous rejoice that seek the Lord, Ps. 105. 3. Note, God is pleased sometimes to favour young converts with such tokens of his love as are very encouraging to them, in reference to the difficulties they meet with at their setting out in the ways of God.

II. See how they made their address to him when they had found him, v. 11. We may well imagine their expectations were raised to find this royal Babe, so high slighted by the nation, yet honourably attended at home; and what a disappointment it was to them, when they found a cottage was his palace, and his own poor mother all the retinue he had! Is this the Saviour of the world? Is this the King of the Jews, nay, and the Prince of the kings of the earth? Yes, this is he, who, though he was rich, yet, for our sakes, became thus poor. However, these wise men were so wise as to see through this veil, and in this despised Babe to discern the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father; they did not think themselves balked or baffled in their inquiry; but, as having found the King they sought, they presented themselves first, and then their gifts, to him.

1. They presented themselves to him; they fell down, and worshipped him. We do not read that they bowed to him, though he was in the height of his royal grandeur; but to this Babe, they gave this honour, not only as to a King, (then they would have done the same to Herod,) but as to a God. Note, All that have found Christ fall down before him; they adore him, and submit themselves to him. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him. It will be the wisdom of the wisest of men, and by this it will appear they know Christ, and understand themselves and their true interests, if they be the humble, faithful worshippers of the Lord Jesus.

2. They presented their gifts to him. In the eastern nations, when they did homage to their kings, they made them presents; thus the subject of the kings of Sheba to Christ is spoken of, (Ps. 72. 10.) They shall bring presents, and offer gifts. See Isa. 60. 6. Note, With ourselves, we must give up all that we have to Jesus Christ; and if we be sinners, who surrender ourselves to him, we shall not be unwilling to part with what is dearest to us, and most valuable, to him and for him; nor are our gifts accepted, unless we first present ourselves to him living sacrifices. God had respect to Abel, and then to his offering. The gifts they presented were, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, money, and money's-worth. See Luke 1. 34 this for a seasonable relief to Joseph and Mary in their distresses. These were the products of their own country; what God favours us with, we must honour him with. Some think there was a significance in their gifts; they offered him gold, as a King, paying him tribute; to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's; frankincense, as God, for they honoured God with the smoke of incense; and myrrh, as a Man that should die, for myrrh was used in embalming dead bodies.

III. See how they left him when they had made their address to him, v. 12. Herod appointed them to bring him word what discoveries they had made, and, it is probable, they would have done so, if they had not been countermanded, not suspecting then God thus using his tools in a wicked design. Those that mean honestly and well themselves are easily made to believe that others do so too, and cannot think the world is so bad as really it is; but the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation. We do not find that the wise men promised to come back to Herod, and, if they had, it must have been with the usual prisoner's file. God did not take them, and prevented the mischief Herod designed to the Child Jesus, and the trouble it would have been to the wise men to have been made involuntarily accessory to it. They were warned of God, χείρισθη τοισωδίαν—ορακολόν τοις ῥυποσισκολογημένοις—an oracular intimation. Some think that it intimates that they asked counsel of God, and that this was the answer. Note, Those that act cautiously, and are sincere and serious, if they apply themselves to God for direction, may expect to be led in the right way. They were warned not to return to Herod, or to Jerusalem; these were unworthy to have reports brought them concerning Christ, that might have seen with their own eyes, and would not. They departed into their own country another way, to bring the tidings to their countrymen; but it is strange that we never hear any more of these wise men, nor that they or their did not afterwards attend him in the temple, whom they had worshipped in the cradle. However, the direction they had from God in their return would be a further confirmation of their faith in this Child, as the Lord from heaven.

13. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. 14. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; 15. And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

We have here Christ's flight into Egypt, to avoid the cruelty of Herod, which was the effect of the wise men's inquiry after him; for, before that, the obscurity he lay in was his protection. It was but little respect (compared with what should have been) that was paid to Christ in his infancy; yet even that, instead of honouring him among his people, did but excite his persecutors. No now observe,

I. The command given to Joseph concerning it, v. 13. Joseph knew neither the danger the Child was in, nor how to escape it; but God, by an angel, tells him both in a dream, as before he directed him in like manner what to do, ch. 1. 20. Joseph, before his alliance to Christ, had not been wont to converse with angels. The truth here is, that spiritually related to Christ by faith, have that communion and correspondence with Heaven, which before they were strangers to.

2. Joseph is here told what their danger was; Herod will seek the young Child to destroy him. Note, God is acquainted with all the cruel projects and purposes of the enemies of his church. I know thy rage against me, saith God to Sennacherib, Isa. 37. 28. How early was the blessed Jesus involved in trouble! Usually, even those whose ripper years
are attended with toils and perils have a peaceable and quiet infancy; but it was not so with the blessed Jesus: his life and sufferings were all together; he was born a Man slain with, as Jeremiah said (Jer. 15. 10), whom was sanctified from the womb, Jer. 1. 5. Both Christ the Head, and the church his body, agree in saying, Many a time have they afflicted me, from my youth up. Pharaoh's cruelty fastens upon the Hebrews' children, and the great respect they show them in sparing the man-child as soon as it should be born, Rev. 12. 1, 2.

2. He is directed what to do, to escape the danger; Take the young Child, and flee into Egypt. Thus early must Christ give an example to his own rule; (ch. 10. 23.) When they persecute you in one city, flee to another. He that came to die for us, when his hour was not yet come, fled for his own safety. Self-preservation, being a branch of the law of nature, is eminently a point of the law of God. Flee; but why into Egypt? Egypt was infantile for idolatry, tyranny, and enmity to the people of God; it had been a house of bondage to Israel, and particularly cruel to the infants of Israel; in Egypt, as much as in Ramah, Rachel had been weeping for her children; yet that is appointed to be a place of rest for the young Child Jesus. Note, God, when he pleases, can make the worst of places serve the best of purposes; for the earth he upbraideth the Lord's; he makes what use he pleases of it: sometimes the earth helps the woman, Rev. 12. 26. God, who made Moab a shelter to his outcasts, makes Egypt a refuge for his Son. This may be considered.

(1.) As a trial of the faith of Joseph and Mary. They might be tempted to think, if this Child be the Son of God, as we are told he is, has he no other way to secure himself from a danger that is a warm, than by such a mean and inglorious retreat as this? Cannot he summon legions of angels to be his life-guard, or cherubims with flaming swords to keep this tree of life? Cannot he strike Herod dead, or wither the hand that is stretched out against him, and so save us the trouble of this removal? They had been lately told that he should be the Glory of his people Israel; and is the land of Israel so soon become too hot for him? But we find not that they made any such objections; their faith, being tried, was found firm, and they believe this is the son of God, though they see no miracle wrought for his preservation; but they are put to the use of ordinary means. Joseph had great honour put upon him in being the husband of the blessed Virgin; but that honour has trouble attending it; for all his honours have in this world; Joseph must take the young Child, and carry him into Egypt; and now it appeared how well God had provided for the young Child and his mother, in appointing Joseph to stand in so near a relation to them; now the gold which the wise men brought would stand them in stead to bear their charges. God foresaw his people's distresses, and provides against them beforehand, and God intimates the continuance of his care and guidance, when he said, Be thou there until I bring thee word; so that he must expect to hear from God again, and not stir without fresh orders. Thus God will keep his people still in a dependence upon him.

(2.) As an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. God foresaw his people's distresses, and provides against them beforehand, and God intimates the continuance of his care and guidance, when he said, Be thou there until I bring thee word; so that he must expect to hear from God again, and not stir without fresh orders. Thus God will keep his people still in a dependence upon him.

(3.) As a token of God's displeasure against the Jews, who took so little notice of him; justly does he leave those who had slighted him. We see also here an earnest of his favour to the Gentiles, to whom the apostles were to bring the gospel when the Jews rejected it. If Egypt entertain Christ when he is forced out of Judea, it will not be long ere he be said, Blessed be Egypt my people, Isa. 19. 25.

II. Joseph's obedience to this command, v. 14. The journey would be inconvenient and perilous both to the young Child and to his mother; they were but poorly provided for it, and were likely to meet with cold entertainment in Egypt; yet Joseph was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, made no objection, nor was dilatory in his obedience. As soon as he had received his orders, he immediately arose, and went away by night: the same brings it to such a pass, as to seem, that he received the orders. Note, Those that would make sure work of their obedience, must make quick work of it. Now Joseph went out, as his father Abraham did, with an implicit dependence upon God, not knowing whither he went, Heb. 11. 8. Joseph and his wife, having little, had little to take care of in this remove, and abundance encumbers a necessary flight. If rich people have the advantage of the poor while they possess what they have, the poor have the advantage of the rich when they are called to part with it. Joseph took the young Child and his mother. Some observe, that the young Child is put first, as the divine Person, and Mary is called, not the wife of Joseph, but, which will be of greater dignity, the mother of the young Child. This was the first Joseph that was driven from Canaan to Egypt for a shelter from the anger of his brethren; this Joseph ought to be welcome there for the sake of that.

If we may credit tradition, at their entrance into Egypt, happening to go into a temple, all the images of their gods were overthrown by an invisible power, and fell, like Dagon before the ark, according to that prophecy, The Lord shall come into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, Isa. 19. 1. They continued in Egypt till the death of Herod, which, some think, was seven years, others think, not so many months. There they were at a distance from the temple and the temple was at a distance of the idolaters; but God sent them thither, and did not leave them mercy, and not sacrifice. Though they were far from priests of the Lord, they had with them the Lord of the temple. A forced absence from God's ordinances, and a forced presence with wicked people, may be the lot, are not the sin, yet cannot but be the grief, of good people.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in all this— that scripture, (Hos. 11. 1.) Out of Egypt have I called my son. Of all the evangelists, Matthew takes most notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what concerned Christ, because his gospel was first published among the Jews, with whom that would add much strength and lustre to it. Now this word of the prophet undoubtedly referred to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, in which God owned them for his son, his first-born; (Exod. 4. 22.) but it is here applied, by way of analogy, to Christ, the Head of the church. Note, The scripture has many accomplishments, so full and copious is it, and so well ordered in all things! God is every day fulfilling the scripture. Scripture is not of private interpretation, we must give it its full sense. When Israel was a child, then I loved him; and though I loved him, I suffered him to be a great while in Egypt; but because I loved him, in due time I called him out of Egypt. They that read this, must, in their thoughts, not only look back, but look forward; that which has been shall be again; (Ecc. 1. 9.) and the manner of expression intimates this; for it is not said, I called him,
but, I called my son, out of Egypt. Note, It is no new thing for God's sons to be in Egypt, in a straitened condition, and in a house of shame, they shall be fetched out. They may be hid in Egypt, but they shall not be left there. All the elect of God, being by nature children of wrath, are born in a spiritual Egypt, and in conversion are effectually called out. It might be objected against Christ, that he had been in Egypt. Must the sun of Righteousness arise out of that land of darkness? But this shews that to be no such strange thing: Israel was brought out of Egypt, to be advanced to the highest honours; and this is but the doing the same thing again.

16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

17. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,

18. In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Here is, 1. Herod's resentment of the departure of the wise men. He waited long for their return; he hopes though they be slow, they will be sure, and he shall crush his Rival at his first appearing; but he hears, upon enquiry, that they are gone by another way, which increases his jealousy, and makes him suspect they are in the interest of this new King, which made him exceeding wroth; and he is the more desperate and outrageous for his being disappointed. Note, Invertebrate corruption swells the higher for the obstructions it meets with in a sinful pursuit.

II. His pious contrivance, notwithstanding this, to destroy him that is born king of the Jews. If he could not reach him by a particular execution, he doubted not but to involve him in a general stroke, which, like the sword of war, should devour one as well as another. This would be sure work; and thus those that would destroy their own iniquity, must be sure to destroy all their iniquities. Herod was an Edomite, enmity to Israel was bred in the bone with him. Doeg was an Edomite, who, for David's sake, slew all the priests of the Lord. It was strange that Herod could find any so inhuman as to be employed in such a bloody and barbarous piece of work; but wicked hands never want wicked tools to work with. Little children have always been taken under the special protection, not only of human laws, but of human nature; yet these are sacrificed to the rage of this tyrant, under whom, as under Nero, innocence is the least security. Herod was, throughout his reign, a bloody man; it was not long before, that he destroyed the whole Sanhedrin, or bench of judges; but blood to the blood-thirsty is like drink to those in a dropsy. *Quo plus sunt potes, plus situantur aquae. The more they drink, the more thirsty they become.* Herod was now about seventy years old, so that an infant, at this time under two years old, was not likely ever to grow to any great height. Note, Herod was violent over fond of his own children, or of their preferment, having formerly slain two of his own sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and his son Antipater after this, but five days before he himself died; so that it was purely to gratify his own brutish lusts of pride and cruelty that he did this. All is fish that comes to hook.

Observe what large measures he took. 1. As to time; He slew all from two years old and under. It is probable that the blessed Jesus was at this time not a year old; yet Herod took in all the infants under two years old, that he might be sure not to miss of his prey. He cares not how many heads fall, which he allows to be innocent, provided that one be not which he supposes to be guilty. 2. As to place; He kills all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the coasts thereof, in all the villages of that city. This was being *overmuch wicked* (Ecc. 7. 17.) Note, An unbridled wrath, armed with an unlawful power, often transports men to the most absurd and unreasonable instances of cruelty. It was no unrighteous thing with God to permit this; every life is forfeited to his justice as soon as he commences; that is, when one man's disobedience, introduced death with it; and we are not to suppose any thing more than that common guilt, we are not to suppose that these children were sinners above all that were in Israel, because they suffered such things. God's judgments are a great deal. The diseases and deaths of little children are proofs of original sin. But we must look upon this murder of the infants under another character. They were but the instruments of God's vengeance, and persecution commence against Christ and his kingdom! *Think ye that he came to send peace on the earth? No, but a sword, such a sword as this, ch. 10. 34, 35.* A passive testimony was hereby given to the Lord Jesus. As when he was in the womb, he was witnessed to by a child's leaping in the womb for joy at his approach, so now, at two years old, he had contemporary witnesses to him of the same age. The killing of children was the last of the days of the child, for him for them. These were the infantry of the noble army of martyrs. If these infants were thus baptized with blood, though it were their own, into the church triumphant, it could not be said but that, with what they got in heaven, they were abundantly recompensed for what they lost on earth. Out of the mouths of these babes and sucklings God did perfect praise; otherwise, it was not good to the Almighty that he should lie idle.

The tradition of the Greek church, and (we have it in the Ethiopic missal,) is, that the number of the children slain was 14,000; but that is very absurd. I believe, if the births of the male children in the weekly bills were computed, there would not be found so many under two years old, in one of the most populous cities in the world, much less in Bethlehem, a small town, that was not more a fourth part of it. But it is an instance of the vanity of tradition. It is strange that Josephus does not relate this story; but he wrote long after St. Matthew, and it is probable that he therefore would not relate it, because he would not so far countenance the Christian history, for he was a zealous Jew; but, to be sure, if it had not been true and well attested, he would have contested it. Macrobius, a heathen writer, tells us, that Timeomus, the son of the infant, and the natural son of Herod, among the children he ordered to be slain under two years old, slew his own son, he passed this jest upon him, That it was better to be Herod's swine than his son. The usage of the country forbade him to kill a swine, but nothing could restrain him from killing his son. Some think that he had a young child at nurse in Bethlehem; others think that, through mistake, two events are confused—the murder of the infants was the murder of his son Antipater. But for the church of Rome to put the Holy Innocents, as they call them, into their calendar, and observe a day in memory of them, while they have so often, by their barbarous
massacres, justified, and even out-done Herod, is but to do as their predecessors did, who built the tombs of the prophets, while they themselves filled up the same measure.

Some observe another design of Providence in the murder of the infants. By all the prophecies of the Old Testament it appears that Bethlehehm was the place, and this the time, of the Messiah's nativity; now all the children of Bethlehehm, born at this time, being murdered, and Jesus only escaping, none but Jesus could pretend to be the Messiah. Herod now thought he had baffled all the Old-Testament prophecies, and defeated the indications of the star, and the devotions of the wise men, by ridding the country of this new King; having burst the hive, he concludes he had killed the master bee; but God in heaven laughs at him, and has him in derision. Whatever cruelty rude devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand.

1. In the place of this mourning. The noise of it was heard from Bethlehehm to Ramah; for Herod's cruelty extended itself to all the coasts of Bethlehehm, even into the lot of Benjamin, among the children of Rachel. Some think the country about Bethlehehm was called Rachel, because there she died, and was buried. Rachel's sepulchre was hard by Bethlehehm, Gen. 35. 16, 19. Compare 1 Sam. 10. 2. Rachel had her heart much set upon children; the son she died in travoul of, she called Benjamin—the son of her sorrow. These mothers were like Rachel, laid near Rachel's grave, and many of them descended from Rachel; and therefore their lamentations are elegantly represented by Rachel's weeping.

2. In the degree of this mourning. It was lamentation and weeping, and great mourning; all little enough to express the sense they had of this aggravated calamity. There was a great cry in Egypt when the first-born were slain, and so there was here when the youngest was slain; for whom we naturally have a particular tenderness. Here was a representation of this world we live in. We hear in it lamentation, and weeping, and mourning, and see the tears of the oppressed, some upon one account, and some upon another. Our way lies through a vale of tears. This sorrow was so great, that they could not bear it. They hardened themselves in it, and took a pleasure in it. They could not be god, there is no occasion of grief in this world, no, not that which is supplied by sin itself, that will justify us in refusing to be comforted! They should not be comforted, because they are not, that is, they are not in the land of the living, are not as they were, in their mothers' embraces. If, indeed, they could not, there might be some excuse for sorrowing as though we had been wholly dead, for we know they are not lost, but gone before; if we forget that they are, we lose the best ground of our comfort, 1 Thess. 4. 13. Some make this great grief of the Bethlehemites to be a judgment upon them for their contempt of Christ. That they would not rejoice for the birth of the Son of God, are justly made to weep for the death of their own sons; for they only were spared at the tidings the shepherds brought them, but did not welcome them.

The quoting of this prophecy might serve to obviate an objection which some would make against this account. 'Why, said they, does not this prophecy, xx. 16, 17. 'Then will I raise up unto them a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him,' refer to the Messiah?'' Yes, for so it was foretold, and the scripture must be accomplished. And besides, if we look further into this prophecy, we shall find that 'the bitter weeping in Ramah was but a prelude to the greatest joy, for it follows, Thy work shall be rewarded, and there is hope in the end. The worse things are, the sooner they will mend. Unto them a Child was born, sufficient to repair their losses.

19. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20. Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. 21. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither; notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: 23. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

We have here Christ's return out of Egypt into the land of Israel again. Egypt may serve to sojourn in, or take shelter in, for a while, but not to abide in. Christ was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and therefore to them he must return. Observe, I. What it was that made way for his return—the death of Herod, which happened not long after the murder of the infants; some think not above three months. Such quick work did divine vengeance make! Note, Herods must die; proud tyrants, that were the terror of the mighty, and the oppressors of the Godly, 'in the land of the living,' their day must come to fall, and down to this day they do. Who art thou then, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die? (Isa. 51. 12, 13.) especially considering that at death, not only their envy and hatred are perished, (Ecc. 9. 6.) and they cease from troubling, (Job 3. 17.) but they are punished. Of all sins, the guilt of innocent blood fills the measure soonest. It is a dreadful account which Josephus gives of the death of this same Herod, Ant. xix. 12, 1. He was brought up in a state of luxury and debauchery. Being afflicted with a disease which burned him inwardly with an inexpressible torture; that he was insatiably greedy of meat; had the colic, and gout, and dropsy; such an intolerable stench attended his disease, that none could come near him; and so passionate and impatient was he, that he was a torment to himself, and a terror to all that attended him: his innate cruelty, being thus exasperated, made him more barbarous than ever; having ordered his own son to be put to death, he imprisoned many of the nobility and gentry, and ordered that as soon as he was dead they should be killed; but that execution was prevented. See what kind of men have been the enemies and persecutors of Christ and his followers? Few have opposed Christianity but such
The providence of God commonly so orders it, that his people shall not want a quiet retreat from the storm and from the tempest; when one climate becomes hot and scorching, another shall be kept more cool and temperate. Galilee lay far north; Samaria lay between it and Judea; thither they were sent, to Nazareth, a city upon a hill, in the centre of the lot of Zebulun; there the mother of our Lord lived, when she conceived that holy thing; and, probably, Joseph lived there too, Luke 1. 26. 27. There they were unknown, and were among their relations; the most proper place for them to be in. There they continued, and from thence our Saviour was called Jesus of Nazareth, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, for, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? In this is said to be fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarite; which may be looked upon, (1.) As a name of honour and dignity, though primarily it signifies, no more than, a man of Nazareth; there is an allusion, or mystery in it, speaking Christ to be, (1.) The Man, the Branch, spoken of, Isaiah 11. 1. The word there is Nitzar, which signifies, either a branch, or the city Nazareth: in being denominated from that city, he is declared to be that Branch. (2.) It speaks him of the great promise of his people, Deut. 23. 15. These Naze- rites were a type and figure, (especially Samson, Judg. 13. 5.) and Joseph, who is called a Nazarite among his brethren, (Gen. 49. 26.) and to whom that which was prescribed concerning the Nazarites, has reference, Num. 6. 2, &c. Not that Christ was, strictly, a Nazarite, for he drank wine, and touched dead bodies; but he was eminently so, both as he was singularly holy, and as he was known, and devotion and dedication set apart to the honour of God in the work of our redemption, as Samson was to save Israel. And it is a name we have all reason to rejoice in, and to know him by. Or, (2.) As a name of reproach and contempt. To be called a Nazarite, was to be called a deplorable man, a man from whom no good was to be expected, and to whom no respect was to be paid. The Devil first fastened upon him, and subjected him to ruin and shame, and justly people against him, and it stuck as a nick-name to him and his followers. Now this was not particularly foretold by any one prophet, but, in general, it was spoken by the prophets, that he should be despised and rejected of men, (Isa. 53. 3.) a Worm and no man, (Ps. 22. 6. 7.) that he should be an Alien to his brethren, Ps. 69. 7, 8. Let no name of reproach for religion’s sake seem hard to us, when our Master was himself called a Nazarite.

CHAP. III.

At the story of this chapter, concerning the baptism of John, begins the gospel; (Mark, 1. 1.) what went before is but Preface or Introduction; this is “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And Peter answers the same date, note 1. 22, beginning from the baptism of John, for then Christ began first to appear in him, and then to appear to him, and by him to the world.” Here is, 1. The glorious rising of the morning-star—John the Baptist, v. 1. 1. The doctrine he preached, v. 2. 2. The fulfilling of the scripture in him, v. 3. 4. His manner of life, v. 4. 4. The resort of multitudes to him, and their submission to his baptism, v. 5. 6. 5. His sermon that he preached to the Pharisees and Sadducees, wherein he endeavours to bring them to repentance, (v. 7—10.) and so to bring them to Christ, v. 11. 12. The more glorious shining forth of the sun of righteousness, immediately after; when John’s head is delivered to the beasts of judgment, John 19. 12—15. 2. The honour done to him by the descent of the Spirit upon him, and a voice from heaven, v. 16, 17.

N those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea,
2. And saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. 5. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. 6. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

We have here an account of the preaching and baptism of John, which were the dawning of the gospel-day. Observe,

1. The time when he appeared. In those days, (v. 1.) or, after those days, long after what was recorded in the foregoing chapter, which left the Child Jesus in his infancy. In those days, in the time appointed of the Father for the beginning of the gospel, when the fulness of time was come, which was often thus spoken of in the Old Testament, in those days. Now the last of Daniel's weeks began, or rather, the latter half of the last week, when the Messiah was to confirm the covenant with marks remarkable concerning either of them, till they were about thirty years old. Nothing is recorded in their childhood and youth, but the greatest part of their life is tempus exhor.—swopt up in darkness and obscurity: these children differ little in outward appearance from other children, as the heir, while he is under age, differs nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all. And this was to shew, 1. That even then when God was acting as the Saviour, verily he is a God that hideth himself, (Isa. 45. 13.) The Lord is in this place, and I know it not, Gen. 28. 16. Our beloved stands behind the wall long, before he looks forth at the windows, Cant. 2. 9. 2. That our faith must principally have an eye to Christ in his office and undertaking, for there is the display of his power; but in his person is the hiding of his power. All this while, Christ was God-man; yet we are not told what he said or did, till he appeared as a Prophet; and then, Hear ye him. 3. That young men, though well qualified, should not be forward to put forth themselves in public service, but be humble, and modest, and self-diffident, swift to hear, and slow to speak.

Matthew says nothing of the conception and birth of John, the Baptist. St. Luke, but finds him at full age, as if dropped from the clouds to preach in the wilderness. For above three hundred years the church had been without prophets; those lights had been long put out, that he might be the more desired, who was to be the great Prophet. After Malachi there was no prophet, nor any pretender to prophecy, till John the Baptist, to whom the Prophet Malachi referred, spoke more directly, than any of the Old-Testament prophets had done; (Mal. 3. 1.) I send my messenger. 11. The place where he appeared first. In the wilderness of Judea. It was not an uninhabited desert, but a part of the country not so thickly peopled, nor so much inclosed into fields and vineyards, as other parts were; it was such a wilderness as had six cities and their villages in it, which are named, Josh. 13. 31, 62. In these cities and villages John preached, for thereabouts he had hitherto lived, being born hard by, in Hebron; the scenes of his action began there, where he had long spent his time in contemplation: and often when he showed himself to Israel, he shewed how well he loved retribution, as far as would consist with his business. The word of the Lord found John here in a wilderness. Note, No place is so remote as to shut us out from the visits of divine grace; nay, commonly the sweetest intercourse the saints have with Heaven, is when they are withdrawn farthest from the noise of this world. John was in the desert, that David penned the 63d Psalm, which speaks so much of the sweet communion he then had with God, Hos. 2. 14. In a wilderness the law was given; and as the Old Testament, so the New Testament, Israel was first found in a desert land, and there God led him about and instructed him, Deut. 32. 10. John Baptist was a priest of the order of Aaron, yet we find him preaching in a wilderness, and never officiating in the temple; but Christ, who was not a Son of Aaron, is yet often found in the temple, and sitting there as one having authority; so it was foretold, Mal. 3. 1. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; not the messenger that was to prepare his way. This intimated that the preparation of Christ was to thrust out that of Aaron, and direct it to a far higher and more wonderful end. The beginning of the gospel in a wilderness, speaks comfort to the deserts of the Gentile world. Now must the prophecies be fulfilled, I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, Isa. 41. 18, 19. The wilderness shall be a fruitful field, Isa. 32. 15. And the desert shall rejoice, Isa. 33. 1, 2. The Septuagint reads, the desert of Jordan, the very wilderness in which John preached. In the Roman church, who are those who call themselves hermits, and pretend to fellow John; but when they say of Christ, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth, ch. 24. 26. There was a seducer that led his followers into the wilderness, Acts 21. 38.

III. His preaching. This he made his business. He came, not fighting, nor disputing, but preaching; (v. 2.) Repent ye. He preached this in Judea, among those that were called Jews, and made a profession of religion; for even they need repentance. He preached it, not in Jerusalem, but in the wilderness of Judea, among the plain country people; for even those who think themselves most out of the way of temptation, and furthest from the vanities and vices of the town, cannot wash their hands in innocency, but must do it in repentance. John Baptist's business was to call men to repent of their sins; Meramoth.—Bethink yourselves; • Admit a second thought, to correct the errors of the first—an after-thought. Consider your ways, change your minds, as you have heard, and think again. Note, True penitents have other thoughts of God and Christ, and sin and holiness, and this world and the other, than they have had, and stand otherwise affected toward them. The change of the mind produces a change of the way. Those who are truly sorry for what they have done amiss, will be careful to do no more. This repentance is necessary both in the external command of God; (Acts 17. 30.) and a necessary preparative and qualification for the comforts of the gospel of Christ. If the heart of man had continued upright and unsteadied, divine consolations might have been received without this painiful operation preceding; but, being sinful, it must be first pains
The conviction the a a and, startling John this John a temporal (2.) that Kindness 8. gi-eat make to more meant It jm-on way. ” re/ient. 23.) a so John John that John the being the voice made should the kingdom, he' (Luke 2. 19.) also is Paul, and what is Ananias' loyal subjects of it. It is a kingdom of heaven, not of this world, a spiritual kingdom: its original from heaven, its tendency to heaven. John preached this at hand; then it was at the door; to us it is come, by the pouring out of the Spirit, and the full exhibition of the riches of gospel-grace. Now, (1.) This is a great inducement to us to repent. There is nothing like the consideration of divine grace to break the heart, in all, in every heart, of all, in every evangelical repentance, that flows from a sight of Christ, from a sense of his love, and the hopes of pardon and forgiveness through him. Kindness in conquering; abused kindness, humiliating and melfting. What a wretch was I to sin against such grace, against the law and love of such a kingdom! (2.) It is a great encouragement to us to repent; Re- pent, for your sins shall be pardoned upon your repentance. Run to a way of grace and kingdom, and he will, through Christ, return you to a way of mercy. The proclamation of pardon discovers, and fetches in, the malefactor who before fled and absconded. Thus are we drawn to it with the cords of a man and the bonds of love.

IV. The prophecy that was fulfilled in him, v. 3. This is he that was spoken of in the beginning of that part of the prophecy of Isaiahs, which is mostly evangelical, and which points at gospel-times and gospel-grace; see Isa. 40. 3, 4. John is here spoken of. 1. As the voice of one crying in the wilderness. John owned it himself; (John 1. 23.) I am the voice, and that is all. God is the Speaker, who makes known his mind by John, as a man does by his voice. The word of God must be received as such; (1 Thess. 2. 13.) what also is Paul, and what is Ananias' but the voice! John is called the voice, even גלוס —the voice of one crying aloud, which is startling and awakening. Christ is called the Word, which, being distinct and articulate, is more instructive. John, as the voice, outraged men, and then Christ, as the Word, taught them; as we find, Rev. 14. 2. The voice of many waters, and of a great thunder, made way for the melodious voice of harpers and the new song, v. 2. Some observe that, as Sam-son's mother must drink no strong drink, yet he was designed to be a strong man; so John Baptist's father was struck dumb, and yet he was designed to be the voice of one crying. When the crier's voice is be- gotten of a dumb father, it shews the excellency of the power to be of God, and not of man. 2. As one whose business it was to prepare the way of the Lord. John Baptist make his patha straight; so it was said of him before he was born, that he should make ready a people prepared for the Lord, (Luke 1. 17.) as Christ's harbinger and forerunner; he was such a one as intimated the nature of Christ's kingdom, for he came not in the gaudy dress of a herald at arms, but in the homely one of a hermit. Officers are sent before great men to clear the way; so John prepares the way of the Lord. (1.) He himself did so among the men of that generation. In the Jewish church and nation, at that time, all was out of course; there was a great decay of piety, the vitals of religion were corrupted and eaten out by the traditions and injunctions of the elders. The Scribes and Pharisees, that is, the greatest hypo- crites in the world, had the key of knowledge, and the key of government, at the same time, generally, extremely proud of their privileges, confident of justification by their own righteousness, insensible of sin; and though now under the most humbling providences, being lately made a province of the Roman Empire, yet they were unhumbled; they were much in the same temper as they were in Malachi's time, insolent and haughty, and ready to contradict the word of God: now John was sent to tear these things down; to shew them their own opinion of themselves, and to shew them their sins, that the doctrine of Christ might be the more ac- ceptable and effectual. (2.) His doctrine of repentance and humiliation is still as necessary as it was then to prepare the way of the Lord. Note, There is a great deal to be done, to make way for Christ into a soul, to bow the heart for the reception of the Son of David; (2 Sam. 19. 14.) as they did to this, then the discovery of sin, and a conviction of the insufficiency of our own righteousness. That which lets will, until it be taken out of the way; prejudices must be removed, high thoughts brought down, and captivated to the obedience of Christ. Gates of brass must be broken, and bars of iron cut asunder, ere the everlasting doors be opened for the King of glory to come in. The way of sin and Satan is a crooked way; to pre- pare a way for Christ, the paths must be made straight, Heb. 12. 13.

V. The garb in which he appeared, the figure he made, and the manner of his life, v. 4. They who expected the Messiah as a temporal prince, would think that his forerunner must come in great pomp and splendour, that his equipage should be very magnificent and gay; but it proves quite contrary; he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, but mean in the eye of the world; and, as Christ himself, having no form or comeliness; to intimate betimes, that the glory of Christ's kingdom was to be spiri- tual, and the subjects of it such as ordinarily were either found by it, or made by it, poor and despised, who derived their honours, pleasures, and riches, from another world.

1. His dress was in a loin. This same John had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; he did not go in long clothing, as the scribes, or soft clothing, as the courtiers, but in the clothing of a country-husbandman: for he lived in a country-place, and suited his habit to his habita- tion. Note, It is good for us to accommodate our- selves to the place and condition which God, in his providence, has put us in. John appeared in this dress, (1.) To shew that, like his Forerunner, and his generation, and the delights and gaieties of it. Behold an Israelite indeed! These that are lowly in heart should shew it by a holy negligence and insufficiency in their attire; and not make the putting on of apparel their adorning, nor value others by their attire. (2.) To shew that he was a prophet, for prophets wore rough garments, as mortified men; (Zech. 13. 4.) and especially, to shew that he was the Elias, who is to be the forerunner of the day of the Lord, as Elias was the forerunner of the day of the Lord. Take notice of the character of Elias; that he was a hairy man, (which, some think, is meant of the hairy garments he wore,) and that he was girt with a gir- dle of leather about his loins, 2 Kings 1. 8. John Baptist appears no way inferior to him in mortifica- tion; this therefore is that Elias that was to come. (3.) To shew that he was a man of resolution; his
girdle was not fine, such as were then commonly worn, but it was strong, it was a leathern girdle; and blessed is that servant, whom His Lord, when He comes, will find with his talents, Luke 12. 33. 1 Pet. 1. 13.

2. His diet was plain; his meat was locusts and wild honey: not as if he never ate any thing else; but these he frequently fed upon, and made many meals of them, when he retired into solitary places, and continued long there for contemplation. Locusts were a sort of flying insect, very good for food, and allowed as clean; (Lev. 11. 23.) they required little dressing, and were light, and easy of digestion, whence it is reckoned among the infirmities of old age, that the grasshopper, or locust, is then a burden to the stomach, Eccl. 12. 5. Wild honey was that which Canaan flowed with, 1 Sam. 14. 26. Either it was gathered immediately, as it fell in the dew, or rather, as it was found in the hollows of trees and rocks, where bees built, that were not like those in hives, under the care and inspection of men. This intimates that he ate sparingly, a little served his turn; a man would be long ere he filled his belly with locusts and wild honey: John Baptist came neither eating nor drinking, (ch. 11. 18.)—not with the curiosity, formality, and familiarity that other people do. He was so entirely taken up with spiritual things, that he could seldom find time to set a table. (v. 1.) This agreed with the doctrine he preached of repentance, and fruits meet for repentance. Note, Those whose business it is to call others to mourn for sin, and to mortify it, ought themselves to live a serious life, a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world. John Baptist thus shewed the deep sense he had of the badness of the time and place he lived in, which made his fruit a little fruit, and his work a few days work. It was a fast-day with him. (2.) This agreed with his office as Christ's forerunner; by this practice he shewed that he knew what the kingdom of heaven was, and had experienced the powers of it. Note, Those that are acquainted with divine and spiritual pleasures, cannot but look upon all the delights and ornaments of sense with a holy indifference; they know better things. By giving others this example he made way for Christ. Note, A conviction of the vanity of the world, and every thing in it, is the best preparative for the entertainment of the kingdom of heaven in the heart. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

VI. The people who attended upon him, and flocked after him: (v. 5.) Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea. Great multitudes came to him from the city, and from all parts of the country; some of all sorts, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, Pharisees and Publicans; they went out to him, as soon as they heard of his preaching the kingdom of heaven, that they might hear what they heard so much of. Now, 1. This was a great honour put upon John, that so many attended him, and flocked after him. Note, John had the most real honour done them, who least count the shadow of it. Those who live a mortified life, who are humble and self-denying, and dead to the world, command respect; and men have a secret value and reverence for them, more than one would imagine. 2. This gave John a great opportunity of doing good, and was an evidence that God was with him; and John himself began to rejoice in the kingdom of heaven; (Luke 16. 16.) and a blessed sight it was, to see the dew of the youth dropping from the womb of the gospel-morning, (Ps. 110. 3.) to see the net cast where there were so many fish. 3. This was an evidence, that it was now a time of great expectation; it was generally thought that the kingdom of God would presently appear; (Luke 19. 11.) and therefore, when John shewed himself to Israel, lived and preached at this rate, so very different from the Scribes and Pharisees, they were ready to say of him, that he was the Christ; (Luke 3. 15.) and perhaps at no other occasion to such a confidence of people about him. 4. Those who would have the benefit of John's ministry must go out to him in the wilderness, sharing in his reproach. Note, They who truly desire the sincere milk of the word, if it be not brought to them, will seek it out for themselves; and they who would learn the doctrine of repentance must go out from the hurry of this world, and be still. It and the benefits of it, that of the man who came to John's baptism, there were of a view that adhered to it; witness the cold reception Christ had in Judea, and about Jerusalem. Note, There may be a multitude of forward hearers, where there are but a few true believers. Curiosity, and affection of novelty and variety may bring many to attend upon good preaching, and to be affected with it for a while; but who yet are never subject to the power of it. Ezck. 33. 31. 32.

VII. The rite, or ceremony, by which he admitted disciples, v. 6. Those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his discipline, were baptized of him in Jordan, thereby professing their repentance, and their belief that the kingdom of the Messiah was at hand. 1. They testified their repentance by confession of sin, and forsaking of the cursed works of darkness; and of which it is probable, they made to John that they were sinner, that they were polluted by sin, and needed cleansing; but to God they made a confession of particular sins, for he is the party offended. The Jews had been taught to justify themselves; but John teaches them to accuse themselves, and not to rest, as they used to do, in the general confession of sin made for all Israel, once a year, upon the day of atonement. God washed them with water, which was a token of his personal cleansing, every one of the plague of his own heart. Note, A penitent confession of sin is required in order to peace and pardon; and those only are ready to receive Jesus Christ as their righteousness, who are brought; with sorrow and shame to own their guilt, 1 John 1. 8. 2. The benefits of the kingdom of heaven, now at hand, were thereupon sealed to them by baptism. He washed them with water, which was a token of this—that from all their iniquities God would cleanse them. It was usual with the Jews to baptize those whom they admitted Presbytists to their religion, especially those who were only Prophets of the gate, and were not circumcised, as the Prophets of righteousness were. Some think it was likewise a custom for persons of eminent religion, who set up for leaders, by baptism to admit pupils and disciples. Christ's expression concerning John's baptism, Was it from heaven, or of men? implied, that there were baptisms of men, who pretended not to a divine mission; with this usage John complied, but his was from heaven, and was distinguished from all others with this character, It was the baptism of repentance, Acts 19. 4. All Israel were baptized unto Moses, 1 Cor. 10. 2. and Christ being the last and greatest of men, it was proper for him to have baptisms; (Heb. 9. 10.) but John's baptism refers to the remedial law, the law of repentance and faith. He is said to baptize them in Jordan, that river which was famous for Israel's passage through it, and Naaman's cure; yet it is probable that John did not baptize in that river at first, but that afterward, when the people who came to his baptism were convinced of their necessity, and were baptized, he obliged them to live a holy life, according to the profession they took upon themselves. Note, Confession of sin must always be accompanied with holy resolutions, in the strength of divine grace, not to return to it again.

7. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism,
he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 3. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire. 11. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

The doctrine John preached was that of repentance, in consideration of the kingdom of heaven being at hand; now here we have the use of that doctrine. Application is the life of preaching, so it was of John's preaching.

Observe, 1. To whom he applied it; to the Pharisees and Sadducees that came to his baptism, v. 7. 2. To others he thought it enough to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; but when he saw these Pharisees and Sadducees come about him, he proved more needfully to explain himself, and deal more closely. These were two of the three noted sects among the Jews at that time; the third was that of the Essenes, whom we never read of in the Gospels, for they affected retirement, and declined burying themselves in public affairs. The Pharisees were zealots for the ceremonies, for the power of the church, and the traditions of the elders; the Sadducees ran into the other extreme, and were little better than deists, denying the existence of spirits and a future state. It was strange that they came to John's baptism, but their curiosity brought them to be hearers; and some of them, it is probable, submitted to be baptized, but it is certain that the generality of them did not; for Christ says, (Luke 7. 29, 30.) that when the publicans justified God, and were baptized of John, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against them selves, being not baptized of him. Note, Many come to ordinances, who come not under the power of them. Now to them John here addresses himself with all faithfulness; and what he said to them, he said to the multitude, (Luke 3. 7.) for they were all concerned in what he said. 2. What the application was. It is plain and home, and directed to their conscience, and speaks as one that came not to preach before them, but to preach to them. Though his education was private, he was not bashful when he appeared in public, nor did he fear the face of man, for he was full of the Holy Ghost, and of power.

I. Here is a word of conviction and awakening. He begins harshly, calls them not Rabbi, gives them not the titles, much less the applause, they had been used to. 1. The title he gives to them, is a generation of vipers. Christ gave them the same titles, ch. 12. 34, 35. They were as vipers; though specious, yet venomous and poisonous, and full of malice and enmity to every thing that was good; they were a vipers brood, the seed and offspring of such as had been of the same spirit; it was bred in the bone with them. They gloried in it, that they were the seed of Abraham; but John showed them that they were the serpent's seed; (compare Gen. 3. 15.) of their father the Devil, John 8. 44. They were a viperous brood, they were all alike; though enemies to one another, yet confederate in mischief. Note, A wicked generation is a generation of vipers, and they ought to be told so; it becomes the ministers of Christ to be bold in shewing sinners their true character. 2. The admonishment. What have you done that were you to flee from the wrath to come? This intimates that they were in danger of the wrath to come; and that their case was so nearly desperate, and their hearts so hardened in sin, (the Pharisees by their parade of religion, and the Sadducees by their arguments against religion,) that it was next to a miracle to effect any thing hopeful among them. What brings you to this place? What has caused you to seek, and fear that you have been put into, that you inquire after the kingdom of heaven? Note, (1.) There is a wrath to come; beside present wrath, the vials of which are poured out now, there is future wrath, the stores of which are treasured up for hereafter. (2.) It is the great concern of every one of us to flee from that wrath. (3.) It is wonderful mercy that we are fairly warned to flee from this wrath; think how we may secure it.

II. Here is a word of exhortation and direction; (v. 8.) "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance. Therefore, because you are warned to flee from this wrath to come, let the terrors of the Lord persuade you to a holy life." Or, "Therefore, because you profess repentance, and attend upon the doctrine and baptism of repentance, evidence that you are true penitents. Repentance is seated in the heart. There it is as a root; but in vain do we pretend to have it there, if we do not bring forth the fruits of it in a universal reformation, forsaking all sin, and cleaving to that which is good; these fruits, εἰκόνες τῆς ὑπομονῆς—worthy of repentance. Note, These are not worthy the name of penitents, or their privileges, who say they are sorry for their sins, and yet persist in them. They that profess repentance, as all that are baptized do, must be and act as becomes penitents, and never do any thing unbecoming a penitent sinner. It becomes penitents to be humble and low in their own eyes, to be thankful for the least mercy, patient under the greatest afflication, to be watchful against all appearances of sin, and approaches towards it, to abound in every duty, and to be charitable in judging others.

III. Here is a word of caution, not to trust to their external privileges, so as with them to shift off these calls to repentance; (v. 9.) Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. Note, There is a great deal which carnal hearts are prone to say within themselves, to put by the convincing, commanding power of the word of God, which ministers should labour to meet with and anticipate; vain thoughts which lodge within those who are called to wash their hearts, Jer. 4. 14. Mic 7. 17—18. "Pretend not, presume not, to say within yourselves; nor be of the opinion that this will save you; there is not such a concept. Please not yourselves with saying this;" (so some read it;) "reck not yourselves asleep with this, nor flatter yourselves into a fool's paradise." Note, God takes notice of what we say within ourselves, which we dare not speak out, and is acquainted with all the false rests of the soul, and the fallacies with which it deludes
itself, but which it will not discover, lest it should be undeceived. Many hide the lie that ruins them, in their right hand, and roll it under their tongue, because they are ashamed to own it; they keep in the Devil's interest, by keeping the Devil's counsel.

Now John shews them,

1. What their pretense was: "We have Abraham to our father." Note, It is fit indeed that they should be called to repent; but we are Jews, a holy nation, a peculiar people, what is this to us? Note, The word does no good, when we will not take it as spoken to us, and belonging to us. "Think not that because you are the seed of Abraham, therefore," (1.) "You need not repent, you have nothing to repent of; your relation to Abraham, and your interest in the covenant made with him, denominate you so holy, that there is no occasion for you to change your mind or way." (2.) "That therefore you shall fare well enough, though you do not repent. Think not that this will bring you off in the judgment, and secure you from the wrath to come; that God will condescend at your importance, because you are Abraham's seed." Note, It is very easy, and very seducing, to think that good relations will save us, though we be not good ourselves. What though we be descended from pious ancestors; have been blessed with a religious education; have our lot cast in families where the fear of God is uppermost; and have good friends that advise us, and pray for us; what will all this avail us, if we do not repent, and live a life of repentance? We have Abraham to our father, and therefore are entitled to the privileges of the covenant made with him; being his seed, we are sons of the church, the temple of the Lord, Jer. 7. 4. Note, Multitudes, by resting in the honours and advantages of their visible church-membership, take up short of heaven.

2. How foolish and groundless this pretense was; they thought that being the seed of Abraham, they were the only people God had in the world, and therefore that, if they were cut off, he would be at a loss for a church; but John shews them the folly of this conceit; "I say unto you, (whenever you say within yourselves,) that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." He was now baptizing in Jordan at Bethabara, (John 1. 28.) the baptism of the children of the church was passed over; and there were the twelve stones, one for each tribe, which Joshua set up for a memorial, Josh. 4. 20. It is not unlikely that he pointed to those stones, which God should raise to be, more than in representation, the twelve tribes of Israel. Or perhaps he refers to Isa. 51. 1. where Abraham is called the rock out of which they were hewn. That God who raised Isaac out of such a rock, can, if there be occasion, do as much again, for with him nothing is impossible. Some think he pointed to those beheaded soldiers that were present, telling the Jews that God would raise up a church for himself among the Gentiles, and entail the blessing of Abraham upon them. Thus when our first parents fell, God could have left them to perish, and out of stones have made them the image of their father: we are stones then again, for with him we should be the seed of Abraham's seed, rather than such hard, dry, barren sinners as you are." Note, As it is lowering to the confidence of the sinners in Zion, so it is encouraging to the fears of the sons of Zion, that, whatever comes of the present generation, God will never want a church in the world; if the Jews fall off, the Gentiles shall be grafted in, ch. 21. 43. Rom. 11. 12.

IV. It is a word of terror to the careless and secure Pharisees and Sadducees, and other Jews, that knew not the signs of the times, nor the day of their visitation, v. 10. "Now look about, now that the kingdom of God is at hand, and be made sensible,"

1. "How strict and short your trial is; Now the axe is carried before you, now it is laid to the root of the tree, now you are upon your good behaviour, and are to be so but a while; now you are marked for ruin, and cannot avoid it but by a speedy and sure repentance. Now we expect that God will make quicker work with you by these judgments than he did formerly, and that they will begin at the house of God; where God allows more means, he allows less time." Behold, I come quickly. Now they were put upon their last trial; now, or never.

2. "How sore and severe your doom will be, if you do not improve this; It is now declared with the axe at the root, to shew that God is earnest in the declaration, that every tree, however high in gifts and honours, however green in external professions and performances, if it bring not forth good fruit, the fruits meet for repentance, is heen down, disowned as a tree in God's vineyard, unworthy to have room there, and is cast into the fire of God's wrath; that grace, and good works, and repentance can ever have the power to make a tree good for fruit? are they good for? If not fit for fruit, they are fit for fuel. Probably, this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which was not, as other judgments had been, like the lopping off of the branches, or cutting down of the body of the tree, leaving the root to bud again, but it would be the total, final, and irrecoverable extirpation of that people, which Christ will come to make a great and continued impenitent. Now God would make a full end, wrath was coming on them to the utmost.

V. A word of instruction concerning Jesus Christ, in whom all John's preaching centred. Christ's ministers preach, not themselves, but him. Here is,

1. The dignity and pre-eminence of Christ above John. See how meanly he speaks of himself, that he might magnify Christ; (v. 11.) "I indeed baptize you with water, that is the utmost I can do." Note, Sacrifices derive not their efficacy from those who administer them; they can only apply the sign; it is Christ's prerogative to give the thing signified, 1 Cor. 3. 6. 2 Kings 4. 31. But he that comes after me is mightier than I. Though John had much power, for he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, ch. 1. 15. Christ had more, he was truly greater, great in the sight of the Lord, (ps. a greater was born of woman,) yet he thinks himself unworthy to be in the meanest place of attendance upon Christ; whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He sees, (1.) How mighty Christ is, in comparison with him. Note, It is a great comfort to faithful ministers, to think that Jesus Christ is mightier than they, can do that for them, and that by them, which they cannot do; his strength is perfected in their weakness. (2.) How mean he is, in comparison with Christ, not worthy to carry his shoes after him! Note, Those whom God puts honour upon, are thereby made very humble and low in their own eyes; willing to be abased, so that Christ may be magnified; to be a thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

2. The usual and intended Christ's appearing, which they were now speedily to expect. When it was prophesied that John should be sent as Christ's forerunner, (Mal. 3. 1, 2.) it immediately follows, The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come, and shall sit as a refiner, v. 3. And, after the coming of Elijah, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, (Mal. 4. 1.) to which the Baptist seems here to refer. Christ will come to make a full end, v. 11. But by the powerful working of his grace: He shall baptize you, that is, some of you, with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Note, [1.] It is Christ's prerogative to baptize with the Holy Ghost. This he
and in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit conferred upon the apostles, to which Christ himself applies these words of John, Acts 1. 5. This he does in the graces and comforts of the Spirit given to them that ask him, Luke 11. 13. John 7. 38, 39. See Acts 11. 16. [2.] They who are baptized with the Holy Ghost are baptized as with fire; the seven spirits of God appear as seven lamps of fire, Rev. 4. 5. Is fire enlightening, the Spirit of Judgment must be illumined by him. Is it warning? And do not their hearts burn within them? Is it consuming? And does not the Spirit of Judgment, as a Spirit of burning, consume the dross of their corruptions? Does fire make all it seizes like itself? And does it move upward? So does the Spirit make the soul holy like itself, and its tendency is heaven-ward. Christ says, I am come to send fire, Luke 12. 49. It is the conclusions of his judgment; (v. 12.) Whose fire is in his hand. His ability to distinguish, as the eternal wisdom of the Father, who sees all by a true light, and his authority to distinguish, as the Person to whom all judgment is committed, is the fire that is in his hand, Jer. 15. 7. Now he sits as a Refiner. Observe here, [1.] The visible church is Christ's floor; O my threshing, and the corn of my floor. Isa. 28. 1. It contains the crop of wheat and chaff. [2.] In this floor there is a mixture of wheat and chaff. True believers are as wheat, substantial, useful, and valuable; hypocrites are as chaff, light and empty, useless and worthless, and carried about with every wind; these are now mixed, good and bad, under the same external profession, and in the same visible communion. [3.] There is a day coming when the floor shall be purified, and the wheat and chaff shall be separated. Something of this kind is often done in this world, when God calls his people out of Babylon, Rev. 18. 4. But it is the day of the last judgment that will be the great winnowing, distinguishing day, which will infallibly determine concerning doctrines and works, (1 Cor. 3. 13.) and concerning persons, (ch. 28. 32, 33.) when saints and sinners shall be parted for ever. [4.] Heaven is the garner into which Jesus Christ will shortly gather all his wheat, and not a grain of it shall be lost: he will gather them as the ripe fruits were gathered in. Death's scythe is made use of to gather them to their people. In heaven the saints are brought together, and no longer scattered; they are safe, and no longer exposed; separated from corrupt neighbours without, and corrupt affections within, and there is no chaff among them. They are not only gathered into the barn, (ch. 15. 50.) but into the garner, where they are thoroughly purified. [5.] Hell is the unquenchable fire, which will burn up the chaff, which will certainly be the portion and punishment, and everlasting destruction, of hypocrites and unbelievers. So that here are life and death, good and evil, set before us; according as we now are in the field, we shall be then in the floor. 13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 16. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him 17 And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Our Lord Jesus, from his childhood till now, when he was almost thirty years of age, had lain hid in Galilee, as it were, buried alive; but now, after a long and dark night, behold, the Sun of righteousness rises in glory. The futility of time was come that Christ should enter on his prophetic office; and he chooses to do it, not at Jerusalem, (though it is probable that he went thither at the three yearly feasts, as others did,) but there where John was baptizing; for to him resorted those who waited for the consolation of Israel, to whom alone he would be welcome. John the Baptist was six months older than our Saviour, and it is supposed that he began to preach and baptize about six months before Christ was sown; but by reason of many ways, in the region round about Jordan; and more was done towards it in these six months than had been done in several ages before. Christ's coming from Galilee to Jordan, to be baptized, teaches us not to shrink from pains and travail, that we may have an opportunity of drawing nigh to God in an ordinance. We should be willing to go farther than the come short of communion with God. They who will find must seek. Now in this story of Christ's baptism we may observe.

1. How hardly John was persuaded to admit of it, v. 14, 15. It was an instance of Christ's great humility, that he would offer himself to be baptized of John; that he who knew no sin would submit to the baptism of repentance. Note, As soon as ever Christ began to preach, he preached humility; preached it by his example, preached it to all, especially to young ministers. Christ was designed for the highest honours, yet in his first step he thus abases himself. Note, They who would rise high must begin low. Before honour is humility. It was a great piece of respect done to John, for Christ thus to come to him; and it was a return for the service he did him, in giving notice of his approach. Note, Those that honour God he will honour. Now here we have,

1. The objection that John made against baptizing Jesus, v. 14. John forbade him, as Peter did, when Christ went about to wash his feet, John 13. 6, 8. Note, Christ's gracious condescensions are so surprising, as to appear at first incredible to the strongest believers; so deep and mysterious, that even they who know his mind well cannot soon find out the meaning of them. But, by reason of their being start objections against the will of Christ. John's modesty thinks this an honour too great for him to receive, and he expresses himself to Christ, just as his mother had done to Christ's mother; (Luke 1. 43.) Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? John had now obtained a great name, and was universally respected; yet see how humble he is still! Note, God has further honours in store for those whose spirits continue low when their reputation rises.

(1.) John thinks it necessary that he should be baptized of Christ; I have need to be baptized of thee with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as of fire, for that was Christ's baptism, v. 11. [1.] Though John was filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb, (Luke 1. 15.) yet he acknowledges he had need to be baptized of Christ. Note, we need much of the Spirit of God, yet, while here, in this imperfect state, see that they have need of more, and need to apply themselves to Christ for more. [2.] John has need to be baptized, though he was the greatest that ever was born of woman; yet, being born of a woman, he is polluted, as others of Adam's seed are, and owns he has need of cleansing.
Note, the purest souls are most sensible of their own remaining impurity, and seek most earnestly for spiritual washing. [3.] He has need to be baptized of Christ, who can do that for us, which no one else can, and which must be done for us, or we are undone. Note, The best and holiest of men have need of Christ, and better than others, and are made more sensible of that need. [4.] This was said before the multitude, who had a great zeal for John, and were ready to embrace him for the Messiah; yet he publicly owns that he had need to be baptized of Christ. Note, It is no disparagement to the greatest of men, to confess that they are undone without Christ and his grace. [5.] John was Christ's forerunner, and foreknew what he was to be; this was the reason that he had need to be baptized of him. Note, Even they who were before Christ, in time dependent on him, received from him, and had an eye to him. [6.] While John was dealing with others about their souls, observe how feelingly he speaks of the case of his own soul, I have need to be baptized of thee. Note, Ministers, who preach to others, and baptize others, are concerned to look to it that they preach to themselves, and be themselves baptized with the Holy Ghost. Take heed to thyself first; save thyself. 1 Tim. 4. 16.

(2.) He therefore thinks it very preposterous and absurd, that Christ should be baptized by him; Comest thou to me? Does the holy Jesus, that is separated from sinners, come to be baptized by a sinner, as a sinner, and among sinners? How can this be? Or (3.) How can Christ be given of it? Note, Christ's coming to us may well be wondered at.

2. The over-ruling of this objection: (v. 13.) Jesus said, Suffer it to be so now. Christ accepted his humiliation, but not his refusal; he will have the thing done; and it is fit that Christ should take his own method, though we do not understand it, nor can give a reason for it. So we must all bow down under God's dealings.

(1.) If Christ can be given of it, he must be so now. He does not deny that John had need to be baptized of him, yet he will now be baptized of John. * Ask not.—Let it be yet so; Suffer it to be so now. Note, Every thing is beautiful in its season. But why now? Why yet? [1.] Christ is now in a state of humiliation; he has emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. He is not only found in fashion as a man, but he is now made less than the angels. Let God therefore now let him be baptized of John; as if he needed to be washed, though perfectly pure; and thus he was made Sin for us, though he knew no sin. [2.] John's baptism is now in reputation, it is that by which God is now doing his work; that is the present dispensation, and therefore Jesus will now be baptized with water; but his baptismizing with the Holy Ghost is reserved for hereafter, many days hence, Acts 1. 5. John's baptism has now its day, and therefore honour must now be put upon that, and they who attend upon it must be encouraged. Note, They who are of greatest attainments in gifts and graces, should yet, in their place, bear their testimony to instituted ordinances, by a humble and diligent attendance on them, that they may give a grace to them, and add to their value. John was dead while we see he does so, we must own, John was now increasing, and therefore it must be thus yet; shortly he will decrease, and then it will be otherwise. [3.] It must be so now, because now is the time for Christ's appearing in public, and this will be a fair opportunity for it. See John 1. 31-32. Thus he must be made manifest to Israel, and be signified Christ, plain to all hearts and eyes, in the face of the people, which was most conducive to his own self-abasing.

(2.) The reason he gives for it; Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Note, [1.] There was a propriety in every thing that Christ did for us; it was all graceful; (Heb 2. 10. 7. 26.) and we must study to do not only that which behoves us, but that which becomes us; not only that which is indisputably necessary, but that which is lovely, and of good report. [2.] Our Lord Jesus looked upon it as a thing well becoming him, to fulfill all righteousness, that is, (as Dr. Whitby explains it,) to own every divine institution, and to shew his readiness to comply with all God's righteous partings. Thus it becomes him to justify God, and approve his wisdom, in sending John to prepare his way by the baptism of repentance. Thus it becomes us to countenance and encourage every thing that is good, by pattern as well as precept. Christ often mentioned John and his baptism with honour, which, that he might do the better, he was himself baptized. Thus Jesus began his ministry in a manner that all the ministers must take the same method. Thus Christ filled up the righteousness of the ceremonial law, which consisted in divers washings; thus he recommended the gospel-ordinance of baptism to his church, put honour upon it, and shewed what virtue he designed to put into it. It became Christ to submit to John's washing with water, because it was a divine appointment; but it became him to oppose the Pharisees' washing with water, because it was a human invention and imposition; and he justified his disciples in refusing to comply with it. With the will of Christ, and this reason for it, John was entirely satisfied, and then he suffered him. The same modesty which made him at first decline the honour Christ offered him, now made him do otherwise, yet with the utmost cheerfulness and resolution; he would lose no time. How was he straitened till it was accomplished!

Now, when he was coming out of the water, and all the company had their eye upon him, 1. Lo! the heavens were opened unto him, so as to discover something above and beyond the starry firmament, at least, to him. This was, (1.) To encourage him to go on in his undertaking, with the prospect of the glory and joy that were set before him. Heaven is opened to receive him, when he has finished the work he is now entering upon. (2.) To encourage us to receive him, and submit to him. Note, In and through Jesus Christ, the heavens are opened to the children of men. Sin shut up heaven, put a stop to all friendly intercourse between God and man; but now, when Jesus Christ has done all that belongs to heaven to all believers. Divine light and love are darted down upon the children of men, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest. We have receipts of mercy from God, we make returns of duty to God, and all by Jesus Christ, who is the Ladder that has its foot on earth and its top in heaven, by whom alone it is that we have any comfortable correspondence with God. And now, when Christ is come, we have the key of heaven at last. The heavens were opened when Christ was baptized, to teach us, that when we duly attend on God's ordinances, we may expect communion with him, and communications from him.

2. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, or as a dove, and coming enlightening upon him. Christ
The Spirit of God descended, and lighted on him. In the beginning of the old world, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, (Gen. 1:2.) hovered as a bird upon the nest. So here, in the beginning of this new world, Christ, as God, needed not to receive the Holy Ghost, but it was foretold that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, (Isa. 11:1-2.) and we read so; for God, he was to be a Prophet; and prophets always spake by the Spirit of God, who came upon them. Christ was to execute the prophetic office, not by his divine nature, (says Dr. Whitby,) but by the allusions of the Holy Spirit. [2.] He was to be the Head of the church; and the Spirit descended upon him, by him to be delivered to all believers, in his gifts, graces, and comforts. The ointment on the head ran down to the skirts. Christ received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men. [2.] He descended on him like a dove; whether it was a real, living dove, or, as was usual in visions, the representation or similitude of a dove, is uncertain. If there must be a bodily shape, (Luke 3:22.) it must not be that of a man, for the being seen in fashion as a man was peculiar to the second person; nor must it be the shape of any of the fowls of heaven, (heaven being uncreated,) and of all fowl none was so significant as the dove. [1.] The Spirit of Christ is a dove-like spirit; not like a silly dove, without heart, (Hos. 7:11.) but like an innocent dove without gall. The Spirit descending, not in the shape of an eagle, which is, though a royal bird, yet a bird of prey, but in the shape of a dove, than which no creature is more harmless and inoffensive. Such was the Spirit of Christ; Ye shall not strive, nor cry; such must Christians be, harmless as doves. The dove is remarkable for her eyes; we find that both the eyes of Christ, (Cant. 5:12.) and the eyes of the church, (Cant. 1:4.) are compared to doves’ eyes, for they have the same spirit. The dove mourns much, (Isa. 58:14.) Christ wept oft; and penitent souls are compared to doves of the valleys. [2.] The dove was the only fowl that did not depart from the ark. [2.] The Spirit, by the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God. [3.] The tidings of the decrease of Noah’s flood were brought by a dove, with an olive-leaf in her mouth; fitly therefore are the glad tidings of peace with God brought by the Spirit as a dove. It speaks God’s good-will toward men; that his thoughts towards us are thoughts of good, and not of evil. By the voice of the turtle heard in our land, (Cant. 2:12.) the Chaldean paraphrase understands, the voice of the Holy Spirit. That God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, is a joyful message, which comes to us upon the wing, the wings of a dove. 3. To explain and complete this solemnity, there came a voice from heaven, which, we have reason to think, was heard by all that were present. The dove was manifestly the symbol of the descent of the Spirit, but God the Father by a voice; for when the law was given they saw no manner of similitude, only they heard a voice: (Deut. 4:12.) and so this gospel came, and gospel indeed it is, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth; for it speaks plainly, and fully God’s favour to Christ, and us in him. 

1. See here how God owns our Lord Jesus; This is my Son, in Sins. Observe, [1.] The relation he stood in to him; He is my Son. [2.] He is the only Son of God by eternal generation, as he was begotten of the Father before all worlds, (Col. 1:15. Heb. 1:1.) and by supernatural conception; he was therefore called the Son of God, because he was condescended by the power of the Holy Ghost; (Luke 1:35.) yet this is not all; he is the Son of God by special designation to the work and office of the World’s Redeemer. He was sanctified and sealed, and sent upon that errand, brought up with the Father for it, (Prov. 8:30.) appointed to it; I will make him my First-born, Ps. 89.27. [2.] The affection the Father had for him; He is my beloved Son; his dear Son, the Son of his love; (Col. 1.13.) he had lain in his bosom from all eternity, (John 1.18.) had been always his delight, (Prov. 8:30.) but particularly as Mediator, and in undertaking the work of man’s salvation, he was his beloved Son. He is mine Elect, in whom my soul delights. See Isa. 42.1. Because he consented to the covenant of redemption, and delighted to do that will of God, therefore the Father loved him. John 10.17.—3.35. Behold, then, behold, and wender, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that he should deliver up him that was the Son of his love, to suffer and die for these that were the generation of his wrath; yea, and that he therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep! Now know we that he loved us, seeing he has not withheld his Son, his only Son, his Isaac whom he loved, but gave him to be a sacrifice for our sin. 

2. See here how ready he is to own us in him; He is my beloved Son, not only with whom, but in whom, I am well-pleased. He is pleased with all that are in him, and in the place of him. His heart has been displeased with the children of men, but now his anger is turned away, and he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1.6. Let all the world take notice, that this is the Peacemaker, the Days-man, who has laid his hand upon us both, and that there is no coming to God as a Father, but by him as Mediator, John 14.6. In him our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable, for he is the Mediator that sanctifies every gift. 1 Pet. 2.5. One of Christ, God is a consummating Fire, but, in Christ, a reconciled Father. This is the sum of the whole gospel; it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that God has declared, by a voice from heaven, that Jesus Christ is his beloved Son, in whom he is well-pleased, with which we must by faith cheerfully concur, and say, that he is our beloved Saviour, in whom we are well-pleased.

CHAP. IV.

John Baptist said concerning Christ, He must increase, but I must decrease; and so it proved. For, after John had baptized Christ, and borne his testimony to him, we hear little more of his ministry, he had done what he came to do, and thereforefar there is as much talk of Jesus as there had been of John. As the rising Sun advances, the morning star disappears. Concerning Jesus Christ we have in this chapter, I. The temptation he underwent, the triple assault the tempter made upon him, and the reply he gave to each assault, v. 1—11. II. The teaching work he undertook, the places he preached in, (v. 12—16.) and the subject he preached on, v. 17. III. His calling of disciples, Peter and Andrew, James and John, v. 18—22. IV. His miraculous power, v. 22—24. The effect of the Gospel of the desert to them, both to be taught and to be healed.

1. THEN was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. 2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. 3. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4. But he answered and said, It is written. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city.
and setteth him o. a pinnacle of the temple, 6.  And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 8. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: 9. And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 11. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

We have here the story of a famous duel, fought hand to hand, between Michael and the dragon, the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, nay, the serpent himself, in which the Seed of the woman suffers, being tempted, and so has his heel bruised; but the serpent is quite baffled in his temptations, and so has his head broken; and our Lord Jesus comes off a conqueror, and so secure of not only comfort, but conquest at last, to all his faithful followers. Concerning Christ's temptation, observe,

1. The time when it happened: Then; there is an emphasis laid upon that. Immediately after the heavens were opened to him, and the Spirit descended on him, and he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, the next news we hear of him is, he is tempted; for then he is best able to grapple with the temptation. Note, 1. Great privileges, and special tokens of divine favour will not secure us from being tempted. Nay, 2. After great honours put upon us, we must expect something that is humiliating; as Paul had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, after he had been in the third heavens. 3. God usually prepares his people for the time when he calls them to it; he gives strength according to the day, and, before a sharp trial, gives more than ordinary comfort. 4. The assurance of our sonship is the best preparative for temptation. If the good Spirit witness to our adoption, that will furnish us with an answer to all the suggestions of the evil spirit, designed either to daemon or disquiet us.

Then, when he was newly come from a solemn ordinance, when he was baptized, then he was tempted. Note, After we have been admitted into communion with God, we must expect to be set upon by Satan. The enriched soul must double its guard. When thou hast eaten and art full, then beware. Then, when he began to shew himself publicly to Israel, then he was tempted, so as he never had been while he lived in privacy. Note, The Devil has a particular spite at useful persons, who are bad, but given to do good, especially at their first setting out. It is the advice of the Son of Sirach, (Ecclesiastic. 2. 1.) My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thyself for temptation. Let young ministers know what to expect, and arm accordingly.

II. The place where it was; in the wilderness; probably in the great wilderness of Sinai, where Moses and Elijah fasted forty days, for no part of the wilderness of Judea was so abandoned to wild beasts as this is said to have been, Mark 1. 13. When Christ was baptized he did not go to Jerusalem to there to publish the glories that had been put upon him, but retired into a wilderness. After communion with God, it is good to be private a while, lest we lose what we have received, in the crowd and hurry of worldly business. Christ withdrew into the wilderness, 1. To gain advantage to himself. Retirement gives an opportunity for meditation and communion with God, and for the most active life must yet have their contemplative hours, and must find time to be alone with God. Those are not fit to speak of the things of God in public to others, who have not first conversed with those things in secret by themselves. When Christ would appear as a Teacher come from God, it shall not be said of him, "He is newly come from travelling." He abounds in knowledge, but, "He is newly come out of a desert, he has been alone conversing with God and his own heart." 2. To give advantage to the tempter, that he might have a readier access to him than he could have had in company. Note, Though solitude is a friend to a good heart, yet Satan knows how to improve it against us. Woe to him that is alone. Those who, under pretence of sanctity, retire from the busy world, and deserts, find that they are not out of the reach of their spiritual enemies, and that there they want the benefit of the communion of saints. Christ retired, (1.) That Satan might have leave to do his worst. To make his victory the more illustrious, he gave the enemy sun and wind on his side, and yet baffled him. He might give the Devil advantage, for the prince of this world had nothing in him; but he has in us, and therefore we must pray not to be led into temptation, and must keep out of harm's way. (2.) That he might have opportunity to do his best himself, that he might be exalted in his own strength; for so it was written, I have trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me. Christ entered the lists without a second. Note, II. The preparations for it, which were two,

1. He was directed to the combat; he did not wilfully thrust himself upon it, but he was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the Devil. The Spirit that descended upon him like a dove made him meek, and yet made him bold. Note, Our care must be, not to enter into temptation; but if God, by his providence, order us into circumstances of temptation for our trial, we must not think it strange, but do our duty, and set not our hearts and minds too fast in the faith, and all shall be well. If we presume upon our own strength, and tempt the devil to tempt us, we provoke God to leave us to ourselves; but, whosoever God leads us, we may hope he will go along with us, and bring us off more than conquerors.

Christ was led, to be tempted of the Devil, and him only, whereas others are tempted. For they are driven aside of their centre, and erst; (1.) The Devil takes hold of that handle, and ploughs with that heifer: but our Lord Jesus had no corrupt nature, and therefore he was led securely, without any fear or trembling, as a champion into the field, to be tempted purely by the Devil.

Now Christ's temptation is, (1.) An instance of his own condescension and his condescension. Thus they come against the flesh, buffetings, siftings, wearings, combats, all which denote hardship and suffering; therefore Christ submitted to them, because he would humble himself, in all things to be made like unto his brethren; thus he gave his back to the smiters. (2.) An occasion of Satan's confusion. There is no conquest without a combat. Christ was tempted, that he might overcome the tempter, who had tempted the first Adam, and triumphed over him; but he shall not always triumph, the second Adam shall overcome him, and lead
captive. (3.) Matter of comfort to all the saints. In the temptation of Christ it appears, that our enemy is subtle, sly, and very dexterous in his temptations; but it appears withal, that he is not invincible. Though he is a strong man armed, yet the Captain of our salvation is stronger than he. It is some comfort to us to think that Christ suffered, being tempted; for thus it appears that temptations, if not yielded to, are discouraging to the affections; and much should he be the lot of these with whom God is well-pleased. And we have a High-Priest who knows, by experience, what it is to be tempted, and that who therefore is the more tenderly touched with the feeling of our infirmities in an hour of temptation, Heb. 2. 18.—4. 15. But it is much more a comfort to think that Christ conquered, being tempted, and conquered for us; not only that the enemy we grapple with is a conquered, baffled, disarmed enemy, but that we are interested in Christ's victory over him, and through him are more than conquerors.

2. He was dieted for the combat, as wrestlers, who are to prepare in all things; (1 Cor. 9. 25.) but Christ beyond any other, for he fasted forty days and forty nights, in compliance with the type and example of Moses the great law-giver, and of Elias the great reformer, of the Old Testament. John Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, was no less that spiritual, but not in such things as were miraculous; (John 10. 41.) that honour was reserved for Christ. Christ needed not to fast for mortification; (he had no corrupt desires to be subdued) yet he fasted, (1.) That herein he might humble himself, and might seem as one abandoned, whom no man seeketh after. (2.) That he might give Satan both occasion and advantage against him; and so make his victory over him the more illustrious. (3.) That he might sanctify and recommend fasting to us, when God in his providence calls to it; or when we are reduced to straits, and are destitute of daily food, or when it is requisite for the keeping under of the body or the quickening of prayer, those excellent preparatives for temptation. If good people are brought low, if they want friends and succours, this may comfort them, that their Master himself was in like manner exposed. We may then take occasion to remember, that the Spirit, was his Father's; and, that he took up on himself our natural infirmities, that he might alone for us, Man fell by eating, and that way we often sin, and therefore Christ was an hungered.

IV. The temptations themselves. That which Satan aimed at, in all his temptations, was, to bring him to sin against God, and so to render him for ever incapable of being a Sacrifice for the sin of others. Now, whatever the colours were, that which he aimed at was, to bring him, to. 1. To despise of his Father's goodness. 2. To presume upon his Father's power. 3. To alienate his Father's honour, by giving it to Satan. In the two former, that which he tempted him to, seemed innocent, and therein appeared the subtlety of the tempter; in the last, that which he tempted him with, seemed desirable. The two former are artful temptations, which there was need of something more than a temptation, which there was need of great resolution to resist; yet he was baffled in them all.

1. He tempted him to despise of his Father's goodness, and to distrust of his Father's care concerning him. (1.) See how the temptation was managed; (v. 3.) The tempter came to him. Note, The Devil is the tempter, and therefore he is Satan—an adversary; for those are our worst enemies, that entice us to sin, and are Satan's agents, are doing his work, and carrying on his designs. He is called emphatically the tempter, because he was so to our first parents, and still is so, and all other tempters are set on work by him. The tempter came to Christ in a visible appearance, not terrible and affrighting, as afterward in his agony in the garden; no, if ever the Devil transformed himself into an angel of light, he did it now, and pretended to be a good genius, a guardian angel. Observe the subtlety of the tempter, in joining this first temptation with what went before, to make it the stronger. [1.] Christ began to be hungry, and therefore the motion seemed very proper, "to turn these stones into bread" for his necessary support. Note, It is one of the wiles of Satan to take advantage of our outward condition, in that to plant the battery of his temptations. He is an adversary no less watchful than sly; and the more ingenious he is to take advantage against us, the more industrious we must be to give him none. When he began to be hungry, and that in a wilderness, where there was no house, be had then the Devil assaulted him. Note, Want and poverty are a great temptation to discontent and unbelief, and the use of unlawful means for our relief, under pretence that necessity has no law; and it is excused with this, that hunger will break through stone-walls, which yet is no excuse, for the law of God ought to be stronger to us than stone-walls. Agur prays against poverty, not because it is an affliction and reproach, but because it is a temptation; lest I be full, and steal. Those therefore who are reduced to straits, have need to double their guard; it is better to starve to death, than live and thrive by sin. [2.] Christ was lately declared to be the Son of God, and here the Devil tempts him to doubt of that; If thou be the Son of God. Had not the Devil known that the Son of God was to come into the world, he would not have said this; and had he not been told it, he would not have said it to him, nor durst he have said it, if Christ had not now drawn a veil over his glory, and if the Devil had not now put on an impudent face. First, "Thou hast now an occasion to question whether thou be the Son of God or no; for can it be, that the Son of God, who is heir of all things, should be reduced to such straits? If God were thy Father, he would not see thee, seemed very proper, 'to turn these stones into bread.' Ps. 30. 10, 12. It is true, there was a voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, but surely it was delusion, and thou wast imposed upon by it; for either God is not thy Father, or he is a very unkind one." Note, 1. The great thing Satan aims at, in tempting good people, is, to overthrow their relation to God as a Father, and so to cut off their dependence on him, their duty to him, and their communion with him. The greatest harm that he can do to them is to make them think that they are the children of God; the evil spirit, as the accuser of the brethren, does all he can to shake that testimony. 2. Outward affictions, wants and burdens, are the great arguments Satan uses to make the people of God question their sonship; as if afflictions could not consist with, when really they proceed from, God's fatherly love. They know how to answer this temptation very ingeniously. Though I be a discouragement, though I be a reproach, though I be a curse, yet I will trust in him, and love him as a Friend, even when he seems to come forth against me as an Enemy. 3. The Devil aims to shake our faith in the word of God, and bring us to question the truth of that. Thus he began with our first parents: Eva, has God
so did so and so? Surely he has not. So here, Has God said that thou art his beloved Son? Surely he did not say so; or if he did, it is not true. We then give place to the Devil, when we question the truth of any word that God has spoken; for his business, as the father of lies, is to oppose the true sayings of God. 4. The Devil carries on his designs very much by possessing people with hard thoughts of God, as if he were unkind, or unfaithful, and had forsaken or forgotten those who have ventured their all with him. He endeavoured to beget in our first parents a notion that God forbade them the tree of knowledge, because he grudged them the benefit of it; and so here he insinuates to our Saviour, that the Father had cast him off, and left him to shift for himself. But see how unreasonable this suggestion was, and how easily answered. If Christ seemed to be a mere Man now, because he was hungry, why was he not confessed to be more than a Man, even the Son of God, when for forty days he fasted, and was not hungry? Secondly, "Thou hast now an opportunity to show that thou art the Son of God. If thou art the Son of God, prove it by this, command that these stones (a heap of which, probably, lay now before him) be made bread, v. 3. John Baptist said but the other day, that God can, out of stones, raise up children to Abraham; a divine power therefore can, no doubt, turn stones into bread, for those children; if therefore thou hast that power, exert it now in a time of need for thyself." He does not say, Pray to thy Father that he would turn them into bread, but command it to be done; thy Father hath forsaken thee, set up for thyself, and be not obliged to him. The Devil is for nothing that is humbling, but every thing that is assuming; and gains his point, if he can but bring men off from their dependence upon God, and possess them with an opinion of their self-sufficiency. 2. See how this temptation was resisted and overcome. [1.] Christ refused to comply with it. He would not command these stones to be made bread; not because he could not, or his power, which soon after this, turned water into wine, could have turned stones into bread; for this was the Devil, not God, speaking. It would not be allowed. At first view, the thing appears justifiable enough, and the truth is, The more plausible a temptation is, and the greater appearance there is of good in it, the more dangerous it is. This matter would bear a dispute, but Christ was soon aware of the snares in the grass, and would not do any thing. First, That looked like questioning the truth of the voice he heard from heaven, or putting that upon a new trial which was already settled. Secondly, That looked like distrusting his Father's care of him, or limiting him to one particular way of providing for him. Thirdly, That looked like setting up for himself, and being his own carver; or, Fourthly, That looked like gratifying Satan, by doing a thing at his moment. Some would have said, To give the Devil his own way, in some things, and not to make wait upon God, to consult him, is more than his due; it is like inquiring of the god of Ekron, when there is a God in Israel. [2.] He was ready to reply to it; (v. 4.) He answered, and said, It is written. This is observable, that Christ answered and baffled all the temptations of Satan with, It is written. He is himself the Author of it, and could have produced the mind of God without having recourse to the writings of Moses; but he put honour upon the scripture, and, to set us an example, he appealed to what was written in the law; and he says this to Satan, taking it for granted that he knew well enough what was written. It is possible that these who are the Devil's children may yet know very well what is written in God's book; The devil believe, and tremble. This method we must take when at any time we are tempted to sin; resist and repel the temptation with, It is written. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit, therefore we must have the spiritual armory; (Eph. 6. 17.) and we may say of it as David of Goliath's sword, none is like that in our spiritual conflicts. This answer, as all the rest, is taken out of the book of Deuteronomy, which signifies the second law, and in which there is very little ceremonial; the Levitical sacrifices and purifications could not avail in this case; and the proofs of his divinity in the real less holy water and the sign of the cross, which are of human invention; but moral precepts and evangelical promises, mixed with faith, these are mighty, through God, for the vanquishing of Satan. This is here quoted from Deut. 8. 3, where the reason given why God fed the Israelites with manna, is, because he would teach them that man shall not live by bread alone. This Christ applies to his own case. Israel was God's son, whom he called out of Egypt, (Hos. 11. 1.) so was Christ; (ch. 2. 15.) Israel was then in a wilderness, Christ was so now, perhaps the same wilderness. Now, First, The Devil would have him question his sonship, because he was in straits; no, says he, Israel was God's son, and a son he was very tender of, and whose manners he would not rob of that name, (Eph. 2. 13, 15.) and yet he brought them into straits; and it follows there, (Deut. 8. 5.) As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Christ, being a Son, thus learns obedience. Secondly, The Devil would have him distrust his Father's love and care. "No," says he, "that would be to do as Israel did, who, when they were in want, said, Is the Lord among us? and, Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread?" Thirdly, The Devil would have him, as soon as he began to be hungry, immediately look out for supply; whereas God, for wise and holy ends, suffered Israel to hunger before he fed them; to humble them, and prove them. God will have his children, when they want, not only to wait on him, but to wait for him. Fourthly, The Devil would have him to supply himself with bread; "No," says he, "I am not here as a man, but as a Christ. It is a point long since settled, and incontestably proved, that man may live without bread, as Israel in the wilderness lived forty years upon manna." It is true, God, in his providence, ordinarily maintains men by bread out of the earth; (Job 28. 6.) but he can, if he pleases, make use of other means to keep men alive; any word proceeding out of the mouth of God, any thing that God shall order and appoint for that end, will be as good a livelihood for man as bread, and will maintain him as well. As we may have bread, and yet not be nourished, if God deny his blessing, (Hab. 1. 6, 9; Mic. 6. 14.) for though bread is the staff of life, it is God's blessing that is the staff of bread; so we may want bread, and yet he nourish some other way. God sustained the prophet Elijah by the ravens, (1 Kings 17.) and sustained himself just now for forty days; he sustained Israel with bread from heaven, angels' food; Elijah with bread sent miraculously by ravens, and another time with the widow's meal miraculously multiplied; therefore Christ need not turn stones into bread, but trust God to keep him alive some other way; no that he is hungry, as he had done forty days before he hungered. As God is so wise, he must not think to live without God, so in our greatest straits we must learn to live upon God; and when the fig-tree does not blossom, and the field yields no meat, when all ordinary means of succour and support are cut off, yet then we must rejoice in the Lord; then we must not think to command what we will, though contrary to his command, but must
humbly pray for what he thinks fit to give us, and be thankful for the bread of our allowance, though a short allowance. Let us learn of Christ here to be at God's finding, rather than at our own; and not to take any irregular courses for our supply, when our wants are ever so pressing. (Ps. 37. 3.) Jehovah-jireh; some way or other the Lord will provide. It is better to live poorly upon the fruits of God's goodness, than live plentifully upon the products of our own sin.

2. He tempted him to presume upon his Father's power and protection! See what a restless unrestrained adversary the Devil is! If he fail in one assault, he tries another.

Now in this second attempt we may observe, (1.) What the temptation was, and how it was managed. In general, finding Christ so confident of his Father's care of him, in point of nourishment, he endeavours to draw him to presume upon that care, first subtle the Devil, as in the case of missing our way, both on the right hand and on the left, and therefore must take heed, lest, when we avoid one extreme, we be brought by the artifices of Satan, to run into another; lest, by overcoming our prodigality, we fall into covetousness. Nor are any extremes more dangerous than those of despair and presumption, especially in the affairs of religion. Some people who have obtained a persuasion that Christ is able and willing to remove them from their sins, are then tempted to presume that he will save them in their sins. Thus when people begin to be zealous in religion, Satan hurries them into bigotry and intemperate heats.

Now in his temptation we may observe,

[1.] How he made way for it. He took Christ, not by force and against his will, but moved him to go, he persuaded him to go. Note, Either Christ went upon the ground, and so went up the stairs to the top of the temple, or whether he went in the air is uncertain; but so it was, that he was set upon a pinnacle, or spire; upon the face, (so some,) upon the battlements, (so others,) upon the wing, (so the word is,) of the temple. Now observe, First, How submissively Christ was, in suffering himself to be hurried thus, that he might let Satan do his worst. First, An evil attempt to pull him up to the top of the temple was made; but he, as if it never had a possibility of success, lost all the hurry he made. Second, He was, in the choice of the place for his temptations. Intending to solicit Christ to an ostentation of his own power, and a vain-glorious presumption upon God's providence, he fixes him on a public place in Jerusalem, a populous city, and the joy of the whole earth; in the temple, one of the wonders of the world, continually gazed upon with admiration by some one or other. There he might make himself remarkable, and he taken notice of by every body, and prove himself the Son of God: not, as he was urged in the former temptation, in the obscurities of a wilderness, but before multitudes, upon the most eminent stage of action.

Observe, 1. That Jerusalem is here called the holy city; for so it was in name and profession, and there was in it a holy seed, that was the substance thereof. Note. There is no city on earth so holy as to exempt and secure us from the Devil and his temptations. The first Adam was tempted in the holy garden, the second in the holy city. Let us not, therefore, in any place, be off our watch. Nay, the holy city is the place where he does, with the greatest advantage and success, tempt men to pride and presumption; but, blessed be God, into the Jerusalem above, that holy city, no sinner shall enter; there we shall be for ever out of temptation.

2. That he set him upon a pinnacle of the temple, which (as Josephus describes it, Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 14.) was so very high, that it would make a man's head dizzy to look down to the bottom. Note, Pinnacles of the temple areplaces of temptation; I mean, (1.) High places are so; they are places of admiration, by being high above the others, and a man a fair mark for Satan to shoot his fiery darts at. God casts down, that he may raise up; the Devil raises up, that he may cast down: therefore they who would take heed of falling, must take heed of climbing. (2.) High places in the church are, in a special manner, dangerous. They who excel in gifts, who are in eminent stations, and have gained great reputation, have need to keep humble; for Satan will, if he can, draw them up with pride, that they may fall into the condemnation of the Devil. Those that stand high are charged to stand fast.

[2.] How he moved it; "If thou be the Son of God, now show thyself to the world, and prove thyself to be so; cast thyself down, and then," First, Thou wilt be admired, as under the special protection of God, so long as they see thee receive no hurt by a fall from such a height. The Devil, as the barbarous people did of Paul, “that thou art a God.” Tradition says, that Simon Magus by this very thing attempted to prove himself a god, but that his pretensions were disproved, for he fell down, and was miserably bruised. “Nay,” Secondly, “Thou wilt be receiv’d, as coming with a special commission from Heaven. All Jerusalem shall see and acknowledge, not only that thou art more than a man, but that thou art that Angel of the covenant, that should suddenly come to the temple, (Mal. 3. 1.) and from thence descend into the streets of the holy city; and thus the work of convincing the Jews will be cut short, and soon done.”

Observe, The Devil said, Cast thyself down. The Devil could not cast him down, though a little while, he could not cast him down, but he was cast down. Note, The power of Satan is a limited power; hitherto he shall come, and no further. Yet, if the Devil had cast him down, he had not gained his point; that had been his suffering only, not his sin. Note, Whatever real mischief is done us, it is of our own doing; the Devil can but persuade, he cannot compel; he can but say, Cast thyself down; he cannot cast us down. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn down to give his own judgment and not enforced, but enticed. Therefore let us not hurt ourselves, and then, blessed be God, no one else can hurt us, Prov. 19. 12.

[3.] How he backed this motion with a scripture; For it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee. But is Saul also among the prophets? Is Satan so well versed in scripture, as to be able to quote it so readily? It seems, he is. Note. It is possible for a man to have his head full of scriptures notions, and his mouth full of scripture expressions, while his heart is full of reigning enmity to God and all goodness. The knowledge which the devils have of the scripture, increases both their mischieffulness and their torment. Never did the Devil speak with more vexation to himself, than when he said to Christ, I know thee whom thou art. The Devil would persuade Christ to throw himself down, hoping that he would he his own murderer, and that there would be an end of him and his undertaking, which he looked upon with a jealous eye; to encourage him to do it, he tells him, that there was no danger, that the good angels would protect him, for
First, There was something right. It is true, the Devil knows it by experience; for he finds his attempts against them fruitless, and he frets and rages at it, as he did at the hedge about Job, which he speaks of so sensibly, Job 1. 10. He was also right in applying it to Christ, for to him all the promises of the protection of the saints primarily and eminently belonged; and therefore he tempted Christ, as he supposed, to measure his faith by this promise, that not a bone of theirs shall be broken. (Ps. 34. 20.) was fulfilled in Christ, John 19. 36. The angels guard the saints for Christ’s sake.

Secondly, There was a great deal wrong in it; and perhaps the Devil had a particular spite against this promise, and perverted it, because it often stood in his way, and baffled his mischievous designs against the saints. See here, 1. How he misapplied it; and that was bad. The promise is, They shall keep thee; but how? In all thy ways; not otherwise; if we go out of our way, out of the way of our duty, we forfeit the promise, and put ourselves out of God’s protection. Now this word made against the tempter, and therefore he industriously left it out. If Christ had cast himself down, he had been in no danger; for he had no call so to expose himself. It is good for us upon such occasions to consult the scriptures themselves, and not to take things upon trust, that we may not be imposed upon by those that maim and mangle the word of God; we must do as the noble Bereans, who searched the scriptures daily. 2. How he misrepresented it; and that was worse. Scripture is abused when it is pressed to patronize sin; and when men thus wrest it to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16. This promise is firm, and stands good; but the Devil made an ill use of it, when he used it as an encouragement to presume upon the divine care. Note, It is no new thing for the grace of God to be turned into wantonness; and for men to take encouragement in sin from the discoveries of God’s good will to sinners. But shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? throw ourselves down, that the angels may bend us up? God forbid.

(2.) How Christ overcame this temptation; he resisted and overcame it, as he did the former, with It is written. The Devil’s abusing of scripture did not prevent Christ from using it, but he presently urges, Deut. 6. 16. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. The meaning of this is not, Therefore thou must not tempt me; but, Therefore I must not tempt my Father. In the place whence it is quoted, it is in the plural number. Ye shall not tempt; here it is singular, Thou shalt not. Note, We are then likely to get good by the word of God, when we hear and receive general promises as speaking to us in particular. Satan said, It is written, thou shalt not tempt. He wrote not that one scripture contradicts another. God said, It is written, thou shalt not tempt me, and he in one mind, but that is a promise, this is a precept, and therefore that is to be explained and applied by this; for scripture is the best interpreter of scripture; and they who prophesy, who expound scripture, must do it according to the proportion of faith, (Rom. 12. 6.) consistently with it.

If Christ should cast himself down, it would be the tempting of God, [1.] As it would be requiring a further confirmation of that which was so well confirmed. Christ was abundantly satisfied that God was already his Father, and took care of him, and gave his angels a charge concerning him; and therefore to put it up to a new experiment, would he tempt him, as the Pharisees tempted Christ; when they had so many signs on earth, they demanded a sign from heaven. This is limiting the Holy One of Israel. [2.] As it would be requiring a special preservation of him, in doing that which he had no call to do, we expect the name God has promised not to forsake us, therefore he should follow us out of the way of our duty; that because he has promised to supply our wants, therefore he should humour us, and please our fancies; that because he has promised to keep us, we may willfully thrust ourselves into danger, and may expect the desired end, without using the appointed means; this is presumption, this is tempting God. And it is an aggravation of the sin, that he is the Lord our God; it is an abuse of the privilege we enjoy, in having him for our God; he has thereby encouraged us to trust him, but we are very ungrateful, if therefore we tempt him; it is contrary to our duty to him as our God. This is to affront him whom we ought to honour. Note, We must never promise ourselves any more than God has promised us.

3. He tempted him to the most black and horrid idolatry, with the proffer of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And here we may observe.

(1.) How the Devil made this push at our Saviour, v. 8, 9. The worst temptation was reserved for the last. Note, Sometimes the snares last; and with those, the bitterest. But the hardest blow is the sorest; therefore, whatever temptation we have been assaulted by, still we must prepare for worse; must be armed for all attacks, with the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. In this temptation, we may observe,

[1.] What he showed him—all the kingdoms of the world. In order to this, he took him up into an exalted prospect of things; and the Devil, not content with the high mountain, produced the bursting of the heavens, as Balsam with Balaam, he changed his ground. The pinnacle of the temple is not high enough; the prince of the power of the air must have him further up into his territories. Some think this high mountain was on the other side of Jordan, because there we find Christ next after the temptation, John 1. 28, 29. Perhaps it was mount Pægah, whence Moses was bid to ascend in communion with God, and all the kings of Canaan showed him. Hither the blessed Jesus was carried for the advantage of a prospect; as if the Devil could show him more of the world than he knew already, who made and governed it. Thence he might discover some of the kingdoms situate about Jotida, though not the glory of them; but there was doubtless a jiggery and a delusion of Satan’s in it; it is probable that that which the Devil showed him was, but a landscape, an airy representation in a cloud, such as that great deceiver could easily frame and put together; setting forth, in proper and lively colours, the glories and splendid appearance of princes, and their robes and crowns, their retinue, equipage, and life-guards; the pomp of thrones, and courts, and stately palaces, the sumptuous buildings in cities, the gardens and fields, the sumptuous and magnificent instances of their wealth, pleasure, and quietness; so as might be most likely to strike the fancy, and excite the admiration and affection. Such was this show, and his taking of him up into a high mountain, was but to humour the thing, and to colour the delusion: in which vêt the blessed Jesus did not suffer himself to be imposed upon, but saw through the charade. He remained to the end, that his victory over him might be the more illustrious. Hence observe, concerning Satan’s temptations, that, First, They often come in at the eye, which is blinded to the thines it should see, and dazzled with the vanities it should be turned from. The first sin began in the eye, Gen. 3. 6. We therefore need to make a covenant with our eyes, and to pray that
God would turn them away from beholding vanity. 

Secondly. Temptation commonly take rise from the world, and the things of it. The lust of the flesh, and of the eye, with the pride of life, are the topics from which the Devil fetches most of his arguments. 

Thirdly. That it is a great cheat which the Devil puts upon poor souls, in his temptations. He deceives, and so destroys; he imposes upon men with shadows and false colours; shows the world and the glory of it, and hides from men's eyes the sin and sorrow of it. So that, by pride of all this glory, the cares and calamities which attend great possessions, and the thorns which crown themselves are lined with. Fourthly. That the glory of the world is the most charming temptation to the unhallowed and unawary, and that by which men are most imposed upon. 

Laban's sons grudge Jacob all his glory; the pride of life is the most dangerous snare. 

[2.] What he said to him; (v. 2.) All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. 

See, 

First. How vain the promise was. All these things will I give thee. He seems to take it for granted, that in the former temptations he had in part gained his point, and proved that Christ was not the Son of God, because he had not given him those evidences of it which he demanded; but that here he was tempted by the Devil, and the man of God; for he, "It seems that the God, whose Son thou thinkest!st thyself to be, deserts thee, and starves thee—a sign that he is not thy Father; but if thou wilt be ruled by me, I will provide for thee than so; own me for thy father, and ask my blessing, and all this will I give thee." Note, Satan makes an easy prey of men, when he can persuade them to think themselves abased, as of God. Thy fall is too premeditated in that. All this will I give thee. And what was all that? It was but a map, a picture, a mere phantasm, that had nothing in it real or solid, and this he would give him; a goodly prize! Yet such are Satan's proflers. Note, Multitudes lose the sight of that which is, by setting their eyes on that which is not. The Devil's baits are all a sham; they are shows and shadows with which he deceives them, or rather they deceive him. The notions of the earth had been, long before, promised to the Messiah; if he be the Son of God, they belong to him; Satan pretends now to be a good angel, probably one of those that were set over kingdoms, and to have received a commission to deliver possession to him according to promise. Note, We must take heed of receiving even that which God had promised, out of the Devil's hand; we do so with such a precipitancy and compliance in such an sly way. 

Secondly. How vile the condition was: If thou wilt fall down, and worship me. Note, The Devil is fond of being worshipped. All the worship which the heathen performed to their gods, was directed to the Devil, (Deut. 32. 17.) who is therefore called the god of this world, 2 Cor. 4. 4. 1 Cor. 10. 20. And vain would he draw Christ into his interests, and persuade him, now that he set up for a teacher, to preach up the Gentile idolatry, and to introduce it again among the Jews, and then the nations of the earth would soon flock in to him. What temptation could be more hideous, more black? Note, The best of saints may be tempted to the worst of sins, especially when they are under the power of melancholy; as, for instance, to atheism, blasphemy, murder, self-murder, and what not. It is their affliction which is their weakness, and the trial of their fidelity which they are not their sin; Christ was tempted to worship Satan. 

1. With abhorrence and detestation! Get thee hence, Satan! The two former temptations had something of colour, which would admit of a consideration; but this was so gross as not to bear a parley; it appears abominable at the first sight, and therefore is immediately rejected. If the best friend we have in the world should suggest such a thing as this to us, Go, serve other gods, he must not be heard with patience, for the Devil's temptations have not been written with the same readiness in his forefront, they are open before-hand; they are not to be disputed with, but rejected; "Get thee hence, Satan! Away with it, I cannot bear the thought of it." While Satan tempted Christ to do himself a mischief, by casting himself down, though he yielded not, yet he heard it; but now that the temptation flies in the face of God, he cannot bear it; "Get thee hence, though!"

2. With an argument fetched from scripture. Note, In order to the strengthening of our resolutions against sin, it is good to see what a great deal of reason there is for those resolutions. The argument is very suitable, and exactly to the purpose, taken from Deut. 6. 13. and 10. 20. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Christ does not dispute whether he were an angel of light, as he pretended, or not; but though he were, for he must not be worshipped, because that is an honour due to God only. Note, It is good to make our answers to temptation as full and as brief as may be, so as not to leave room for objections. Our Saviour has recourse to the fundamental law in this case, which is indispensable, and universally obligatory. Note, Religious worship is due to God only, and must not be given to any creature; it is a flower of the crown which cannot be alienated. Note, The Devil's picture, the Lord's glory, which he will not give to another, and which he would not give to his own Son, by obliging all men to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, if he had not been God, equal to him, and one with him. Christ quotes this law concerning religious worship, and quotes it with application to himself; First, To show that in his estate of humiliation he was himself made under this law; though, as God, he was worshipped, yet, No, he did worship God, both publicly and privately. He obliges us to no more than what he was first pleased to oblige himself to. Thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. Secondly, To show that the law of religious worship is of eternal obligation: though he abrogated and altered many institutions of worship, yet this fundamental law of nature—that God only is to be worshipped, he came to destroy and confirm, and enforce such laws. We have here the end and issue of this conflict, v. 11. Though the children of God may be exercised with many and great temptations, yet God will not suffer them to be tempted above the strength which they either have, or he will put into them, 1 Cor. 10. 13. It is but for a season that they are in heaviness, through manifold temptations. 

Now the issue was glorious; and much to Christ's honour: 1. The Devil was baffled, and quitted the field: Then the Devil left him, forced to do so by the power that went along with that word of command, Get thee hence, Satan. He made a shamefaced and inglorious retreat, and came off with disgrace; and the more daring his attempts had been, the more
mortifying was the foil that was given him. Magnus
tamen excitat animus—the attempt, however, in which
he failed, was daring. Then, when he had done his
worst, had tempted him with all the kingdoms of
the world, and the glory of them, and found that he
was not influenced by that bait, that he could not
prevail with that temptation. Yet when he had
overthrown the children of the children of men, then he leaves him; then he gives him over
as more than a man. Since this did not move him,
he desairs of moving him, and begins to conclude,
that he is the Son of God, and that it is in vain to
tempt him any further. Note, If we resist the Devil,
he will flee from us; he will yield, if we keep our
ground; as when John said, the Devil was steadfastly
left off speaking to him. When the Devil left our Saviour, he owned himself fairly
beaten; his head was broken by the attempt he
made to bruise Christ's heel. He left him because
he had nothing in him, nothing to take hold of; he
saw it was to no purpose, and so gave over. Note,
The Devil, though he is an enemy to all the saints,
is a conquered enemy. The Captain of our salva-
tion has defeated and disarmed him; we have noth-
ing to do but to pursue the victory.
2. The holy angels came and attended upon our
victorious Redeemer; Behold, angels came and mi-
nered unto him. They came in a visible appear-
ance, as the Devil had done in the temptation. While
the Devil was making his assaults upon our Saviour, the angels stood at a distance, and their
immediate attendance and ministration were sus-
pended, that it might appear that he vanquished
Satan in his own strength, and that his victory might
be the more illustrious; and that afterward, when
Michael makes use of his angels in fighting with the
dragon and his angels, it might appear, that it is not
because he needs them, or could not do his work
without them, but because he is pleased to honour
them so far as to employ them. One angel might
have served to bring him food, but here are many
attending him, to testify their respect to him, and
their readiness to receive his commands. Behold
this! It is worth taking notice of; (1.) That as
there is a world of wicked, malicious spirits that
fight against Christ and his church, and all particu-
lar believers, so there is a world of holy, blessed
spirits engaged and employed for them. In refer-
cence also to the Church of God, his church is a
school of comfort from our communion with angels.
(2.) That Christ's victories are the angels' triumphs. The angels came to congratulate Christ on his suc-
cess, to rejoice with him, and to give him the glory
due to his name; for that was sung with a loud voice
in heaven, when the great dragon was cast out, (Rev.
12. 9, 10.) Now is come salvation and strength.
(3.) That the angels ministered to the Lord Jesus,
not only food, but whatever else he wanted after his
great fatigue. See how the instances of Christ's
condescension and humiliation were balanced with
tokens of his glory. As when he was crucified in
weakness, yet he lived by the power of God; so
when in weakness he was tempted, was hungry and
weary, yet by his divine power he commanded the
ministration of angels. Thus the Son of man did eat
and drink and work, as the Son of God; (Psa. 110. 4.)
and the angels were ministering unto him, (Luke
1. 13.) Thus the Son of man was tempted as a vec-
in the wilderness, 1 Kings 19. 4, 7. Note, Though
God may suffer his people to be brought into wants and
straits, yet he will take effectual care for their
supply, and will rather send angels to feed them,
than see them perish. Trust in the Lord, and verily
thou shalt be fed, Ps. 37. 5.

Christ was thus succoured after the temptation,
[1.] For his encouragement to go on in his under-
taking, that he might see the powers of heaven
siding with him, when he saw the powers of hell
set against him. [2.] For our encouragement to
trust in him; for as he knew, by experience, what
it was to suffer, being tempted, and how hard that
was, so he knew what it was to be succoured, being
tempted, and how comfortable that was; and there-
fore we may expect, not only that he will sympa-
thize with his tempted people, but that he will come
in with seasonable relief to them; as our great Mel-
choly, when we are tempted, comforts and supports
us in the battle, and as the angels here ministered to
him. Lastly, Christ, having been thus signalized
and made great in the invisible world by the voice of
the Father, the descent of the Spirit, his victory over
devils, and his demission over angels, was doubtless
qualified to appear in the visible world as the Medi-
ator between God and man; for consider how great
this Man was!

12. Now when Jesus had heard that
John was cast into prison, he departed into
Galilee: 13. And leaving Nazareth, he
came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is
upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabu-
lon and Nephthalim. 14. That it might be
fulfilled which was spoken by Esias the
prophet, saying, 15. The land of Zab-
lon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the
way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the
Gentiles; 16. The people which sat in
darkness saw great light: and to them
which sat in the region and shadow of
death light is sprung up. 17. From that
time Jesus began to preach, and to say,
Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at
hand.

We have here an account of Christ's preaching
in the synagogues of Galilee, for he came into the
world to be a Preacher; the great salvation which
he wrought out, he himself began to publish, (Heb.
2. 3.) to shew how much his heart was upon it, and
ours should be.

Several passages in the other gospels, especially
in that of St. John, are supposed, in the order of
the story of Christ's life, to intervene between his tem-

tation and his preaching in Galilee. His first ap-
pearance after his temptation, was when John Bat-
pist pointed to him, saying, Behold the Lamb of God,
John 1. 29. After that, he went up to Jerusalem, to
the passover. (John 2.) discoursed with Nicodemus,
(John 3.) with the woman of Samaria, (John 4.) and
then returned into Galilee, and preached there.
But Matthew, having had his residence in Galilee,
begins his story of Christ's public ministry, with his
first preaching there, which here we have an account
of, Observe,
1. The time; when Jesus had heard that John
was cast into prison, then he went into Galilee, v. 12.
Note, 'The cry of the saints' sufferings comes up into
the ears of the Lord Jesus. If John be cast into
prison, Jesus hears it, takes cognizance of it, and
stirs his course accordingly; he remembers the
causes and situations that abide his people. Observe,
1. Christ did not go into the country, till he heard
of John's imprisonment; for he must have time given
him to prepare the way of the Lord, before the Lord
himself appear. Providence wisely ordered it, that
John should be exalted before Christ shone forth;
otherwise the minds of people would have been
distracted between the two; one would have said,
'I am of John, and another, I am of John.'

Christ must be our harbinger, but not his rival. The
moon and stars are lost when the sun rises. John
had done his work by the baptism of repentance,
and then he is laid aside. The witnesses were slain when they had laid all their testimony, and not before
and this, Rev. 11. 2. He did go into the country as soon as he heard of John's imprisonment; not only to provide for his own safety, Knowing that the Pharisees in Judea were as much enemies to him as Herod was to John, but to supply the want of John Baptist, and to build upon the good foundation he had laid. Note, God will not leave himself without witness, nor his church without guides; when he removes one instrument, he can raise up another, for he has the residue of the Spirit, and he will do it, if he has work to do. *Moses my servant is dead, John is cast into prison; now therefore, Joshua, arise, Jesus, arise.*

11. The place where he preached; in Galilee, a remote part of the country, that lay farthest from Jerusalem, and was there looked upon with contempt, as rude and boorish. The ins that he took country were reckoned out, not fit for soldiers, but not polite men, or fit for scholars. Thither Christ went, there he set up the standard of his gospel; and in this, as in other things, he humbled himself. Observe,

1. The particular city he chose for his residence; not Nazareth, where he had been bred up; no, he left Nazareth; particular notice is taken of that, v. 13. He went into Galilee, and came into the country of the Gadarees, for the men of that city *thrust him out* from among them, Luke 4. 29. He made them his first, and a very fair, offer of his service, but they rejected him and his doctrine, and were filled with indignation at him and it; and therefore he left Nazareth, and shook off the dust of his feet for a testimony against those there, who would not have him to teach them. Nazareth was the first place that refused Christ, and was therefore refused by him. Note, It is just with God, to take the gospel and the means of grace from those that slight them, and thrust them away. Christ will not stay long where he is not welcome. Unhappy Nazareth! *If thou hast known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace, how well had it been for thee!* But now they are hid from thine eyes.

2. He did lay dwelt in Capernaum, which was a city of Galilee, but many miles distant from Nazareth, a great city and of much resort. It is said here to be *on the sea coast, not the great sea, but the sea of Tiberias, an inland water, called also the lake of Gennesaret.* Close by the falling of Jordan into this sea stood Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphtali, but bordering upon Zebulun; hither Christ came, and here he dwelt. Some think that his father Joseph had a habitat here, others, that he had it in Nazareth. Note, If some reject Christ, yet others will receive him, and bid him welcome. Capernaum is glad of Nazareth's leavings. If Christ's own countrymen be not gathered, yet he will be glorious. "And thou, Capernaum, hast now a day of it; thou art now lifted up to heaven; be wise for thyself, and know the time of thine visitation."

The prophecy that was fulfilled in this, v. 14—15. It is quoted, Isa. 9. 1, 2, but with some variation. The prophet in that place is foretelling a greater darkness of affliction to befal the contemporaries of Immanuel, than befell the countries there mentioned, either in their first captivity under Babylon, which was but light, (1 Kings 15. 20.) or in their second captivity under the Assyrian, which was much heavier, 2 Kings 15. 29. The punishment of the Jewish nation for rejecting the gospel, should be sorer than either; (see Isa. 8. 21, 22.) for those captivated places had some reviving in their bondage, and saw a great light again, ch. 9. 12. This is Isaiah's sense; but the Scripture has many fulfilments; and the Evangelist here takes only the latter clause, which speaks of the return of the light of liberty and prosperity to those countries that had been in the darkness of captivity, and applies it to the appearing of the gospel among them.

The places are spoken of, v. 15. *The land of Zebulun is rightly said to be by the sea coast,* for Zebulun was a haven of ships, and rejected in her going out, Gen. 49. 13. *Deut. 33. 18.* Of Napthali, it had been said, that he should *give good words,* (Gen. 49. 21.) and should be *satisfied with favour,* (Deut. 33. 22.) that is, he should be satisfied with the fulness of grace and peace which God would be pleased to bestow upon all the Gentiles. In this sense the text may be applied to the New Testament. The fulness of grace and peace which was given to the Gentiles by the gospel, was just such a fulness as is therein spoken of, which had a diffusive influence did the Sun of righteousness cast.

Now, concerning the inhabitants of these places, observe, (1.) The posture they were in before the gospel came among them; (v. 16.) they were in darkness. Note, Those that are without Christ, are in the dark, nay, they are darkness itself; as the darkness that was upon the *face of the deep.* Nay, they were dead, as under the *day of the shadow of death,* and the dead cannot see but through a glass in the dark. And the dead were not only great darkness, as the grave is a land of darkness, but great danger. A man that is desperately sick, and not likely to recover, is in the valley of the shadow of death, though not quite dead; so the poor people were in the borders of damnation, though not yet damned, dead in law. And, which is worst of all, they were *sitting in this condition.* Sitting is a continuing posture; where we sit, we are of a certain station, are likely to be in a certain condition, and likely to be so, despairing to find the way out. And it is a contested posture; they were in the dark, and they loved darkness, they chose it rather than light; they were willingly ignorant. Their condition was sad; it is still the condition of many great and mighty nations, which are to be thought of, and prayed for, with pity. But *their condition is more sad, who sit in darkness in the midst of gospel-light.* For that is in the dark because it is good light, may be sure that the sun will shortly arise; but he that is in the dark because he is blind, will not so soon have his eyes opened. We have the light, but what will that avail us, if we be not light in the Lord? (2.) The privilege they enjoyed, when Christ and his gospel came among them; it was as great a reviving as ever light was to a benighted traveller. Note, When the gospel comes, light comes; when it comes to any place, when it comes to any soul, it makes day there, John 3. 19. Luke 1. 78, 79. Light is discovering, it is directing; so is the gospel.

It is a great light; denoting the clearness and evidence of gospel-revelations; not like the light of a candle, but the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. *Great in comparison with the light of the law, the shadows of which were now done away.* It is a light of the world, and of vast consequence; it will last long, and spread far. And it is a growing light, intimating in that word, It is *springing up.* It was but *spring of day* with them; now the day dawned, which afterward *shone more and more.* The gospel-kingdom, like a
grain of mustard-seed, or the morning-light, was small in its beginnings, gradual in its growth, but great in its perfection. 

We observe, The light sprang up to them; they did not go to seek it; but were prevented with the blessings of this goodness. It came upon them ere they were aware, at the time appointed, by the disposal of him who commanded the morning, and causes the day-spring to know its place, that it may take hold of the ends of the earth, Job 38. 12, 13.

The text he preached upon is mentioned, v. 17. From that time, that is, from the time of his coming into Galilee, into the hand of Zachanah and Nabhath, from that time, he began to preach. He had been preaching, before this, in Judea, and had made and baptized many disciples; (John 4. 1.) but his preaching was not so public and constant as now it began to be. The work of the ministry is so great and awful, that it is fit to be entered upon by steps and gradual advances.

The subject which Christ dwelt upon now in his preaching, (and it was indeed the sum and substance of all his preaching,) was the very same that John had preached upon; (ch. 3. 2.) Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; for the gospel is the same for substance under various dispensations; the commands the same, and the reasons to enforce them the same; an angel from heaven daries not preach and publish the same, (Ch. 3. 1.) and will preach for it is the everlasting gospel. Fear God, and, by repentance, give honour to him, Rev. 14. 6, 7. Christ put a great respect upon John’s ministry, when he preached to the same purport that he had preached before him. By this he showed that John was his messenger and ambassador; for when he brought the errand himself, it was the same that he had sent by him. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; Isa. 44. 26. The Son came on the same errand that the servants came on, (ch. 21. 37.) to seek fruit, fruits meet for repentance. Christ had lain in the bosom of the Father, and could have preached sublime notions of divine and heavenly things, that should have alarmed and amused the learned world, but he pitches upon this old, plain text, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, Luke 6. 27.

[1.] This he preached first upon; he began with this. Ministers must not be ambitious of broaching new opinions, framing new schemes, or coinning new expressions, but must content themselves with plain, practical things, with the word that is nigh us, even in our mouth, and in our heart. We need not go up to heaven, nor down to the deep, for matter or language in our preaching. As John prepared Christ’s way, so Christ prepared his own, and made way for the farther discoveries he designed, with the doctrine of repentance. If any man will do this part of his will, he shall know more of his doctrine, John 7. 17. [2.] This he preached often upon; wherever he went, this was his subject, and neither he nor his followers ever reckoned it worn threadbare, as those would do that have one, that have itching ears, and are fond of novelty and variety, which is not in the nature of things, nor in the method of preaching, so truly edifying. Note, That which has been preached and heard before, may yet very profitably be preached and heard again; but then it should be preached and heard better, and with new affections; what Paul had said before, he said again, weaving, Phil. 3. 1, 18. [3.] This he preached as gospel; that it was the word of God, and the means of change and return to yourselves. Note, The doctrine of repentance is right gospel-doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, who was looked upon as a melancholy, morose man, but the sweet and gracious Jesus, whose lips dropped as a honey-comb, preached repentance; for it is an unspeakable privilege that room is left for repentance. [4.] The reason is still the same; The kingdom of heaven is at hand; for it was not reckoned to be fully come; till the pouring out of the Spirit after Christ’s ascension. John had preached the kingdom of heaven at hand above a year before this; but now that it was so much nearer, the argument was so much of effect, as now is in the faith of the Angal, Rom. 13. 11. We should be so much the more quickened to our duty, as we see the day approaching, Heb. 10. 25.

18. And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers of men. 19. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. 20. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21. And going on from thence, he saw another two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. 22. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

When Christ began to preach, he began to gather disciples, who should now be the hearers, and hereafter the preachers, of his doctrine, who should now be witnesses of his miracles, and hereafter concerning them. Now, in these verses, we have an account of the first disciples that he called into fellowship with himself.

And this was an instance, 1. Of effectual calling to Christ. In all his preaching he gave a common call to repentance; but this was a particular call to those that were given him by the Father. Let us see and admire the power of Christ’s grace, own his word to be the rod of his strength, and wait upon him for those powerful influences which are necessary to the efficacy of the gospel-call—those distinguishing influences. All the country was called, but these were called out, were redeemed from amongst men. Christ gave so peculiar a call to those that were given him by the Father, that he was not manifested unto the world. 2. It was an instance of ordination, and appointment to the work of the ministry. When Christ, as a Teacher, set up his great school, one of his first works was to appoint ushers, or under-masters, to be employed in the work of instruction. Now he began to give gifts unto men, to put the treasure into earthen vessels. It was an early instance of his care for his church.

Now we may observe here.

1. Where they were called—by the sea of Galilee, where Jesus was walking, Capernaum being situated near that sea. Concerning this sea of Tiberias, the Jews have a saying, That of all the seven seas that God made, he made choice of none but this sea of Genesaret; which is very applicable to Christ’s ministry, as it is the sea of Galilee, and as he ministered with his presence and miracles. Here, on the banks of the sea, Christ was walking for contemplation, as Isaac in the field; hither he went to call disciples: not to Herod’s court, (for few mighty or noble are called,) not to Jerusalem, among the chief priests and the elders, but to the sea of Galilee; surely Christ sees not as man sees. Not but that the same power which effectually called Peter and Andrew, would have wrought upon Annas and Caiaphas, for with God nothing is impossible; but, as in other things, so in his converse and attendance, he would humble himself, and show that God has chosen the poor of this world. Galilee was a remote part of the nation, the inhabitants were less cultivated and refined, their very language was broad and uncouth to the
curious, their speech bewrayed them. They who were picked up at the sea of Galilee, had not the advantages and improvements, no, not of the more polished Galileans; yet thither Christ went, to call his apostles that were to be the prime ministers of state in his kingdom. For he chose the fouls things of this world, to confound the wise.

II. Who they were. We have an account of the call of two pairs of brothers in these verses—Peter and Andrew, James and John; the two former, and, probably, the two latter also, had had acquaintance with Christ before, (John 1. 40, 41.) but were not till now called into a close and constant attendance upon him. Note, Christ brings poor souls by degrees, and not all at once, to follow him, the same as his disciples of John, and so were the better disposed to follow Christ. Note, Those who have submitted to the discipline of repentance, shall be welcome to the joys of faith. We may observe concerning them,

1. That they were brothers. Note, It is a blessed thing, when they who are kinsmen according to the flesh, (as the apostle speaks, Rom. 9. 3.) are brought together into a spiritual alliance with Jesus Christ. It is the honour of a house, and of those that are of the same family, are of God's family.

2. That they were fishers. Being fishermen, (1.) They were poor men: if they had had estates, or any considerable stock in trade, they would not have made it their trade, however they might have made it their recreation. Note, Christ does not despise the poor, and therefore we must not; the poor are evangelized, and the Fountain of honour sometimes gives more abundant honour to that part which most lacked. (2.) They were unlearned men, not bred up to books or literature as Moses was, who was conversant with all the learning of the Egyptians. Note, Christ sometimes chooses to endow those with the gifts of grace who have least to show of the gifts of nature. Yet this will not justify the bold intrusion of ignorant and unqualified men into the work of the ministry; extraordinary gifts of knowledge and spiritual endowment are not now to be expected, but requisite abilities must be obtained in an ordinary way, and without a competent measure of these, none are to be admitted to that service. (3.) They were men of business, who had been bred up to labour. Note, Diligence in an honest calling is pleasing to Christ, and no hindrance to a holy life. Moses was called from keeping sheep, and David from following the ewes, to be mighty men to display his might. He was open to the temptations of Satan than to the calls of God. (4.) They were men that were accustomed to hardships and hazards; the fisher's trade, more than any other, is laborious and perilous; fishermen must be often wet and cold; they must watch, and wait, and toil, and be often in peril by water. Note, Those who have learned to bear hardships, and to run hazards, are best prepared for the fellowship and service of Christ. Good soldiers of Christ must endure hardness.

III. What they were doing. Peter and Andrew were then using their nets, they were fishing; and James and John were mending their nets, which was an instance of their industry and good husbandry. They did not go to their father for money to buy new nets, but took pains to mend their old ones. It is commendable to make what we have as far, and last as we can, and make use of what we have. Note, their father Zebedee, ready to assist him, and make his business easy to him. Note, It is a happy and hopeful presage, to see children careful of their parents, and dutiful to them. Observe, 1. They were all employed, all very busy, and none idle. Note, When Christ comes, it is good to be found doing. "Am I in Christ?" is a very needful question for us to ask ourselves; and, next to that, "Am I in my calling?" 2. They were differently employed; two of them were fishing, and two of them mending their nets. Note, Ministers should be always employed, either in teaching or studying; they may always find themselves something to do, if it be not their own fault; and mending their nets is, in its season, as necessary work as fish for Christ. IV. What the call was. (v. 19.) Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. They had followed Christ before, as ordinary discipless, (John 1. 37.) but so they might follow Christ, and follow their calling too; therefore they were called to a more close and constant attendance, and must leave their calling. Note, Even they who have been called to follow Christ, have need to be called to follow on, and those who have been so called, and so designed for the work of the ministry. Observe, 1. What Christ intended them for; I will make you fishers of men, this alludes to their former calling. Let them not be proud of the new honour designed them, they are still but fishers; let them not be afraid of the new work cut out for them, for they have been used to fishing, and fishers they are still. It was usual with Christ to speak of spiritual and heavenly things by such images, and in such expressions, as took rise from common things that offered themselves to his view. David was called from feeding sheep to feed God's Israel; and when he is a king, is a shepherd. Note, (1.) Ministers are fishers of men, not to destroy them, but to save them, by bringing them into another element. They must fish, not for wrath, wealth, and preference, to gain them to themselves, but for souls, rejoicing that they have gained them to Christ. They watch for your souls. (Heb. 13. 17.) and seek not yours, but you. 2 Cor. 12. 14, 16. (2.) It is Jesus Christ that makes them so; I will make you fishers of men. It is he that qualifies men for this work, calls them to it, authorizes them in it, and gives them success in it, gives them commission to fish for souls, and wisdom to win them. Those ministers are likely to have comfort in their work, who are thus made by Jesus Christ.

2. What they must do in order to this; Follow me. They must separate themselves to a diligent attendance on him, and set themselves to a humble imitation of him; must follow him as their Leader. Note, (1.) Those whom Christ employs in any service for him, must first be fitted and qualified for it. (2.) Those who would preach Christ, must first learn Christ, and learn of him. How can we expect to bring others to the knowledge of Christ, if we do not know him well ourselves? (3.) Those who would get an acquaintance with Christ, must be diligent and constant in their attendance on him. The apostles were prepared for their work, by accompanying Christ all the time that he went in and out among them, Acts 1. 21. There is no learning comparable to that which is got by following Christ. Joshua, by accompanying Moses, was fitted to be his successor. (4.) Those who are to fish for men, must first follow Christ, and do it as he did, with diligence, faithfulness, and tenderness. Christ is the great Pattern for preachers, and they ought to be workers together with him.

V. What was the success of this call. Peter and Andrew straightway left their nets; (v. 20.) and James and John immediately left the ship and their father. (v. 21.) Note, Those who would follow Christ, must leave all to follow him. Every christian must leave all in affection, sit loose to all, must hate father and mother, (Luke 14. 26.) must love them less than Christ, must be ready to part with his interest in them rather than with his interest in Jesus Christ; but those who are devoted to the work of the ministry are, in a special manner, concerned to disentangle themselves from all the affairs of this life, that
they may give themselves wholly to that work which
requires the whole man. Now,
1. This instance of the power of the Lord Jesus
gives us good encouragement to depend upon
the sufficiency of his grace. How strong and effectual
is his word! He speaks, and it is done. The same
power goes along with this word of Christ, Follow
me, that went along with that of Moses, Let my people
come out, &c. Ps. 110. 3.
2. This instance of the pliability of the disciples,
gives us a good example of obedience to the com-
mand of Christ. Note, It is the good property of all
Christ's faithful servants to come when they are
called, and to follow their Master wherever he leads
them. They objected not their present employ-
ments, their engagements to their families, the diffi-
culties of their way; but, with hearts willing, to, or
their own unfitness for it; but, being called, they obeyed,
and, like Abraham, went out not knowing whither
they went, but knowing very well whom they fol-
lowed. James and John left their father, it is not
said what became of him; their mother Salome was
a constant follower of Christ; no doubt, their father
Zebedee was a believer, but he called to follow Christ
fastened on the young ones. Youth is the learning
age, and the labouring age. The priests ministered
in the prime of their time.
23. And Jesus went about all Galilee,
teaching in their synagogues, and preach-
ing the gospel of the kingdom, and healing
all manner of sickness and all manner of
disease among the people. 24. And his
fame went throughout all Syria: and they
brought unto him all sick people that were
taken with divers diseases and torments,
and those which were possessed with de-
vils, and those which were lunatic, and
those that had the palsy; and he healed
them. 25. And there followed him great
multitudes of people from Galilee, and
from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and
from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.
See here, 1. What an industrious preacher Christ was; He
went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues,
and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Observe,
1. What Christ preached—the gospel of the king-
dom. The kingdom of heaven, that is, of grace and
glory, is emphatically the kingdom, the kingdom that
was now to come; the kingdom which shall survive,
as it doth surpass, all the kingdoms of the earth.
The gospel is the charter of that kingdom, contain-
ing the King's coronation oath, by which he has gra-
ciously obliged himself to pardon, protect, and save
the subjects of that kingdom; it contains also their
oath of allegiance, by which they oblige themselves
to observe his statutes and seek his honour; this is the
gospel of the kingdom; this Christ was himself
the Preacher of, that our faith in it might be con-
firmed, to which he so frequently points in the synagogues;
not there only, but there chiefly, because sometimes
the places of concourse, where wisdom was to lift
up her voice; (Prov. 1. 21.) because they were
places of concourse for religious worship, and there,
it was to be hoped, the minds of the people would
be prepared to receive the gospel; and there the
scriptures of the Old Testament were read, the ex-
positions of which he held easily introduce the gospel
of the kingdom. 3. What he did in preaching; He went about all Galilee, teaching. He might
have issued out a proclamation to summon all to
come to him; but, to show his humility, and the
condescensions of his grace, he goes to them; for
he waits to be gracious, and comes to seek and save.
Josephus says, There were about two hundred cities
and towns in Galilee, and all, or most of them,
Christ visited. He went about doing good. Never
was there such an itinerant preacher, such an inde-
fatigable one, as Christ was; he went from town to
town, from day to day, and night to night, as
the Spirit of God. This is an example to ministers, to
lay themselves out to do good, and to be instant and constant,
in season, and out of season, to preach the word.
II. What a powerful Physician Christ was; he
went about, not only teaching, but healing, and with
his word, that he might magnify that above all
his name. He sent his word, and healed them.
Now observe,
1. What diseases he cured—all without excep-
tion. He healed all manner of sickness, and all man-
ner of disease. There are diseases which are called
the refractions of physicians, being obstinate to all the
methods they can prescribe; but even those were
the glory of this Physician, for he healed them all,
however invertebrate. His word was the true pan-
acea.

Three general words are here used to intimate
this; he healed every sickeness, above, as blindness,
lameness, fever, dropsy; every disease, or languishing,
paralysis, as fluxes and consumptions; and all
torments, paralyses, as gout, stone, convulsions,
and such like torturing distempers; whether the disease
was acute or chronic; whether it was a raging or a wasting
disease; none was too bad, none too weak, none too
incurable, to be healed by a word's speaking.
Three particular diseases are specified; the palsy,
which is the greatest weakness of the body; lissuny,
which is the greatest malady of the mind; and posses-
sion of the Devil, which is the greatest misery
and calamity of both; yet Christ healed all: for he
is the sovereign Physician both of soul and body,
and has command of all diseases.
2. What patients he had. A Physician who was
so easy of access, so sure of success, who cured im-
mediately, without either a painful suspense and
expectation, or such painful remedies as are worse
than the disease; who cured gratis, and took no
fees, could not but have abundance of patients. See
here what flocking there was to him from all parts;
great multitudes of people came, not only from Ga-
ilee, but from the country about that town of Jerusa-
lem, and from Judea, which lay a great way off;
for his fame went throughout all Syria, not only
among all the people of the Jews, but among the
neighbouring nations, which, by the report that now
spread far and near concerning him, would be pre-
pared to receive his gospel, when afterwards it
should be brought them. This is given as the rea-
son why multitudes came to him. Note, What we
hear of Christ from others, should invite us to invite
him. The queen of Sheba was invited, by the fame of
Solomon, to pay him a visit. The voice of fame is,
"Come, and see." Christ both taught and healed.
They who came for cures, met with instruction con-
cerning the things that belonged to their peace. It
is well if any thing will bring people to Christ; and
they who come to him, will find more in him than
they expected, and more than they could have
imagined. Nothing else will do for those who are
Syrian, coming to be healed of their diseases, many
of them became converts. 2 Kings 5. 15, 17. They
sought health for the body, and obtained the salva-
tion of the soul; like Saul, who sought the asses,
and found the kingdom. Yet it appeared, by the
issue, that many of those who rejoiced in Christ as a
Healer, forgot him as a Teacher.
Now concerning the cures which Christ wrought,
let us, once for all, observe the miracle, the mercy,
and the mystery of them.
1. The miracle of them. They were wrought
in such a manner, as plainly speak them to be the immediate products of a divine and supernatural power; and they were God's seal to his commission. Nature could not do these things, it was the God of nature; the cures were many, of diseases incurable by the art of the physician, of persons that were strangers, of all ages and conditions; the cures were wrought openly, before many witnesses, in mixed companies of persons that would have denied the matter of fact, if they could have had any colour for it. No cure ever failed, or was afterward called in question; they were wrought speedily, and not (as cures by natural causes) gradually; they were perfect cures, and wrought with a worldly speaking; all which proves him a Teacher come from God, for, otherwise, none could have done the works that he did, John 3. 2. He appeals to these as credentials, ch. 11. 4. 5. John 5. 35. It was expected that the Messiah should work miracles, (John 7. 31.) miracles of this nature; (Isa. 35. 6.) and we have this indisputable proof of his being the Messiah; never was there any man that did thus; and therefore his healing and his preaching gentry, (as John would have us think,) and the same went together, for the former confirmed the latter; thus here he began to do and to teach, Acts 1. 1.

(2.) The mercy of them. The miracles that Moses wrought, to prove his mission, were most of them plagues and judgments, to intimidate the terror of that dispensation, though from God; but the miracles that Christ wrought, were all of them blessings (except the cursing of the barren fig-tree) blessings and favours; for the gospel-dispensation is founded, and built up, in love, and grace, and sweetness; and the management is such as tends not to affright but to allure us to obedience. Christ designed by his cures to win upon people, and to ingratiate himself and his doctrine into their minds, and so to draw them with the bands of love. Hos. 11. 4. The miracle of him proved, his doctrine a faithful saying, and convinced men's judgments; the mercy of them proved it worthy of all acclamation, and wrought upon their affections. They were not only great works, but good works, that he showed them from his Father; (John 10. 32.) and his goodness was intended to lead men to repentance, (Rom. 2. 4.) as also to show that kindness, and beneficence, and doing good to all, to the utmost of our power, and opportunity, are essential branches of that holy religion which Christ came into the world to establish. (3.) The mystery of them. Christ, by curing bodily diseases, intended to show that his great errand into the world was to cure spiritual maladies. He is the Sun of Righteousness, that arises with this healing under his wings. As the Conventor of sinners, he is the Physician of souls, and has taught us that his very presence is medicinal, and a cure, as our rule, v. 17. But in the world, in this case, it is the words and wondrous works that are directed to this end, and are spoken of as medicinal. It is to show that the devil, the enemy, and all his operations, are the power of sin and corruption; and to that end, the miracle of healing was spoken of as medicinal. God sent forth his Son that he might have life in him, John 3. 17.
an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the law was given; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the christian law. But observe the difference: when the law was given, the Lord came down upon the mountain; now the Lord went up: then, he spake in thunder and lightning; now, in a still small voice; then the people were ordered to keep their distance; now they are invited to a blessed change! If God’s grace and goodness are (as certainly they are) his glory, then the glory of the gospel is the glory that excels, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 3. 7. Heb. 12. 18. &c. It was foretold of Zebedan and Issaachar, two of the tribes of Galilee, (Dent. 33. 19.) that they shall call the people to the mountain; to this mountain we are called, to learn to offer the sacrifices of righteouness. Now was this the mountain of the Lord, where he taught as his ways, Isa. 2. 2. 3. Mic. 4. 1. 2.

III. The auditors were his disciples, who came unto him; came at his call, as appears by comparing Mark 3. 13. Luke 6. 13. To them he directed his speech, because they followed him for love and learning, while others attended him only for cures. He taught them, that he was willing to be taught; (the meek will he teach his way;) because they would understand what he taught, which to others was foolishness; and because they were to teach others; and it was therefore requisite that they should have a clear and distinct knowledge of these things themselves. The duties prescribed in this sermon were to be conscientiously performed by all those that would enter into that kingdom of heaven which they were set up, with hope, to have the benefit of it. But though this discourse was directed to the disciples, it was in the hearing of the multitude; for it is said, (ch. 7. 28.) The people were astonished. No bounds were set about this mountain, to keep the people off, as were about mount Sinai; (Exod. 19. 12.) for, through Christ, we have access to God, not only to speak to him, but to hear from him. Nay, he had an eye to the multitude, in preaching this sermon. When the fame of his miracles had brought a vast crowd together, he took the opportunity of so great a confluence of people, to instruct them. Note, It is an encouragement to a faithful minister to cast the net of the gospel where there are a great many fishes, in hope that some will be caught. The sight of a multitude puts life into a preacher, which yet must arise from a desire of their profit, not his own praise.

IV. The solemnity of his sermon is intimated in that word, when he was set. Christ preached many times occasionally, and by interlocutory discourses; but this was a set sermon, καθὼς ὁ διάκονος ἔλαβε τοῦτον, when he had placed himself so as to be best heard. He sat down as a Judge or Lawgiver. It intimates with what dignity and solemnity composed and the approbation of God should be spoken and heard. He sat, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, (Mal. 3. 3.) He shall sit as a refiner, to purge away the dross, the corrupt doctrines of the sons of Levi. He sat as in the throne, judging right; (Ps. 9. 4.) for the word he speak shall judge us. That phrase, He opened his mouth, is only a Hebrew periphrasis of speaking, as Job 3. 1. Yet it intimates the importance of this discourse; the congregation being large, he required his voice, and spake louder than usual. He had spoken long by his servants the prophets, and opened their mouths; (Ezek. 3. 27. 24. 27. 31. 22.) but now he opened his own, and spake with freedom, as one having authority. One of the ancients has this remark upon it; Christ taught much without opening his mouth, that is, by his holy and exemplary life; nay, he taught, when, being led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth; but now he opened his mouth, and taught, that the scriptures might be fulfilled, Prov. 8. 1, 2, 6. Doth not Wisdom cry—cry on the top of high places? And the opening of her lips shall be right things. He taught them, according to the promise, (Isa. 54. 13.) All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; for this purpose he had the tongue of the learned, (Isa. 53. 4.) and the Spirit of the Lord, Isa. 11. 2. He taught them, which were the end and they could bear, and what the good they should abide and abound in; for Christianity is not a matter of speculation, but is designed to regulate the temper of our minds and the tenor of our conversations; gospel-time is a time of reformation; (Heb. 9. 10;) and by the gospel we must be reformed, must be made good, must be made better. The truth, as it is in Jesus, is the truth which is according to godliness, 1 Th. 1. 1.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Christ begins his sermon with blessings, for he came into the world to bless us, (Acts 3. 26.) as the great High-Priest of our profession; as the blessed Melchizedec; as He in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed, Gen. 12. 3. He came not only to purchase the evil they, but to take it away; and pronounce blessings on us; and here he does it as one having authority, as one that can command the blessing, even life for evermore, and that is the blessing here again and again promised to the good; his pronouncing of them happy makes them so; for those whom he blesses, are blessed indeed. The Old Testament ended with a curse, (Mal. 4. 6.) the New Testament begins with a blessing; and Christ invited them to another blessing, that we should inherit the blessing. Each of the blessings Christ here pronounces has a double intention: 1. To show who they are that are to be accounted truly happy, and what their characters are. 2. What that is—wherein true happiness consists in the promises made to persons of certain characters, the performance of which will make them happy.
ent the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf; happy the people that is such a case; and their designs, aims, and purposes are acceptable, they will bless the Lord, (Ps. 10. 3.) they will be red.

Now our Lord Jesus came to correct this fundamental error, to advance a new hypothesis, and to give us quite another notion of blessedness and blessed people, which, however paradoxical it may appear to those who are prejudiced, yet is in itself, and appears to be to all who are savingly enlightened, a rule and doctrine of eternal truth and certainty, by which all must be judged. If this, therefore, be the beginning of Christianity, not beginning of a christian's practice must be to take his measures of happiness from those maxims, and to direct his pursuits accordingly.

2. It is designed to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel, by assuring them that his gospel did not make those only happy that were eminent in gifts, graces, comforts, and usefulness; but that even the least in the kingdom of heaven, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honours and privileges of that kingdom.

3. It is designed to invite souls to Christ, and to make way for his law into their hearts. Christ's pronouncing these blessings, not at the end of his sermon, to dismiss the people, may remind us of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, on whose blessings we may depend when the law were read, Deut. 27. 12. &c. There the curses are expressed, and the blessings only implied; here the blessings are expressed, and the curses implied: in both, life and death are set before us; but the law appeared more as a ministration of death, to deter us from sin; the gospel as a dispensation of life, to allure us to Christ, in whom alone all good is to be found. And he by whom these gracious words were wrought by his hand, (ch. 4. 23, 24.) and who heard the gracious words proceeding out of his mouth, would say that he was all of a piece, made up of love and sweetness.

4. It is designed to settle and sum up the articles of agreement between God and man. The scope of the divine revelation is to let us know what God expects from us, and what we may then expect from him. He has now more fully set forth in a few words than here, nor with a more congruity to each other; and that is that gospel which we are required to believe; for what is faith but a conformity to these characters, and a dependence upon these promises? The way to happiness is here opened, and made a highway; (Isa. 35. 8.) and this coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ, it is intimated that from him, and by him, we are to receive both the seed and the fruit; both the grace required, and the glory promised. Nothing passes through the heart of a wretched and fallen man, but through his hand. Some of the wiser heathen had notions of blessedness different from the rest of mankind, and looking toward this of our Saviour. Seneca, undertaking to describe a blessed man, makes it out, that it is only an honest, good man that is to be so called: De Vida beati. V. "Cui multum bonus malumque sit, nisi bonus multus animus, et excellens fortitudo, nec fragant—Cui vera voluptas, nec bona multa—Cui contemptus—Cui tum bonus honestas, tum malum turpitudine. In whom estimation nothing is good or evil, but a good or evil heart—Whom no occurrences slavely or defect—Whose true pleasure consists in a contempt of pleasure—To whom the only good is virtuous, and the only evil vice."

Our Lord Jesus gives us eight characters of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a christian. On each of them a present blessing is pronounced; Blessed are they; and to each a future blessedness is promised, which is variously expressed, so as to suit the nature of the grace or duty recommended.

Do we ask then who are happy? It is answered, 1. The poor in spirit are happy, v. 3. There is a poverty of spirit that is so far from making men blessed, that it is a sin and a sorrow, and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ. To be poor in spirit, is, 1. To be contentedly poor, willing to be empty of worldly wealth, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is low; and to commit all things to a wise dispensation, high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining, and blaming their lot, but we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must know how to be abused, Phil. 4. 12. Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments, which may befall us in the most prosperous state. It is not, in pride or pretence, to make ourselves poor, by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who vew poverty, and yet encroach the wealth of nations; but, if we be rich in the world, we must be poor in spirit, that is, we must confound the poor, and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities. We must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience, Heb. 10. 34. Job was poor in spirit, when he blessed God in taking away, as well as giving. 2. It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be poor in spirit, is to think meanly of ourselves, to value what we are, and do; the poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those that are at ease, and the proud; it is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves, weak, foolish, and insignificant, ch. 18. 4—19. 14. Laodicea was poor in spirituals, wretchedly and miserably poor, and yet rich in spirit, so well increased with goods, as to have need of nothing, Rev. 3. 17. On the other hand, Paul was rich in spirituals, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet poor, out of love to the poor, though worse than the least of all saints, and nothing in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others, and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and mean, and little, to do good; to become all things to all men. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy, and we are sinful; that he is all, and we are nothing, less than nothing, and wretched, to be willing to humble ourselves before him, and under his mighty hand. 3. It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength, that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification, and the Spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That broken and contrite spirit with which the publican cried for mercy to a poor sinner, is this poverty of spirit. Who is poor, because he is always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house. Now, (1.) This poverty in spirit is put first among the christian graces. The philosophers did not reckon humility among their moral virtues, but Christ puts it first. Self-denial is the first lesson to be learned in his school, and poverty of spirit entitled to the first foundation. The foundation of all other graces is laid in humility. Those who would
build high, must begin low; and it is an excellent preparation for the entrance of gospel-grace into the soul; it fits the soil to receive the seed. Those who are weary and heavy laden, are the poor in spirit, and they shall find rest with Christ.

2. They are blessed. Now they are so, in this world. God looks graciously upon them. They are his little ones, and have their angels. To them labor, whether they be rich or poor, easy or heavy, is easy, and they are easy to themselves and all about them, and nothing comes amiss to them; while high spirits are always uneasy.

3. There is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of grace is composed of such; they only are fit to be members of Christ's church, which is called the congregation of the poor. (Ps. 74. 19.) The kingdom of glory is prepared from those who humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The great, high spirits go away with the glory of the kingdoms of the earth; but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of the kingdom of heaven. We are ready to think concerning these who are rich, and do good with their riches, that, no doubt, theirs is the kingdom of this world; but we can thus far say, in store a good security for the time to come; but what shall the poor do, who have not wherewithal to do good? Why, the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor, as to those who are usefully rich. If I am not able to spend cheerful for his sake, if I can but want cheerfully for his sake, even that shall be recompensed. And do not receive a good Master then?

II. They that mourn are happy; (v. 4.) Blessed are they that mourn. This is another strange blessing, and fits suddenly the former. The poor are accustomed to mourn, the graciously poor mourn graciously. We are apt to think, Blessed are the merry; but Christ, who was himself a great Mourner, says, Blessed are the mourners. There is a sinful mourning, which is an enemy to blessedness—the sorrow of the world; despairing melancholy upon a spiritual account, and disconsolate grief upon a temporal account. There is a natural mourning, which may prove a friend to blessedness, by the grace of God working with it, and sanctifying the afflictions to us, for which we mourn. But there is a gracious mourning, which qualifies for blessedness, a habitual seriousness, the mind mortified to mirth, and an actual brokenness of spirit, a confession of our own sins; this is godly sorrow, a sorrow according to God; sorrow for sin, with an eye to Christ, Zech. 12. 10. Those are God's mourners, who live a life of repentance, who lament the corruption of their nature, and their many actual transgressions, and God's withdrawings from them; and who, out of regard to God's honour, mourn also for the sins of others, and sigh and cry for their abominations, Ezek. 9. 4. 2. A sympathizing mourning for the afflictions of others; the mourning of those who weep with them that weep, are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, for the desolations of Zion, (Zech. 3. 18. Ps. 137. 1.) especially who look with compassion on perishing souls, and weep over them, as Christ over Jerusalem.

1. These gracious mourners, (1.) Are blessed. As in vain and sinful laughter the heart is sorrowful, so in gracious mourning the heart has a serious joy, a secret satisfaction, which a stranger does not intermeddle with. They are blessed, for they are like the Lord Jesus, who was a man of sorrows, and of whom we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. They are armed against the many temptations of the flesh, against the world, and are prepared for the comforts of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

2. They shall be comforted. Though perhaps they are not immediately comforted, yet plentiful provi-
of the divine favour. 1. Righteousness is here put for all spiritual blessings. See Ps. 24. 5.—ch. 6. 33. They are purchased for us by the righteousness of Christ; conveyed and secured by the imputation of that righteousness to us; and confirmed by the faithfulness of God. To have Christ made of God to us Righteousness, and to be made the righteousness of God in him; to have the whole man renewed in righteousness, so as to become a new man, and to bear the image of God; to have an interest in Christ and the promises—this is righteousness.

2. These we must hunger and thirst after. We must truly and really desire them, as one who is hungry and thirsty desires meat and drink, who cannot be satisfied with any thing but meat and drink, and will be satisfied with them, though other things be sweeter. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and imperative: "Grant these, or else I die; every thing else is cross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else." Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The question is, how to give these appetites of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his Practical Catechism, distinguishes between hunger and thirst. Hunger is a desire of food to sustain, such is satisfaction; righteousness. Thirst is the desire of drink to refresh, such is justifying righteousness, and the sense of our pardon.

Those who thus hunger and thirst after spiritual blessings, are blessed in those desires, and shall be filled with those blessings. (1.) They are blessed in those desires. Though all desires of grace are not grace, (elevated, faint desires are not;) yet such a desire is a proof of some inward principle. Our desires of spiritual blessings must be earnest and imperative: "Grant these, or else I die; every thing else is cross and chaff, unsatisfying; give me these, and I have enough, though I had nothing else." Hunger and thirst are appetites that return frequently, and call for fresh satisfactions; so these holy desires rest not in any thing attained, but are carried out toward renewed pardons, and daily fresh supplies of grace. The question is, how to give these appetites of righteousness, grace to do the work of every day in its day, as duly as the living body calls for food. Those who hunger and thirst will labour for supplies; so we must not only desire spiritual blessings, but take pains for them in the use of the appointed means. Dr. Hammond, in his Practical Catechism, distinguishes between hunger and thirst. Hunger is a desire of food to sustain, such is satisfaction; righteousness. Thirst is the desire of drink to refresh, such is justifying righteousness, and the sense of our pardon.

V. The merciful are happy, v. 7. This, like the rest, is a paradox; for the merciful are not taken to be the wisest, nor are likely to be the richest; yet Christ pronounces them blessed. Those are the merciful, who are piously and charitably inclined to pity, help, and succour, persons in misery. A man may he truly merciful, who has not wherewithal to be merciful, if he be so disposed; who does but what is in his own willing mind. We must not only bear our own afflictions patiently, but we must, by christian sympathy, partake of the afflictions of our brethren; pity must be showed, (Job 6. 14.) and bowls of mercy put on; (Col. 3. 12.) and, being put on, they must put forth themselves in contributing all we can for the assistance of those who are any way in misery. We must have compassion on the souls of others, and help them; pity the ignorant, and instruct them; the careless, and warn them; those who are in a state of sin, and snatch them as brands out of the burning. We must have compassion on those who are melancholy and in sorrow, and comfort them; (Job 16. 5.) on those whom we have advantage against, and not be rigorous and severe with them; on those who are in want, and supply them; which if we do in the heart, we must show it also in our hands; shut up the bowls of our compassion, James 2. 15, 16. 1 John 3. 17, 18. Draw out thy soul by dealing thy bread to the hungry, Isa. 58. 7, 90, Nay, a good man is merciful to his heart.

Now, as to the merciful, 1. They are blessed; so it was said in the Old Testament; Blessed is he that considers the poor, Ps. 41. 1. Herein they resemble the God, who, "in that the merciful as he is merciful, we are, in our measure, perfect as he is perfect. It is an evidence of love to God; it will be a satisfaction to ourselves, to be so only instrumental for the benefit of others. One of the purest and most refined delights in this world, is that of doing good. In this word, Blessed are the merciful, is included that saying of Christ, which otherwise we find not in the gospels, It is eternal life. The merciful shall find with God eternal mercy, (ch. 6. 14.) satisfying mercy, (Prov. 19. 17.) sustaining mercy, (Ps. 41. 2.) mercy in that day; (2 Tim. 1. 18.) nay, they shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them; (ch. 25. 34, 35.) whereas they have judgment without mercy, (which can be nothing short of hell-fire,) who have showed no mercy.

VI. The pure in heart are happy; (v. 8.) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. This is the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes; here holiness and happiness are fully described and put together.

1. Here is the most comprehensive character of the blessed; they are the pure in heart. Note, True religion consists in heart-purity. Those who are inwardly pure, show themselves to be under the power of pure and undefiled religion. True christliness lies in the heart, in the fountain of the soul; the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. We must lift up to God, not only clean hands, but a pure heart, Ps. 24. 4, 5. 1 Tim. 1. 5. The heart must be pure, in opposition to mixture—an honest heart that aims well; and pure, in opposition to pollution and defilement; as wine unmixed, as water unmuddied. The heart must be kept pure from fleshly lusts, all unchaste thoughts and desires; and every unclean word, rendered pure in the mouth by the washing of that from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14.
him for ever, and never lose the sight of him; this is heaven's happiness. (2.) The happiness of seeing God is promised to those, and those only, who are pure in heart. None but the pure are capable of seeing God, nor would it be a felicity to the impure. What pleasure could an unsanctified soul take in the vision of a holy God? As he cannot endure to look upon their impurity, so they cannot endure to look upon his purity; they shall anathematize Jerusalem, and all that are pure in heart, all that are truly sanctified, have desires wrought in them, which nothing but the sight of God will satisfy; and divine grace will not leave those desires unsatisfied.

VII. The peace-makers are happy, v. 9. The wisdom that is from above, is first pure, and then peacable. The peace-makers are those who have, 1. A peaceable disposition: as, to make a lie, is to be given and addicted to lying, so, to make peace, is to have a strong and hearty affection to peace. I am for peace, Ps. 120. 7. It is to love, and desire, and delight in peace; to look on it as in our element, and to study to be peaceable. 2. A peaceable conduct: industriously, as far as we can, to preserve the peace, that it be not broken, and to recover it when it is broken; to hearken to proposals of peace ourselves, and to be ready to make them to others; where distance is among brethren and neighbours, to do all we can to accommodate it, and to be repairers of the breaches. The making of peace is sometimes a thankless office, and it is the lot of him who parts a fray, to have blows on both sides; yet it is a good office, and we must be forward to it. Some think that this is intended especially as a lesson for ministers, who should do all they can to reconcile those who are at variance, and to promote Christian love among those under their charge.

Now, (1.) Such persons are blessed; for they have the satisfaction of enjoying themselves, by keeping the peace, and of being truly serviceable to others, by disposing them to peace. They are working together with Christ, who came into the world to stay all enmities, and to proclaim peace on earth. (2.) They shall be called the children of God; it will be an evidence to themselves that they are so; God will own them as such, and herein they will resemble him. He is the God of peace; the Son of God is the Prince of peace; the Spirit of adoption is a Spirit of peace. Since God has declared himself reconcilable to us all, he will not own those for his children who are implacable in their enmity to one another; for if the peace-makers are blessed, we to the peace-breakers! Now by this it appears, that Christ never intended to have his religion propagated by fire and sword, or penal laws, or to acknowledge bigotry, or immutable zeal, as the mark of his disciples. The children of this world love to fish in troubled waters, but the children of God are the peace-makers, the quiet in the land.

VIII. Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, are happy. This is the greatest paradox of all, and peculiar to Christianity; and therefore it is put last, and more largely insisted upon than any of the rest. Do you recollect, if your father's dream is, doubled, because hardly credited, and yet the thing is certain; and in the latter part there is a change of the person, "Blessed are ye—the my disciples, and immediate followers. This is that which you, who excel in virtue, are more immediately concerned in; for you must reckon upon hardships and troubles more than other men." Observe here, 1. The case of suffering saints described; and it is a hard case, and a very piteous one. (1.) They are persecuted, hunted, pursued, run down, as noxious beasts are, that are sought for to be destroyed; as if a Christian did caput gerere lunatum—bear a wolf's head, as an outlaw is said to do—any one that finds him may slay him; they are abandoned as the offscouring of all things; fined, imprisoned, banished, striped of their estates, excluded from all places of profit and trust, scourged, racked, tortured, always delivered to death, and accused and kept for the slaughter. This has been the effect of the emission of the serpents out of the garden against the holy seed, ever since the time of righteous Abel. It was so in Old Testament times, as we find, Heb. 11. 35. &c. Christ has told us that it would much more be so with the Christian church, and we are not to think it strange, 1 John 3. 13. He has left us an example. (2.) They are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Nick-names, and names of reproach, are fastened upon them, upon particular persons, and upon the generation of the righteous in the gress, to render them odious; sometimes to make them despriable, that they may be trampled upon; sometimes to make them formidable, they are powerfully assailed; things are laid to their charge that they knew not, Ps. 51. 10. Jer. 20. 18. Acts 17. 18. These reproaches have no power in their hands to do them any other mischief, could yet do this; and those who have had power to persecute, have found it necessary to do this too, to justify themselves in their barbarous usage of them; they could not have bated them, if they had not dressed them in bear-skins; nor have given them the worst of treatment, if they had not first represented them to be the worst of beings. They will wear you, and persecute you. Note, Reviling the saints is persecuting them, and will be found so shortly, when hard speeches must be accounted for, (Judg. 15.) and cruel mockings, Heb. 11. 36. They will say all manner of evil of you falsely; sometimes before the seat of judgment, as witnesses; sometimes in the seat of the scornful, with hypocritical mockers at feast; they are the song of the drunkards; sometimes to their faces, as Shimei cursed David; sometimes behind their backs, as the enemies of Jeremiah did. Note, There is no evil so black and horrid, which, at one time or other, has not been said, falsely, of Christ's disciples and followers.

(5.) All this is for righteousness' sake, (v. 10.) for my sake, v. 11. If for righteousness' sake, then is the reward of righteousness; for they are interested in the work of righteousness. Enemies to righteousness are enemies to Christ. This precludes these from this blessedness who suffer unjustly, and are evil spoken of truly for their real crimes; let such be ashamed and confounded, it is part of their punishment; it is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. Those suffer for righteousness' sake, who suffer because they will not sin against their consciences, and who suffer for doing that which is good. Whatever pretence persecutors have, it is the power of godliness that they have an enmity to; it is really Christ and his righteousness that are maligned, hated, and persecuted; For thy sake I have borne reproach, Ps. 69. 9. Rem. 8. 36. 1. The comforts of suffering saints laid down. (1.) They are blessed; for the authority of their life-time, and the authority of Christ's kingdom (Luke 16. 25.) and receive them upon a good account. They are blessed, for it is an honour to them; (Acts 5. 41.) it is an opportunity of glorifying Christ, of doing good, and of experiencing special comforts and visits of grace, and tokens of his presence, 2 Cor. 1. 5. Dan. 3. 25. Rom. 8. 29. (2.) They shall be recompensed; Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They have at present a sure title to it, and sweet foretastes of it; and shall ere long be in possession of it. Though there be nothing
in those sufferings that can, in strictness, merit of God, (for the sins of the best deserve the worst,) yet this is here promised as a reward; v. 12. 
Great is your reward in heaven: so great, as far to transcend the service. It is in heaven, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud, and violence. Note, God will provide that those who lose for him, though it be life itself, shall not lose him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which hath come up the suffering saints in all ages—this joy we before them.

5. “So persecuted they the prophets that were before you, v. 12. They were before you in excellency, above what you are yet arrived at; they were before you in time, that they might be examples to you of suffering affliction and of patience, James 5. 10. They were in like manner persecuted and abused; and can you expect to go to heaven in a way by yourselves? Was not Isaiah mocked for his line upon line? Elias for his bald head? Were not all the prophets thus treated? Therefore marvel not at it as a strange thing, murmur not at it as a hard thing; it is a comfort to see the way of suffering a beaten road, and an honour to follow such leaders. That grace which was sufficient for them, to carry them through their sufferings, shall not be deficient to you. Those who are slain, shall be raised up, and those who are mocked, shall see them who of old mocked the messengers of the Lord,” 2 Chron. 36. 16. ch. 23. 35. Acts 7. 52.

4. Therefore rejoice and be exceeding glad, v. 12. It is not enough to be patient and content under these sufferings as under common afflictions, and not to render railing for railing; but we must rejoice, because the honour and dignity, the pleasure and advantage, of suffering for Christ, is more than all that can be hoped of it. Not that we must take a pride in our sufferings, (that spoils all,) but we must take a pleasure in them, as Paul; (2 Cor. 12. 10.) as knowing that Christ is herein before-hand with us, and that he will not be behind-hand with us, 1 Pet. 4. 12, 13.

13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. 14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. 15. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick: and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Christ had lately called his disciples, and told them that they should be fishers of men; here he tells them farther what he designed them to be— the salt of the earth, and lights of the world, that they might be indeed what it was expected they should be.

1. Ye are the salt of the earth. This would encourage and support them under their sufferings, that, though they should be treated with contempt, yet they should really be blessings to the world, and the more so for their suffering thus. The prophets, who went before them, were the salt of the land of Canaan; but the apostles were the salt of the whole earth, for they must go into all the world to preach the gospel. It was a discouragement to them that they were so few and so weak. What could they do in so large a province as the whole earth? Nothing, if they were to work by force of arms and dint of sword; but, being to work silently as salt, one handful of that salt would diffuse its savour far and wide; would go a great way, and work insensibly and irresistibly as leaven, ch. 13. 33. The doctrine of the gospel is as salt; it is penetrating, quick, and powerful; (Heb. 4. 12.) it reaches the heart, Acts 2. 37. It is cleansing, purifying, removing, and destroying sin and corruption. We read of the savour of the knowledge of Christ; (2 Cor. 2. 14.) for all other learning is insipid without that. An everlasting covenant is called a covenant of salt; (Numb. 18. 19.) and the gospel is an everlasting gospel. Salt was required in all the sacrifices, (Lev. 2. 13.) in Ezekiel's mystical temple, Ezek. 43. 24. Now Christ's disciples, having themselves learned the doctrine of the gospel, and being employed to teach it to others were as salt. Note, Christians, and especially ministers, are the salt of the earth.

1. If they be such as they should be, they are as good salt, white, and small, and broken into many grains, but very useful and necessary. Pliny says, Sine sale vita humana non potest degere.—Without salt, human life cannot be sustained. See in this,

1. What they are to be in themselves; seasoned with the gospel, with salt, patience, and afflictions, and sufferings, as all manners, all seasons with grace, Col. 4. 6. Have salt in yourselves, else you cannot diffuse it among others, Mark 9. 50. (2.) What they are to be to others; they must not only be good, but do good; must insinuate themselves into the minds of people, not to serve any secular interest of their own, but that they may transform them into the taste and relish of the gospel. (3.) What great blessings they are to the world. Many, many blessings, in calling, converting, saving, and uniting men, were a vast heap, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines, to season it with knowledge and grace, and so to render it acceptable to God, to the angels, and to all that relish divine things.

4. How they must expect to be disposed of; not laid on a heap, they must not continue always together at Jerusalem, but must be scattered as salt upon the meat, here a grain and there another; as the salt was scattered in Israel, that, wherever they live, they may communicate their savour. Some have observed, that whereas it is foolishly called an ill omen to have the salt fall towards us, it is really an ill omen to have this salt fall from us.

2. If they be not, they are as salt that has lost its savour. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavoury, void of spiritual life, rebuke, and instruct; if a Christian be so, especially if a minister be so, his condition is very sad; for, (1.) He is irrecoverable; Wherewith shall it be salted? Salt is a remedy for unsavoury meat, but there is no remedy for unsavoury salt. Christianity will give a man a relish; but if a man can take up and continue the profession of it, and yet remain flat and foolish, and graceless and insipid, no other doctrine, no other means, can be applied, to make him savoury. If Christianity do not do it, nothing will. (2.) He is unprofitable; It is thenceforth good for nothing; what use can it be put to, in which it will not do more hurt than good? As a man without reason, so is a Christian without grace. A wicked man is the worst of creatures; a wicked Christian is the worst of men; and a wicked minister is the worst of Christians. (3.) He is doomed to ruin and rejection; He shall be cast out—expelled the church and the communion of the faithfu1, to which he is a blot and a burden; and he shall be trodden under foot of men. Let God be glorified in the shame and rejection of those by whom he has been reproached, and who
have made themselves fit for nothing but to be trampled upon.

The light of the world, v. 14. This also bespeaks its usefulness, as the former, (Sole sae sale nihil utilius—Nothing more useful than the sun and salts,) but more glorious. All Christians are light in the Lord, (Eph. 5. 8.) and must shine as lights, (Phil. 2. 15.) but ministers in a special manner. Christ calls himself the Light of the world, (John 8. 12.) and they are workers together with him, and have some of his honour put upon them. Truly the light is sweet; it is welcome; the light of the first day of the world was so, when it shone out of darkness; so is the morning light of every day; so was the gospel, and those that spread it, to all sensible people. The world sat in darkness, Christ raised up his disciples to shine in it; and that, they may do so, from him they borrow and derive their light.

This similitude is here explained in two things: 1. As the lights of the world, they are illustrious and conspicuous, and have many eyes upon them. A city that is set on a hill, cannot be hid. The disciples of Christ, especially they who are forward and zealous in his service become remarkable, and are taken notice of as beacons. They are for signs, (Isa. 8. 18.) men wondered at; (Zech. 3. 8.) all their names were taken up. Some admire them, commend them, rejoice in them, and study to imitate them; others envy them, hate them, cen sure them, and study to blast them. They are concerned therefore to walk circumspectly, because of their observers; they are as spectacles to the world, and must take heed of everything that looks ill, because they are so much looked at. The disciples of Christ were obscure men before he called them, but the character he put upon them dignified them, and as preachers of the gospel they made a figure; and though they were reproached for it by some, they were respected for it by others, advanced to thrones, and made judges; (Luke 22. 50.) for Christ will honour those that honour him.

2. As the lights of the world, they are intended to illuminate and give light to others, (v. 15.) and therefore be set up as lights. They having lighted these candles, they shall not be put under a bushel, not confined always, as they are now, to the cities of Galilee, or the fast sheep of the house of Israel, but they shall be sent into all the world. The churches are the candlesticks, the golden candlesticks, in which these lights are placed, that their light may be diffused; and the gospel is so strong a light, and carries with it so much of its own evidence, that, like a city on a hill, it cannot be hid, it cannot but appear to be from God, to all those who do not wilfully shut their eyes against it. It will give light to all that are in the house, to all that will draw near to it, and come where it is. Those to whom it does not give light, must thank themselves; they will not be in the house with it; will not make a diligent and learned inquiry into it, but are strangers to it. (2.) The must shine as lights. [1.] By their good preaching. The knowledge they have, they must communicate for the good of others; not put it under a bushel, but spread it. The talent must not be buried in a napkin, but traded with. The disciples of Christ must not muffle themselves up in privacy and obscurity, under pretence of contemplation, modesty, or self-preservation, (which would be in effect to reject the minister the same, Luke 12. 3.) [2.] By their good living. They must be burning and shining lights; (John 5. 33.) must evidence, in their whole conversation, that they are indeed the followers of Christ, James 3. 13. They must be to others for instruction, direction, quickening, and comfort, Job 29. 11. See here, First, How our light must shine—by doing such good works as men may see, and may approve of; such works as are of good report among men that are without, and will therefore give them cause to think well of Christianity. We must do good works that may be seen to the edification of others, but not that they may be seen to our own ostentation; we are bid to pray in secret, and what lies between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open and obvious to the sight of men, we must study to make conspicuous, and in this manner we must shine (Thynnesworth, Phil. 2. 15.) 4. 8. Those about us must not only hear our good words, but see our good works; that they may be convinced that religion is more than a bare name, and that we do not only make a profession of it, but abide under the power of it.

Secondly, For what end our light must shine—That those who see your good works, may be brought, not to glorify you, (which was the thing the Pharisees aimed at, and it spoiled all their performances,) but to glorify your Father which is in heaven. Note, The glory of God is the great thing we must aim at in every thing we do in religion. 1 Pet. 4. 11. In this centre the lines of all our actions must meet. We must not only endeavour to glorify God ourselves, but we must do all we can to bring others to glorify him. There is a holy emulation to imitate your good works, and so may glorify God. Note, The holy, regular, and exemplary conversation of the saints, may do much toward the conversion of sinners; those who are unacquainted with religion, may hereby be brought to know what it is. [Examples teach.] And those who are prejudiced against it, may hereby be brought in love with it, and thus there is a winning virtue in a godly conversation.

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Those to whom Christ preached, and for whom he gave these instructions to his disciples, were such as in their religion had an eye, 1. To the scriptures of the Old Testament as their rule, and therein Christ here shows them they were in the right: 2. To the Scribes and Pharisees as their example, and therein Christ here shows them they were in the wrong; for,

1. The rule which Christ came to establish, exactly agreed with the scriptures of the Old Testament, here called the law and the prophets. The
prophets were commentators upon the law, and both together made up that rule of faith and practice which Christ found upon the throne in the Jewish church, and here he keeps it on the throne.

1. He protests against the thought of cancelling and weakening the Old Testament; Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. (1.) “Let not the pious Jews, who have an affection for the law and the prophets, fear that I intend to destroy them.” Let them not be prejudiced against Christ and his doctrine, from a jealousy that this kingdom he came to set up, would derogate from the honour of the scriptures, which they had embraced as coming from God, and of which they had experienced the power and purity; no, let them be satisfied that Christ has no ill design upon the law and the prophets. (2.) “Let not the profane Jews, who have a disinfection of the law and the prophets, and are weary of that yoke, hope that I am come to destroy them.” Let not carnal libertines imagine that the Messiah is come to discharge them from the obligation of divine precepts, to secure to them divine promises to make them happy, and yet to give them leave to live as they list. Christ commands nothing new, which was forbidden either by the law of nature or the other law, and the only reason why those laws had enjoined; it is a great mistake to think he does, and he here takes care to rectify the mistake; I am not come to destroy. The Saviour of souls is the Destroyer of nothing but the works of the Devil, of nothing that comes from God, much less of those excellent dictates which we have from Moses and the prophets. No, he came to fulfill them. That is, [1.] To obey the commands of the law, for he was made under the law, Gal. 4. 4. He in all respects yielded obedience to the law, honoured his parents, sanctified the sabbath, prayed, gave alms, and did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing. [2.] To make good the promises of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, which did all bear witness to him. The covenant of grace is, for substance, the same now that it was then, and Christ the Mediator of it. [3.] To answer the types of the law; thus, (as Bishop Tillotson expresses it,) he did not make void, but make good, the ceremonial law, and manifested himself to be the Substance of all these shadows. [4.] To fill up the defects of it, and so to complete and perfect it. Thus the word יְשֵׁבָתָא יְשֵׁבָתָא properly signifies. If we consider the law as a vessel that had some water in it before, but it was not full; the one thing needful is that the law is full, that it is so filled that the right hand is full, and the left hand overflows; or, as a picture that is first rough-drawn, displays some outlines only of the piece intended, which are afterward filled up; so Christ made an improvement of the law and the prophets by his additions and explications. [5.] To carry on the same design; the christian institutes are so far from thwarting and contradicting that which was the main design of the Jewish religion, that they promote and support it. [6.] “Let not I come to destroy the time of reformation, (Heb. 9. 10.) not the repeal of the law, but the amendment of it, and, consequently, its establishment.

2. He asserts the perpetuity of it; that not only he designed not the abrogation of it, but that it never should be abrogated; (v. 18.) “Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, solemnly declares, that after all heaven and earth pass, then time shall be no more, and the unhonourable state of the law shall be no more, the age that compenses shall supersede all laws, one jot or one tittle, the least and most minute circumstance, shall be no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled;” for what is it that God is doing in all the operations, both of providence and grace, but fulfilling the scripture? Heaven and earth shall come together, and all the fulness thereof be wrapt up in ruin and confusion, rather than any word of God shall fall to the ground, or be in vain. The word of the Lord endures for ever, both that of the law, and that of the gospel. Observe, The care of God concerning his law extends itself even to those things that seem to be of least account in it, the iota and the tittle; for whatever belongs to God, and bears his stamp, is with so little, that perhaps to preserve it to his glory it shall be necessary to be conscious to themselves of so much imperfection, that they allow it for a maxim, Après jurin non sunt jurata—The extreme points of law, are not laws, but God will stand by and maintain every iota and title of his law.

3. He gives it in charge to his disciples, carefully to preserve the law, and shows them the danger of the neglect of it. He charges them not to abrogate the least of the commandments of the law of Moses, much more any of the greater as the Pharisees did, who neglected the weightier matters of the law, and shall teach men so as they did, who made void the commandment of God with their traditions, (ch. 15. 3.) he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. Though the Pharisees be cried up for such teachers as should be, they shall not be such. The Jewish religion, but whoever shall do and teach them, as Christ's disciples would, and thereby prove themselves better friends to the Old Testament than the Pharisees were, they, though despised by men, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Note, (1.) Among the commands of God there are some less than others; none absolutely little, but comparatively so. The Jews reckon the least of the commandments of the law to be that of the bird's nest; (Deut. 22. 6, 7.) yet even that had a significance and an intention very great and considerable. (2.) It is a dangerous thing, in doctrine or practice, to abrogate the least of God's commands; to break them, that is to go about either to contract the extent, or weaken the obligation of them; whoever does so, will find it is at his peril. Thus to vacate any of the ten commandments, is too bold a stroke for the jealous God to pass by. It is something more than transgressing the law, it is making void the law, Ps. 119. 126. (3.) That the further such corruptions as these spread, the worse they are. It is impudence enough to break the command, but it is a greater degree of it to teach men so. This plainly refers to those who at this time sat in Moses' seat, and by their comments corrupted and perverted the text. Opinions that tend to weaken the authority, and the value of the precepts, by corrupt glosses on the scripture, are bad when they are held, but worse when they are propagated and taught as the word of God. He that does so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, in the kingdom of glory; he shall never come thither, but be eternally excluded; or, rather, in the kingdom of the gospel-church. He is so far from deserving the dignity of a teacher in it, that he shall be excluded from it. The prophet that teaches these lies, shall be the tail in that kingdom; (Isa. 9. 15.) when truth shall appear in its own evidence, such corrupt teachers, though cried up as the Pharisees, shall be of no account with the wise and good. Nothing makes ministers more contemptible and base than corrupting the law, Mal. 2. 8, 11. Those who extenuate and encourage sin, and discontinue and put contempt upon strictness in religion and exterior devotion, are the dregs of the church. But, on the other hand, [1.] Those are truly honourable, and of great account in the church of Christ, who lay out themselves by their life and doctrine to promote the purity and strictness of practical religion; who both do and teach that which is good; for those who do not as they teach, pull down with one hand what they build up with
the other, and give themselves the lie, and tempt men to think that all religion is a delusion; but those who speak from experience, who live up to what they preach, are truly great; they honour God, and God will honour them, (1 Sam. 2. 10.) and hereafter they shall shine as the stars in the kingdom of our Father.

II. The righteousness which Christ came to establish by this rule, must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. v. 20. This was strange doctrine to those who looked upon the Scribes and Pharisees as having arrived at the highest pitch of religion. The Scribes were the most noted teachers of the law, and the Pharisees the most celebrated professors of it, and they both sat in Moses' chair, (eh. 23. 2.) and had such a reputation among the people, that they were looked upon as super-conformable to the law, and people did not think themselves obliged to be as good as they; it was therefore a great surprise to them, to hear that they must be better than they, or they should not go to heaven; and therefore Christ here avers it with solemnity; I say unto you, It is so. The Scribes and Pharisees were enemies to Christ and his doctrine, and were great opposers of his grace; they must be taken from them, and something commended in them. They were much in fasting, and prayer, and giving of alms; they were punctual in observing the ceremonial appointments, and made it their business to teach others; they had such an interest in the people, that they thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee; and yet our Lord Jesus here tells his disciples, that the religion he came to establish did not exclude the badness, but excel the goodness, of the Scribes and Pharisees. We must do more than they, and better than they, or we shall come short of heaven. They were parzial in the law, and laid most stress upon the ritual part of it; but we must be universal, and not think it enough to give the priest his tithe, but must give God our hearts. They minded only the outside, but we must establish conscience, inside goodness. They aimed at the praise and applause of men, but we must aim at acceptance with God: they were proud of what they did in religion, and trusted to it as a righteousness; but we, when we have done all, must deny ourselves, and say, We are unprofitable servants, and trust only to the righteousness of Christ; and thus we may go out of the Scribes and Pharisees.

21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill: and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. 23. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. 25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. 26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Christ having laid down these principles, that Moses and the prophets were still to be their rulers, but that the Scribes and Pharisees were to be no longer their rulers, proceeds to expound the law in some particular instances, and to vindicate it from the corrupt glosses which these expositors had put upon it, as not anything new, only limits and restrains some permissions which had been abused; and as to the precepts, shows the breadth, strictness, and spiritual nature of them, adding such explanatory statutes as made them more clear, and tended much toward the perfecting of our obedience to them. In these verses, he explains the law of the sixth commandment, according to the true intent and full force of it.

I. Here is the command itself laid down; (v. 12.) We have heard it, and remember it; he speaks to them who knew the law, who had Moses read to them in their synagogues every sabbath-day; yea have heard that it was said by them, or rather as it is in the margin, to them of old time, to your fathers the Jews, Thou shalt not kill. Note, The laws of Moses were not novel, but were delivered to them of old time; they are ancient laws, but of that nature as never to be antiquated nor grew obsolete. The moral law agrees with the law of nature, and the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil, that is, the rectitude of the eternal Mind. Killing is here forbidden, killing ourselves, killing any other, directly or indirectly, or being any way accessory to it. The law of God, the God of life, is a hedge of protection about our lives. It was one of the precepts of Noah, Gen. 9. 5, 6.

II. The exposition of this command which the Jewish teachers contented themselves with; their comment upon it was, Whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. This was all they had to say upon it, that wilful murderers were liable to the sword of justice, and casual ones to the judgment of the city of refuge. The courts of judgment sat in the gate of their principal cities; the judges, ordinarily, were in number twenty-three; these tried, condemned, and executed murderers; so that whoever killed, was in danger of their judgment. Now this gloss of theirs upon this commandment was faulty, for it intimated, 1. That the law of the sixth commandment was only external, and forbade no more than the act of murder, and had no restraint upon the inward lusts, from which wars and fightings come. This was indeed the seditious, false, the fundamental error of the Jewish teachers, that the divine law prohibited only the sinful act, not the sinful thought; they were disposed here to write—to rest in the letter of the law, and they never inquired into the spiritual meaning of it. Paul, while a Pharis...
son, though ever so much our inferior, as a child, a servant, for we are all made of one blood. Anger is a natural passion; there are cases in which it is lawful and laudable; but it is then sinfull, when we are angry without cause. The word includes all mischiefs, sin causa, sine effectu, et sine modo—without cause, without any good effect, without moderation; so that the anger is then sinful. (1) When it is without any just provocation given; either for no cause, or no good cause, or no great and proportionable cause; when we are angry at children or servants for that which could not be helped, which was not our fault, forgetting that ourselves might have been guilty of, and for which we should not have been angry at ourselves; when we are angry upon groundless surmises, or for trivial affronts not worth speaking of. (2) When it is without any good end aimed at, merely to show our authority, to gratify a brutish passion, to let people know our resentments, and excite ourselves to revenge, then it is in vain, it is to do hurt; whereas if we are at any time angry, it should be to awaken the offender to repentance, and prevent his doing so again; to clear ourselves, (2 Cor. 7. 11) and to give warning to others. (3) When it exceeds due bounds; when we are hard and headstrong in our anger, violent and vehement, outrageous and mischievous, and when we seek the hurt of those we are displeased at. This is a breach of the sixth commandment; 'Thou shalt not kill,' when this anger, would kill if he could and would; he who has anger in him he is doomed with it: Cain's killing his brother began in anger; he is a murderer in the account of God, who knows his heart, whence murders proceed, ch. 15. 19.

2. He tells them, that giving opprobrious language to our brother is tongue-murder, calling him, 

2. Race, and Thou fool. When this is done with mildness and for a good end, to convince others of their Heavens, then, as the Heavens says, O vain man, and Paul, Thou fool; and Christ himself, O fools, and slow of heart. But when it proceeds from anger and malice within, it is the smoke of that fire which is kindled from hell, and falls under the same character. (1) Race is a scornful word, and comes from pride, "Thou empty fellow;" it is the language of that which Solomon calls proud wrath, (Prov. 21. 24.) which tramples upon the name of God, which is a name that is upon the dogs of our flock. This people which knows not the law, is cursed, is such language, John 7. 49. (2) Thou fool is a pitiful word, and comes from hatred; looking upon him, not only as mean and not to be honoured, but as vile and not to be loved; "Thou wicked man, thou reprobrate." The former speaks a man without sense, this (in scripture-language) speaks a man without grace; the more the reproach touches his spiritual condition, the more it is a reproach, the more the reproach is a reproach—thou art a haughty taunting of our brother, this is a malignant cursing and condemning of him, as abandoned of God. Now this is a breach of the sixth commandment; malicious slanders and censures are poison under the tongue, that kills secretly and slowly; bitter words are as arrows that wound suddenly, (Ps. 64. 3.) or as a sword in the bones.

The good name of our neighbour, which is better than life, is thereby stabbed and murdered; and it is an evidence of such an ill-will to our neighbour as would strike at his life, if it were in our power.

3. He tells them, that how light soever they made of these sins, they will certainly be reckoned for; he that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment and anger of God; he that calls him Race, shall be in danger of the council, of being punished in the Scripture, which is directing an Israelite; but whatsoever saith, Thou fool, thou profane person, thou child of hell, shall be in danger of hell-fire, to which he condemns his brother; so the learned

Dr. Whitby. Some think, in allusion to the penal tics used in the several courts of judgment among the Jews, Christ shows that the sin of rash anger exposes men to lower or higher punishments, according to the degrees of its transgressions. They had three capital punishments, each worse than the other; beheading, which was inflicted by the judgment; stoning, by the council or chief Sanhedrim; and burning in the valley of the son of Hinnom, which was used only in extraordinary cases: it signifies, therefore, that rash anger and reproachful language are damming sins; but some are more sinning than others, and the greatest and last degree of it is to have a hatred and a desire to be in hell-fire, to which he condemns his brother; so the learned
it may not be our fault; and then come, come and welcome, come and offer thy gifts, and it shall be accepted; therefore we must not let the sun go down upon our wrath any day, because we must go to prayer before we go to sleep; much less let the sun rise upon our wrath on a sabbath-day, because it is a day of prayer.

2. Because, till this be done, we lie exposed to much danger, v. 25. 26. It is at our peril if we do not labour after an agreement, and that quickly, upon two accounts.

(1.) Upon a temporal account. If the offence we have done to our brother, in his body, goods, or reputation, be such as will bear an action, in which he may recover considerable damages, it is our wisdom, and it is duty to our family, to prevent that by a humble submission and a just and peaceable satisfaction; lest otherwise he recover it by law, and put us to a charge, and which is not only a cause of better to compound and make the best terms we can, than to stand it out; for it is in vain to contend with the law, and there is danger of our being crushed by it. Many ruin their estates by an obstinate persisting in the offences they have given, which would soon have been pacified by a little yielding at first.

Solomon's advice in case of necessary action, or the hue and cry, which is to secure and deliver thyself, Prov. 6. 1—3. It is good to agree, for the law is costly. Though we must be merciful to those we have advantage against, yet we must be just to those that have advantage against us, as far as we are able. "Agree, and compound with thine adversary quickly, lest he be exasperated by thy stubbornness, and provoke to insist upon the utmost demand, and will not make thee the abatement which at first he would have made." A prison is an uncomfortable place to those who are brought to it by their own pride and prodigality, their own wilfulness and folly.

(2.) Upon a spiritual account. "Go, and be reconciled to thy brother, be just to him, be friendly with him, because while the quarrel continues, as thou art unfit to bring thy gift to the altar, unfit to come to the table of the Lord, so thou art unfit to die: if thou persist in this sin, there is danger lest thou be suddenly snatched away by the wrath of God, whose judgment thou canst not escape nor except against; and if that iniquity be laid to thy charge, thou art undone for ever." Hell is the prison for all that live and die in malice and uncharitableness, for all that are contentious, (Rom. 2. 8.) and out of prison, there is no rescue, no redemption, no escape, to eternity.

This is very applicable to the great business of our reconciliation to God through Christ; Agree with him quickly, whilst thou art in the way. Note, [1.] The great God is an adversary to all sinners, without regard to a man's interest, without regard to a man's person, without regard to a man's case. He has a controversy with him, that we may be at peace, Job 22. 21. 2 Cor. 5. 20. [2.] It is our common interest to reconcile and compound with him, that he may be at peace, Job 22. 21. 2 Cor. 5. 20. [3.] It is our wisdom to do this quickly, whilst we are in the way. While we are alive, we are in the way; after death, it will be too late to do it; therefore give not sleep to thine eyes until it be done. [4.] They who continue in a state of enmity to God, are continually exposed to the arrests of his judicial justice, to the inclemencies of his wrath. This wise man, Christ is the Judge, to whom impetuous sinners will be delivered; for all judgment is committed to the Son; he that was rejected as a Saviour, cannot be escaped as a Judge, Rev. 6. 16. 17. It is a fearful thing to be thus turned over to the Lord Jesus, when the Lamb shall become a Lion. Angels are the officers to whom Christ will deliver them: (ch. 13. 41, 42.) Devils are so too, having the power of death as executioners to all unbelievers, Heb. 2. 14. Hell is the prison into which those will be cast that continue in a state of enmity to God, 2 Pet. 2. 4. [3.] Damned sinners must remain in it to eternity; they shall not depart till they have paid the uttermost farthing, and that will not be to the utmost ages of eternity: Divine justice will be for ever satisfying, but never satisfied.

27. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. 28. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 31. It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: 32. But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.

We have here an exposition of the seventh commandment, given us by the same hand that made the law, and therefore was fittest to be the interpreter of it: it is the law against uncleanness, which hitherto follows upon the former; that laid a restraint upon sinful passions, this upon sinful appetites, both of which ought always to be under the government of reason and conscience, and if indulged are equally pernicious.

I. The command is here laid down, (v. 17.) Thou shalt not commit adultery; which includes a prohibition of all other acts of uncleanness, and the desire of them; but the Pharisees, in their expositions of this command, made it to extend no further than the act of adultery, suggesting, that if the iniquity was not recorded in the heart, and went no further, God could not hear it, would not regard it, (Ps. 66. 18.) and therefore they thought it enough to be able to say that they were no adulterers, Luke 18. 11.

11. It is here explained in the strictness of it, in three things, which would seem new and strange to those who had been always governed by the tradition of the elders, and took all for oracular that they taught.

1. We are here taught, that there is such a thing as heart-adultery, adulterous thoughts and dispositions, which never proceed to the act of fornication or fornication; and perhaps the defilement which these give to the soul, that is here so clearly asserted, was not only included in the seventh commandment, but was signified and implied in many of those ceremonial laws, under the law, for which they were to wash their clothes, and bathe their flesh in water. Whosoever looketh on a woman, (not only another man's wife, as some would have it, but any woman,) to lust after her, has committed adultery with her in his heart, v. 28. This command forbids not only the acts of fornication or adultery, but, (1.) All appetites to them, all lusting after the forbidden object; this is the beginning of the sin, lust conceiving: (Jam. 1. 15.) it is a bad step toward the sin; and
where the lust is dwelt upon and approved, and the
wanton desire is rolled under the tongue as a sweet
morsel, it is the commission of the sin, as far as the
heart can do it; there wants nothing but a conven-
ient opportunity for the sin itself. *Atticera mens 
under the eye, or wanton glance, or wanton dally-
ance baffled or biased; biased, if it say nothing
against the sin; baffled, if it prevail not in what it
says. (2.) All approaches toward them; feeding
the eye with the sight of the forbidden fruit; not
only looking for that end, that I may lust; but look-
ing till I do lust, or looking to gratify the lust, where
further satisfaction cannot be obtained. The eye is
both the inlet and outlet of a vast deal of wicked
thoughts of this kind, witness Joseph's mistress, (Gen.
29. 7.) Samson, (Judg. 16. 1.) David, 2 Sam. 11.
2. We read of eyes full of adultery, that cannot
cease from sin, 2 Pet. 2. 14. What need have we,
therefore, with holy Job, to make a covenant with our
eyes, to make this bargain with them, that they
should have the pleasure of beholding the light of
the sun and the works of God, provided they would
never fasten or dwell upon anything that might
occasion impure imaginations or desires; and under
this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it
in penitential tears! Job 31. 1. What have we the
covering of the eyes for, but to restrain corrupt
glances, and to keep out their defiling impressions?
This forbids also the using of any of our senses to
stir up lust. If insuring looks are forbidden fruit,
much less are uncles, and wanton dalliances,
and the fuel and bollows of this hellish fire. These
precepts are hedges about the law of heart-purity,
v. 8. And if looking be lust, who dress and
deck, and expose themselves, with design to be
looked at and lusted after, (like Jezebel, that point-
ed her face and tried her head, and looked out of the
window,) are no less guilty. Men sin, but devils
tempt to sin.
3. Which looks and such dalliances are so very
dangerous and destructive to the soul, that it is better
to lose the eye and the hand that thus offend, than
to give way to the sin, and perish eternally in it.
This lesson is here taught us, v. 29, 30. Corrupt
t Nature would soon object against the prohibition of
heart-adultery, that it is impossible to be governed by
it; *It is a hard saying, who can bear it? Flesh and
blood cannot but look with pleasure upon a beau-
tiful face, and be tempted to lust after and dallying with such an object.* Such pretences as these will scarcely be overcome by reason, and therefore must be argued against with the terrors of the Lord, and so they are here argued against.
(1.) It is a severe operation that is here prescribed for the preventing of these fleshly lusts. *If thy right eye offend thee, or cause thee to offend, by wanton
didnce or dalliance, upon forbidden objects; if thy
right hand offend thee, or cause thee to offend,
by wanton dalliances; and if it were indeed impos-
able, as is pretended, to govern the eye and the
hand, and they have been so accustomed to these
wicked practices, that they will not be withheld from them; if there were no other way to restrain them,
(which, blessed be God, through his grace, there
is,) they were better for us to pluck out the eye, and cut
off the right hand, than to think of the right eye, and right hand,
the more honourable and useful, to turn them both in sin to the ruin of the soul. And if this must be
submitted to, at the thought of which nature startles,
much more must we resolve to keep under the body,
and to bring it into subjection; to live a life of mor-
tification and self-denial; to keep a constant watch
over our own hearts, and to suppress the first rising
of lust and corruption there; to avoid the occasions
of sin, to resist the beginnings of it, and to decline
the company of those who will be a snare to us,
their sin, and will be accountable for it. This is one way of being 
hurtaker with adulterers, Ps. 50. 18.
33. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34. But, I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35. Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black: 37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.

We have here an exposition of the third commandment, which we are the more concerned rightly to understand, because it is particularly said, that God will not hold him guiltless, however he may hold himself, who breaks this commandment, by taking the name of the Lord God in vain. Now as to this command,

1. It is agreed on all hands that it forbids perjury, forswearing, and the violation of oaths and vows, v. 33. This was said to them of old time, and is the true intent and meaning of the third commandment.

2. Thou shalt not use, or take up, the name of God (as we do by an oath) in vain, or unto vanity, or for a lie. He hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, is expanded in the next words, nor swear deceitfully, Ps. 24. 4.

3. Perjury is a sin condemned by the light of nature, as a complication of impurity toward God and injustice toward man, and as rendering a man highly obnoxious to the divine wrath, which was always judged to follow so infallibly upon that sin, that the forms of swearing were commonly turned into executions or imprecations; as that, God do so to me, and more also; and with us, So help me, God; wishing I may never have any help from God, if I swear falsely. Thus, by the consent of nations, have men cursed themselves, not doubting but that God would curse them, if they lied against the truth then, when they solemnly called God to witness to it. It is added, from some other scriptures, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths; (Numb. 30. 2.) which may be meant, either, I. Of those promises to which God is a party, vows made to God; these must be punctually paid: (Excl. 5. 4, 5.) or, 2. Of those promises made to our brethren, to which God was a Witness, he being appealed to concerning our sincerity; these must be performed to the Lord, with an eye to him, and for his sake; for to him, by ratifying the promise with an oath, we have made ourselves debtors; and if we break a promise so ratified, we have not lied unto men only, but unto God.

4. It is added, from some other scriptures, but shall perform unto the Lord thine oaths; (Numb. 30. 2.) which may be meant, either, I. Of those promises to which God is a party, vows made to God; these must be punctually paid: (Excl. 5. 4, 5.) or, 2. Of those promises made to our brethren, to which God was a Witness, he being appealed to concerning our sincerity; these must be performed to the Lord, with an eye to him, and for his sake; for to him, by ratifying the promise with an oath, we have made ourselves debtors; and if we break a promise so ratified, we have not lied unto men only, but unto God.

II. It is here added, that the commandment does not only forbid false swearing, but all rash, unnecessary swearing: Swear not at all, v. 34. Compare Jam. 5. 12. Not that all swearing is sinful, so far from it, when rightly done, it is a part of religious worship, and we do it, to give unto the word that is used out of his name. See Deut. 6. 13,—10. 20. Is. 45. 23. Jer. 4. 2. We find Paul confirming what he said by such solemnities, (2 Cor. 1. 23.) when there was a necessity for it. In swearing, we own the truth of something known, to confirm the truth of something doubtful or unknown; we appeal to a greater knowledge; we bind and constraint the reverence of a righteous Judge, if we swear deceitfully.

Now the mind of Christ in this matter is,

1. That we must not swear at all, but when we are duly called to it, and justice or charity to our brother, or respect to the commonwealth, make it necessary for the end of strife, (Heb. 6. 16.) of which necessity the civil magistrate is ordinarily to be the judge. We may be sworn, but we must not swear, we may be adjured, and so obliged to it, but we must not thrust ourselves upon it for our own worldly advantage.

2. That we must not swear lightly and irreverently in common discourse: it is a very great sin to make a ludicrous appeal to the glorious Majesty of heaven, which, being a sacred thing, ought always to be very serious; it is a gross profanation of God's holy name, and of one of the holy things which the children of Israel sanctify to the Lord: it is a sin that has no cloak, no excuse for it, and therefore should be so far weighed, and the means so many ways broken, by the surprise as well as strength of a temptation, that it is not to be used but upon great necessity: the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths.

3. That we must not swear by any promissory oaths, of which Christ more particularly speaks here, for they are oaths that are to be performed. The influence of an affirmative oath immediately ceases, when we have faithfully discovered the truth, and the whole truth; but a promissory oath is to be performed, and therefore cannot be so far weighed, neither so much broken, by the surprise as well as strength of a temptation, that it is not to be used but upon great necessity: the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths.

4. That we must not swear by any creature. It should seem there were some, who, in civility (as they thought) to the name of God, would not make use of that in swearing, but would swear by heaven or earth, &c. This Christ forbids here, (v. 34.) and shows that there is nothing we can swear by, but it is some way or other related to God, who is the Fountain of all beings, and therefore it is as dangerous to swear by them, as it is to swear by God himself: it is the verity of the creature that is laid at stake; now that cannot be an instrument of testimony, but as it has regard to God, who is the summum verum—the chief Truth. As, for instance,

(1.) Swear not by the heaven: "As sure as there is a heaven, this is true;" for it is God's throne, where he resides, and in a particular manner manifests his glory, as a Prince upon his throne: this being the inseparable dignity of the upper world, you cannot swear by heaven, but you swear by God himself.

(2.) Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool. He governs the motions of this lower world; as he rules in heaven, so he rules over the earth; and though under his feet, yet it is also under his eye and care, and stands in relation to him as his, Ps. 24. 1. The earth is the Lord's; so that in swearing by it, you swear by his Owner.

(3.) Neither by Jerusalem, a place for which the Jews had such a veneration, that they could not speak of any thing more sacred, to swear by; but beside the common reference Jerusalem has to God, as part of the earth, it is in special relation to him, for it is the city of the great King, (Ps. 48. 2.) the city of God, (Ps. 46. 4.) he is therefore interested in it, and even the oath taken by it.

(4.) "Neither shalt thou swear by thy head; though it be near thee, and an essential part of thee, yet it is more God's than thine; for he made it, and formed all the springs and powers of it; whereas thou thyself canst not, from any natural, intrinsic influence, change the colour of one hair, so as to make it white or black; so that thou canst not swear by thy head, but thou shalt swear by him who is the Life of the Lifer of life, Ps. 8. 3. 5. That therefore in all our communication we must content ourselves with, Yea, yea, and, Nay, nay, v. 37. In ordinary discourse, if we affirm a
thing, let us only say, Yea, it is so; and, if need be, to evidence our assurance of a thing, we may double it, and say, Yea, yea, indeed it is so: Verily, verily, was our Saviour's yea, yea. So if we deny a thing, let it suffice to say, No; or, if it be requisite, to repeat the denial, and say, No, No; and it may be known, that it will suffice to gain us credit; and if it is quite probable, to back what we say with swearing and cursing, is to render it more suspicious. They who can swallow a profane oath, will not strained at a lie. It is a pity, that this, which Christ puts in the mouths of all his disciples, should be fastened, as a name of reproach, upon a sect faulty enough other ways, when (as Dr. Hammond says) we are not only forbidden any more than you say, but are in manner directed to the use of that.

The reason is observable; For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, though it do not amount to the iniquity of an oath. It comes in vs. 14.25; so an ancient copy has it: It comes from the Devil, the evil one; it comes from the corruption of men's nature, from passion and vehement; from a reigning vanity in the mind, and a contempt of sacred things; it comes from the corruption of men, may be just; therefore may men use these protestations, because they are distrustful one of another, and think they cannot be believed without them. Note, Christians should, for the credit of their religion, avoid not only that which is in itself evil, but that which cometh of evil, and has the appearance of it. That may be suspected as a bad thing, which comes from a bad cause. An oath is physic, which supposes a disease.

33. Ye have heard that it hath been said. An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. 41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. 42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

In these verses the law of retaliation is expounded, and in a manner repealed. Observe, 1. What the Old Testament permission was, in case of injury; and here the expression is only, Ye have heard that it has been said; not, as before, concerning the commands of the decalogue, that it has been said by, or to, them of old time. It was not a command, that every one should of necessity require such satisfaction; but they might lawfully insist upon it, if they pleased; an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This we find, Exod. 21. 24. Lev. 24. 20. Deut. 19. 21. in all which places it is appointed to be done by the magistrate, who bears not the sword in vain, but is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath, Rom. 13. 4. It was a direction to the judges of the Jewish nation, what punishment was fit in case of maims, for terror to such as would do mischief on the one hand, and for a restraint to such as have mischief done to them on the other hand, that they may not insist on a greater punishment than is proper: it is not a life for an eye, nor a limb for a tooth, but observe a proportion; and it is intimated, (Num. 35. 31.) that the forfeiture in this case might be redeemed with money; for when it is provided that no ransom shall be taken for the life of a murderer, it is supposed that for maims a pecuniary satisfaction was allowed.

But some of the Jewish teachers, who were not the most compassionate men in the world, insisted upon it as necessary, that such revenge should be taken, even by private persons, in case that there was no plea left for remission, or the acceptance of satisfaction. Even now, when they were under the government of the Roman magistrates, and consequently the judicial law fell to the ground of course, yet they were still zealous for any thing that looked harsh and severe.

Now, so far this is in force with us, as a direction to magistrates, to use the sword of justice according to the good and wholesome laws of the land, for the terror of evil-doers, and the vindication of the oppressed. That judge neither feared God, nor regarded man, who would not avenge the poor widow of her adversary, Luke 18. 2. 3. And it is in force as a rule to lawgivers, to provide accordingly, and wisely to apportion punishments to crimes, for the restraint of rapine and violence, and the protection of innocency.

II. What the New Testament precept is. As to the complainant himself, his duty is, to forgive the injury as done to himself, and no further to insist upon the punishment of it than is necessary to the public good: and this precept is consistent to the meekness of Christ, and the gentleness of his yoke.

Two things Christ teaches us here.

1. We must not be revengeful. (39.) I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; the evil person that is resistous to you. The resisting of any ill attempt upon us, is here as generally and expressly forbidden, as the resisting of the higher powers is; (Rom. 13. 2.) and yet this does not repeal the law of self-preservation, and the care we are to take of our families: we may avoid evil, and may resist it, so far as is necessary to our own security; but we must not render evil for evil, must not bear a grudge, nor avow our revenges against those that have treated us unkindly, but we must go beyond them by forgiving them, Prov. 20. 22.—24. 29.—25. 21, 22. Rom. 12. 17. The law of retaliation must be made consistent with the law of love, or, if any have injured us, is our recompense in our own hands, but in the hands of God, to whose wrath we must give place; and sometimes in the hands of his viceregents, where it is necessary for the public peace: but it will not justify us in hurting our brother, to say that he began, for it is the second blow that makes the quarrel, and when we were injured, we had an opportunity not to justify our injuring him, but to show ourselves the true disciples of Christ, by forgiving him.

Three things our Saviour instances, to show that Christians must patiently yield to those who bear hard upon them, rather than contend; and these include the others.

(1.) A blow on the cheek, which is an injury to me in my body; "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, which is not only a hurt, but an affront and indignity, (2 Cor. 11. 20.) if a man in anger or scorn thus abuse thee, turn to him the other cheek;" that is, instead of avenging that injury, prepare for another, and bear it patiently: give not the rude man as good as he brings; do not challenge him, nor enter an action against him; if it be necessary to the public peace that he be bound to his good behaviour, leave that to the magistrate; but for thy own part, it will ordinarily be the wisest course to pass it by, and take no further notice of it: there are no bones broken, no great harm done, forgive it, and forget it; and if proud fools think the worse of thee, and laugh at thee for it, all wise men will value and honour thee for it, as a fellow of the blessed Jesus, who, though he was the Judge of Israel, did not smite those who smote him on the cheek, Micah 5. 1. Though this may perhaps, with some base spirits,
expose us to the like affront another time, and so it is, in effect, to turn the other cheek, yet let not that disturb us, but let us trust God and his providence to protect us in the way of our duty. Perhaps, the forgiving of one injury may prevent an avenging of it but would draw on another; some will be overcome by submission, who by resistance would but be the more exasperated, Prov. 23. 22. However, our recompense in Christ's hands, who will reward us with eternal glory for the shame we thus patiently endure; and though it be not directly inflicted, if it be quietly born for conscience sake, and in the exercise of Christ's example, it shall be put upon the score of suffering for Christ.

(2.) The loss of a coat, which is a wrong to me in my estate; (v. 40.) If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, it is a hard case. Note, It is common for legal processes to be made use of for the doing of the greatest injuries. Though judges be just and circumspect, yet it is possible for bad men, who make no conscience of oaths and forgeries, by course of law to force off the coat from a man's back. Marvel not at the matter, (Eccl. 5. 8.) but, in such a case, rather than go to law by way of revenge, rather than exhibit a cross bill, or stand out to the utmost, in defence of that which is thy doubtless right, let him even take thy cloak also. If the matter be small, which we may lose without any concern to our fences; if it be not, it is good to submit to it for peace sake. "It will not cost me so much to buy another cloak, as it will cost thee by course of law to recover that; and therefore unless thou canst get it again by fair means, it is better to let him take it." (3.) The going a mile by constraint, which is a wrong to me in my liberty; (v. 41.) "Whosoever shall lead thee a mile to run an errand for him, or to wait upon him, and go not, but with him two miles rather than fall out with him: say not, "I would do it, if I were not compelled to it, but I hate to be forced;" rather say, "Therefore I will do it, for otherwise there will be a quarrel;" and it is better to serve him, than to serve thy own lusts of pride and revenge. Some give this sense of it. The Jews taught that the disciples of the wise and the students of the law, to be pressed, as others might, by the king's officers, to travel upon the public service; but Christ will not have his disciples to insist upon this privilege, but to comply rather than offend the public service. The sum of all is, that christians must not be litigious; small injuries must be submitted to, and no notice taken of them; and if the injury be such as requires us to seek reparation, it must be for a good end, and without thought of revenge: though we must not invite injuries, yet we must meet them cheerfully in the way of duty, and make the best of them. If any say, Flesh and blood cannot pass by such an affront, let them remember, that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

2. We must be charitable and beneficent; (v. 42.) "When thou art asked to give not only to thy neighbours, but labour to do them all the good we can, not We must be ready to give; Give to him that asketh thee. If thou hast an ability, look upon the request of the poor, as giving thee an opportunity for the duty of almsgiving." When a real object of charity presents itself, we should give at the first word: Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; yet the affairs of our charity must be charitable and done with discretion, (Ps. 112. 5.) lest we give the tithe of the ground to him that is worthy, which should be given to those that are necessitous, and deserve well. What God says to us, we should be ready to say to our poor brethren, Ask, and it shall be given you. (2.) We must be ready to lend. It is sometimes as great a piece of charity as giving; as it not only relieves the present exigence, but ob-
liges the borrower to providence, industry, and honesty; and therefore; "From him that would borrow of thee something to live on, or something to trade on, turn not thou away: shun not those that thou knowest have such a request to make to thee, nor contrive excuses to shoo them off. The way to access to him, that would borrow, though he be base, and have not confidence to make known his case and beg the favour, yet thou knowest both his need and his desire, and therefore offer him the kindness." Excorab autemque rogor; honeste precebus occurrac.--I will prevail on before I am entreated; I will anticipate the becoming petition. Seneca, De Vita beat. It becomes us to be thus ready, whether for acts of kindness, for before we call, God hears us, and -prevents us with the blessings of his goodness.

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: 44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. 45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46. For if ye love those whom love, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? 47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? 48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

We have here, lastly, an exposition of that great fundamental law of the second table, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, which was the fulfilling of the law. I. See here how this law was corrupted by the comments of the Jewish teachers, v. 43. God said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and they understood those only of their own country, nation, and religion; and those only that they were pleased to look upon as their friends: yet this was not the worst; from this command, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, they were willing to infer what God never designed, Thou shalt hate thine enemy; and they looked upon whom they pleased as their enemies, thus making void the great command of God, and the contrary, Exod. 23. 4, 5. Deut. 27. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite nor an Egyptian, though these nations had been as much enemies to Israel as any whatsoever. It was true, God appointed them to destroy the seven devoted nations of Canaan, and not to make leagues with them; but there was a particular reason for it—to make room for Israel, and exalt their nation at their enemies' expense. But it was very ill-natured from hence to infer, that they must hate all their enemies; yet the moral philosophy of the heathen allowed this. It is Cicero's rule, Neminem nocere nisi prius lascivum injuria. To injury no one, unless previously injured. De Offic. See how willing corrupt passions are to fetch countenance from the word of God, and to take occasion by the commandment to justify themselves.

II. See how it is cleared by the command of the Lord Jesus, who teaches us another lesson: "But I say unto you, I, who come to be the great Peace-maker, the general Reconciler, who loved you when you were strangers and enemies, I say, Love your enemies," v. 44. Though men are ever so bad them-
selves, and carry it ever so basely towards us; yet that does not discharge us from the great debt we owe them, of love to our kind, love to our kin. We cannot but find ourselves very prone to wish the hurt, or at least very coldly to desire the good, of those whom we stand in the relation to, if only that which is at the bottom hereof, is a root of bitterness which must be plucked up, and a remnant of corrupt nature which grace must conquer. Note, It is the great duty of Christians to love their enemies; we cannot have complacency in one that is openly winked and profane, nor put a confidence in one that we know to be deceitful; nor are we to love all alike; but we may regard to the last to this end, and so far honour all men; we must take notice, with pleasure, of that even in our enemies which is amiable and commendable; ingenuity, good temper, learning, moral virtue, kindness to others, profession of religion, &c. and love that, though they are our enemies. We must have a compassion for them, and a good will toward them. We are here told, 1. That we must speak well of them: Bless them that curse you. When we speak to them, we must answer their revilings with courteous and friendly words, and not render railing for railing; behind their backs we must commend that in them which is commendable, and when we have said all the good we can of them, not be forward to say anything more. See 1 Pet. 3. 9. They, in whose tongues is the law of kindness, can give good words to those who use none. 2. That we must do well to them. "Do good to them that hate you, and that will be a better proof of love than good words. Be ready to do them all the real kindness that you can, and glad of an opportunity to do it, in their bodies, estates, names, families, and especially to do good to their souls." It was said of Archbishop Cranmer, that the way to make him a friend was to do him an ill turn; so many did hurt themselves who had disdained him. 3. We must pray for them; pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you. Note, (1.) It is no new thing for the most excellent saints to be hated, and cursed, and persecuted, and despitefully used, by wicked people; Christ himself was so treated. (2.) That when at any time we meet with such usage, we have an opportunity of showing our conformity both to the precept and to the example of Christ. It is our own advantage, and that of others, to consider what with whom we have disgraced him. (3.) We cannot otherwise testify our love to them, yet this way we may without ostentation, and it is such a way as surely we durst not dissemble in. We must pray that God will forgive them, that they may never dare the worse for anything they have done against us, and that he would make them to be at peace with us; and this is one way of making them so. Platarch, in his Laconic Apothegms, has this saying, who, being asked what a good king should do, replied, Τὰ μὲν χαίρεται εὐλογεῖται, τὰ δὲ ἐχομεν εἰς κακὸν—Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies; he said, How much better is it τὰ μὲν χαίρεται εὐλογεῖται—do good to our friends, and make friends of our enemies. This is heaping coals of fire on their head. These words are here given to enforce this command (which sounds so harsh) of loving our enemies. We must do it. 1. That we may be like God our Father; "that ye may be, may approve yourselves to be, the children of your Father which is in heaven." Can we write after a better copy? It is a copy in which love to the worst of enemies is reconciled to, and consistent with, infinite purity and holiness. God maketh his sun to rise, and sendeth rain, on the just and unjust, p. 43. Note, First, Sunshine and rain are great blessings to the world, and they come from God. It is his sun that shines, and the rain is sent by him. They do not come of course, or by chance, but from God. Secondly, Common mercies must be valued as instances and proofs of the goodness of God, who is not partial or partial in his dispensations to the world of mankind, who would be very miserable without these favours, and are utterly unworthy of the least of them. Thirdly, These gifts of common providence are dispensed indifferentely to good and evil, just and unjust; so that we cannot know love and hatred by what is before us, but by what is within us; nor by the shining of the sun on our heads, but by the rising of the sun of righteousness in our hearts. Fourthly, To make the most of the comforts of this life in common with others, though they abuse them, and fight against God with his own weapons; which is an amazing instance of God's patience and bounty. It was but once that God forbade his sun to shine on the Egyptians, when the Israelites had fought in their dwellings; God could make such a distinction every day. Fifthly, The gifts of God's bounty to wicked men that are in rebellion against him, teach us to do good to those that hate us; especially considering, that though there is in us a carnal mind which is enmity to God, yet we share in his bounty. Sixthly, Those only will be accepted as the children of God, who study to resemble him, particularly in his goodness. [2.] That we may herein do more than others, v. 46, 47. First, Publicans love their friends. Note, We are to do more than others. To do good to them who do good to us, is a common piece of humanity, which even those whom the Jews hated and despised could give as good proofs of as the best of them. The Publicans were men of no good fame, yet they were grateful to such as had helped them to their places, and courteous to those they had a dependence upon; and shall we be no better than they? In doing this we serve ourselves and consult our own advantage; and what regard can we expect for that, unless a regard to God, and a sense of duty, carry us further than our natural inclination and worldly interest? Secondly, We must therefore love our enemies, that we may exceed them. If we must go beyond Scribes and Pharisees, much more beyond Publicans. Note, Christianity is something more than humanity. It is a serious question, and which we should frequently, to ourselves consider, how much more than others? What exceddng thing do we do? We know more than others; we talk more of the things of God than others; we profess, and have promised, more than others; God has done more for us, and therefore justly expects more from us than from others; the glory of God is more concerned in us than in others; but what do we more than others? Wherein do we live above the rate of the children of this world? Are we not carnal, and do we not walk as men, below the character of Christians? In this especially we must do more than others, that while every one will render good for good, we must render good for evil; and this will speak a nobler principle, and is consonant to a higher rule, than the most of men act by. Others salute their brethren, they embrace those of their own party, and way, and opinion; but we must not so confine our respect, but with all our enemies, and other's enemies, we must expect the reward of Christians, if we rise no higher than the virtue of Publicans." Note, They who presume themselves a reward above others, must study to do more than others. Lastly, Our Saviour concludes this subject with this exhortation, (v. 48.) Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Which may be understood, 1. In general, including all these things wherein we must be followers of God as dear children. Note, 1. It is the duty of Christians to desire,
and aim at, and press towards, a perfection in grace and holiness, Phil. 3. 12—14. And therein we must study to conform ourselves to the example of our heavenly Father, 1 Pet. 1. 15, 16. Or, 2. In this particular before mentioned, of doing good to our enemies; see Luke 6. 36. It is God's perfection to forgive injuries and to entertain strangers, and to do good to the evil and unthankful, and it will be ours to be like him. We that owe so much, that owe our all, to the divine bounty, ought to copy it out as well as we can.

CHAP. VI.

Christ having, in the former chapter, armed his disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the Scribes and Pharisees, especially in their expositions of the law, (that was called their leaven, ch. 16. 12.) comes in this curzer, so likewise in most things, in saying against the two sins, which, though in their doctrine they did not justify, yet in their conversation they were notoriously guilty of, hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness; sins which, of all others, the professors of religion need most to guard against, as sins that most easily beset those who have escaped the grosser pollutions that are in the world through lust, and which are therefore highly dangerous. Verily I say unto you, that as ye do these things as if you were the hypocrisies are, nor do as the hypocrisies do. 1. In giving of alms, v. 1—4. 2. In prayer, v. 5—8. We are here taught what to pray for, and how to pray; (v. 9—13.) and to give in prayer, v. 14, 15. 3. In fasting; v. 16, 17. II. Against worldly-mindedness. 1. In our choice, which is the destroying sin of hypocrisies, v. 19—24. 2. In our cares, which is the disguising sin of many good christians, v. 25—34.

1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2. Therefore when thou dost thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrisies do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4. That thine alms may be in secret: and thy father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

As we must do better than the Scribes and Pharisees in avoiding heart-sins, heart-adultery and heart-murder, so likewise in maintaining and keeping up heart-religion, doing what we do from an inward, vital principle, that we may be approved of God, not that we may be applauded of men; that is, we must watch against hypocrisy, which was the leaven of the Pharisees, as well as against their doctrine, Luke 12. 1. Alms-giving, prayer, and fasting, are three great christian duties—the three foundations of the church of God; (Acts 20. 35.) to do largesse and serve God with our three principal interests; by prayer with our souls, by fasting with our bodies, by alms-giving with our estates. Thus we must not only depart from evil, but do good, and do it well, and so dwell for evermore.

Now in these verses we are cautioned against hypocrisy in giving alms. Take heed of it. Our being bid to take heed of it intimates that it is a sin, 1. We are in great danger of it, 2. A subtle sin; vanity insinuates itself into what we do ere we are aware. The disciples would be tempted to it by the power they had to do many wonderful works, and their living with some that admired them and others that despised them, both which are temptations to covet to make a fair show in the flesh. 2. It is a sin we are in great danger by. Take heed of hypocrisy, for if it reign in you, it will ruin you. It is the dead fly that spoils the whole box of precious ointment.

Two things are here supposed.

The giving of alms is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. Divers ancient copies here for πίλευετε—your alms, read πεπλευετε—your righteousness, for alms are righteousnesses, Ps. 112. 9. Prov. 10. 2. The Jews called the floor's being sold to the poor, the floor of righteoumess. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due, Prov. 3. 27. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. If superstitious Papists have placed a merit in works of charity, that will not be an excuse for covetous Protestants that are barren in such good works. It is true, our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is pure religion, (Jam. 1. 27.) and will be the test at the great day; Christ here takes it for granted that his disciples give alms, nor will he own those that do not.

II. That it is such a duty as has a great reward attending it, which is lost if it be done in hypocrisy. It is sometimes rewarded in temporal things with felicity (Luke 11. 24, 25.) security from distress; (Prov. 28. 27. Ps. 37. 21, 22.) success in distress; (Ps. 41. 1, 2.) honour and a good name, which follow those most that least covet them, Ps. 112. 9. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, (Luke 14. 14.) in eternal riches.

Quae dederes, solas semper habebis, ofes.

The rise or fall in your affluence form the only wealth you will always retain. —Martial.

This being supposed, observe now,

1. What was the practice of the hypocrites about this duty. They did it indeed, but not from any principle of obedience to God, or love to man, but in pride and vain-glorу; not in compassion to the poor, but purely for ostentation, that they might be exalted for good men, and so might gain an interest in the estimation of the people, with which they knew how to serve their own turn, and to get a great deal more than they gave. Pursuant to this intention, they chose to give their alms in the synagogues, and in the streets, where there was the greatest concourse of people to observe them, who applauded their liberality because they shared in it, but were so ignorant as not to discern their abominable pride. Probably they had collections for the poor in the synagogues, and the common beggars haunted the streets and highways, and upon these public occasions they chose to give their alms. Not that it is unlawful to give alms when men see us; we may do it, we must do it, but not that men may see us; we should rather choose those objects of charity that are less observed. The hypocrites, if they gave alms at their own inclining, not seeing the poor together to be served, but really to proclaim their charity, and to have that taken notice of and made the subject of discourse.

Now the doom that Christ passes upon this is very observable; Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. At first view this seems a promise—if they have their reward they have enough, but two words make it a curse; (Matt. 6. 1.) if the poor be not relieved by that, and not that they be not relieved, but that the poor be not relieved by it, and not that the poor are relieved, but that the poor are relieved by it; in a word, if the poor are not relieved by it, and not that the poor are relieved by it, but that the poor be relieved by it; in a word, if the poor be not relieved by it, then it is a curse, or the reward is a curse.

(1.) It is a great reward, but it is their reward; not the reward which God promises to them that do good, but the reward which they promise themselves, and a poor reward it is; they did it to be seen of men, and they are seen of men; they chose their own deusions with which they cheated themselves, and they shall have what they chose. Carnal professors
stupulate with God for preferment, honour, wealth, and they shall have their bellies filled with those things; (Ps. 17. 14.) but let them expect no more; these are their consolation, (Luke 6. 24.) their good things, (Luke 16. 25.) and they shall be put off with these. Didst thou agree with me for a penny? It is the bargain. (Ps. 119. 37.) It is a reward, but it is a present reward, they have it; and there is none reserved for them in the future state. They now have all that they are likely to have from God; they have their reward here, and have none to hope for hereafter. (Ps. 117. 8.) It signifies a receipt in full. What rewards the godly have in this life are but in part of payment; there is more behind, much more; but it is intimated, in this world, that their doom be; themselves have decided it. The world is but for provision to the saints, it is their spending money; but it is pay to hypocrites, it is their portion.

2. What is the precept of our Lord Jesus about it. t. 3. 4. He that was himself such an example of humility, pressed it upon his disciples, as absolutely necessary to the acceptance of their performances. Verily I say unto you, when thou givest alms, (Matt. 6.) that they may do nothing but that which will be seen of men, to be admired of them. It perhaps alludes to the placing of the Corban, the poor man's box, or the chest into which they cast their free-will offerings, on the right hand of the passage into the temple; so that they put their gifts into it with the right hand. Or the giving of alms with the right hand, intimates readiness to it and resolution in it; do it dexterously, not awkwardly, or with a frown. The right hand may be used in helping the poor, lifting them up, writing for them, dressing their sores, and other ways besides giving them to; but whatever kindness thy right hand doeth to the poor, let not thy left hand know it: conceal it as much as possible; industriously keep it private. Do it because it is a good work, but not because it will get thee a good name. In omnibus facitis, re, non testae, mensurare. In all our actions, be you not influenced by a regard to the object, not to the observer. Cic. De Fin. It is intimated, (1.) That we must not let others know what we do; no, not those that stand at our left hand, that are very near us. Instead of acquainting them with it, keep it from them if possible; however, appear so desirous to keep it from them, as that in civility they may seem not to take notice of it, and keep it to themselves, and let it go no farther. (2.) That they should not be influenced by it. As much ourselves, the left hand is a part of ourselves; we must not within ourselves take notice too much of the good we do, must not applaud and admire ourselves. Self-conceit and self-complacency, and an adoring of our own shadow, are branches of pride, as dangerous as vain-glory and ostentation before men. We find these had their good works remembered to their honour, who had not forgotten themselves for them; When saw we thee an hungry and we ministered unto thee? (Matt. 25.) What is the promise of those who are thus sincere, and humble in their alms-giving. Let thine alms be in secret, and then thy Father which seeth in secret will observe them. Note, When we take least notice of our good deeds ourselves, God takes most notice of them. As God hears the wrongs done to us when we do not hear them, (Ps. 38. 14, 15.) so he sees the good done by us, when we do not see it. As he makes their alms his own in this world, so it is no more the hypocrites have their alms; but he, who is God, will take what is done sincerely, and see their alms; that God sees in secret. But this is not all; not only the observation and praise, but the recompense, is of God, himself shall reward them openly. Note, They who in their alms-giving study to approve themselves to God, only turn themselves over to him for their Paymaster. The hypocrite catches at the shadow, but the upright man makes sure of the substance. Observe how emphatically it is expressed; himself shall reward, he will himself be the Rewarder, Heb. 11. 6. Let him alone to make it up in kind or kindness; nay, he will himself be the Rewarder, (Gen. 15. 1.) thine exceeding great reward. He will reward them thy Father, not a master who gives his servant just what he earns and no more, but as a father who gives abundantly more, and without stint, to his son that serves him. Nay, he shall reward thee openly, if not in the present day, yet in the great day; then shall every man have praise of God, open praise, thou shalt be confessed before men. If the work be not open, the reward shall, and that is better.

5. And when thou pravest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 6. But thou, when thou pravest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. 7. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

In prayer we have more immediately to do with God than in giving alms, and therefore are yet more concerned to be sincere, which is what we are here directed to. Where thou pravest; (v. 3.) It is taken for granted that all the disciples of Christ pray. As soon as ever Paul was converted, behold, he prayeth. You may as soon find a living man that does not breathe, as a living christian that does not pray. For this shall every one that is godly pray. If prayerless, then graceless. "Now, when thou pravest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, nor do as they do." (v. 2.) Note, Those who would not do as the hypocrites do in their way and actions, must not be as the hypocrites are in their frame and temper. He names nobody, but it appears by ch. 23. 13. that by the hypocrites here he means especially the Scribes and Pharisees.

Now there were two great faults they were guilty of in prayer, against each of which we are here cautioned—vain-glory; (v. 5, 6.) and vain repetitions, v. 7, 8.

1. We must not be proud and vain-glorious in prayer, nor aim at the praise of men. And here observe.

1. What was the way and practice of the hypocrites. In all their exercises of devotion, it was plain the chief thing they aimed at was to be commended by their neighbors, and thereby to make an interest for themselves. When they seemed to soar upwards in prayer, and if it be right, it is the soul's ascent toward God that is to be esteemed; it was downwards in this as their prayer. Observe, (4.) What the places were which they chose for their devotion; they prayed in the synagogues, which were indeed proper places for public prayer, but not for personal. They pretended hereby to do honour to the place of their assemblies, but intended to do honour to themselves. They prayed in the corners of the streets, the broad streets, (so the word signifies,) which were most frequented. They withdrew
thither, as if they were under a pious impulse which would not admit delay, but really it was to make themselves to be taken notice of. There, where two streets met, they were not only within view of both, but every passenger turning close upon them would observe them, and hear what they said. 

(2.) The posture they used in prayer; they prayed standing; this is a lawful and proper posture for prayer, (Mark 11. 25. When ye stand praying,) but kneeling being the more humble and reverent gesture, Luke 22. 41. Acts 7. 60. Eph. 3. 14. their station was attended to, and of pride and confidence in themselves, (Luke 18. 11.) The Pharisee stood and prayed.

(3.) Their pride in choosing those public places, which is expressed in two things: [1.] They love to pray there. They did not love prayer for its own sake, but they loved it when it gave them an opportunity of making themselves noticed. Circumstances may be such, that our good deeds must needs be done openly, so as to fall under the observation of others, and be commenced by them; but the sin and danger is when we love it, and are pleased with it, because it feeds the proud humour. [2.] It is that they may be seen of men; not that God might accept them, but that men might admire and applaud them; and that they might easily get the estates of widows and orphans into their hands. (Heb. 11. 34.) and that, when they had them, they might devour them without being suspected; (ch. 23. 14.) and effectually carry on their public designs to enslave the people.

(4.) The product of all this, they have their reward; they have all the recompense they must ever expect from God for their service, and a poor recompense it is. What will it avail us to have the good word of our fellow-servants, if our Master do not say, Well done. But if in so great a transaction as is between us and God, when we are at prayer, we can take in so poor a consideration as the praise of men is, it is just that that should be all our reward. They did it to be seen of men, and they are so; and much good may it do them. Note, Those that would approve themselves to God by their integrity in their religion, must have no regard to the praise of men. They must not go to prayer, nor from them that we expect an answer; they are not to be our judges, they are dust and ashes like ourselves, and therefore we must not have our eye to them: what passes between God and our own souls must be out of sight. In our synagogue-worship, we must avoid every thing that tends to make our personal devotion remarkable, as they that caused their voice to be heard on high, Isa. 54. 8. Public places are not proper for private, solemn prayer.

2. What is the will of Jesus Christ in opposition to this. Humility and sincerity are the two great lessons that Christ teaches us; Thou, when thou prayest, do so and so; (v. 6.) thou in particular by thyself, and for thyself. Personal prayer is here supposed to be the duty and practice of all Christ's disciples.

(1.) The directions here given about it.

[1.] Instead of praying in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, enter into thy closet, into some place of privacy and retirement. Isaac went into the field, (Gen. 24. 63.) Christ to a mountain, Peter to the house-top. No place amiss in point of ceremony, if it do but answer the end. Note, Secret prayer is to be performed in retirement, that we may be unobserved, and so may avoid ostentation; undisturbed, and so may avoid distraction; unheard, and so may use the greater freedom; yet if the circumstances be such that we cannot possibly avoid being taken notice of, we must not therefore neglect the duty, lest the omission be a greater scandal than the observation of it.

[2.] Instead of doing it to be seen of men, pray to thy Father which is in secret; to me, even to me, Zech. 7. 5. 6. The Pharisees prayed rather to men than to God; whatever was the form of their prayer, the scope of it was to beg the applause of men, and court their favours. "Well, do thou pray to God, and let that be enough for thee. Pray to him as a Father, saith the Father, ready to hear and answer, graciously inclined to pity, help, and succour thee. Pray to thy Father which is in secret." Note, In secret prayer we must have an eye to God, as present before us. It is not enough to pray in my closet when no one else is there; there especially nigh to thee in what thou callest upon him for. By secret prayer we give God the glory of his universal presence, (Acts 17. 24.) and may take to ourselves the comfort of it.

(2.) The encouragements here given us to it.

[1.] Thy Father seeth in secret; his eye is upon thee only when there is a just and sincere desire for that which, in our own regard, may not be in begging? The reward will be open; they shall not only have it, but have it honourably: the open reward is that which hypocrites are fond of, but they have not patience to stay for it; it is that which the sincere are dead to, and they shall have it over and above. Sometimes secret prayers are rewarded openly in this world by signal answers to them, which manifest the praying people in the consciences of their adversaries; however, at the great day there will be an open reward, when all praying people shall appear in glory with the great Intercessor. The Pharisees had their reward before all the town, and it was a mere flash and shadow; true christians shall have theirs before all the world, angels and men, and it shall be a weight of glory. 14. We must not pray in secret, when we pray in secret; John 17. 24. Sometimes the life of prayer lies in lifting up the soul and pouring out the heart, yet there is some interest which words have in prayer, especially in joint prayer; for in that, words are necessary, and it should seem that our Saviour speaks here especially of that; for before he said, when thou prayest, here, when ye pray, and the Lord's prayer which follows is a joint prayer, and in that, he that is the mouth of others is most tempted to an ostentation of language and expression, against which we are here warned: we not vain repetitions, either alone or with others; the Pharisees affected this, they made long prayers, (ch. 22. 14.) all their care was to make them long. Now observe,

1. What the fault is that is here reproved and condemned; it is making a mere lip-labour of the duty of prayer; and a secret service, when it is not the service of the soul. This is expressed here by two words, παραξενία, παραξενία. (1.) Vain repetitions. Tautology, babble, idle babbling over the same words again and again to no purpose, like Battus, sub illis mortibus erant, erant sub montibus illis; like that imitation of the wordiness of a God, Eccl. 10. 14. A man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell? which is indecent and nauseous in an ordinary use, much more in speaking to God. It is not all repetition in prayer that is here condemned, but vain repetitions. Christ himself prayed, saying the same words, (ch. 26. 44.) out of a more than ordinary fervour and zeal, Luke 22. 44. So Daniel, ch. 9. 18. 19. And there is a very elegant repetition of the same word,
Ps. 136. It may be of use both to express our own affections, and to excite the affections of others.

But the superstitious riproaching of a tale of words, without regard to the sense of them, as the papists, saying by their beads so many Ave-Marys and Paternosters; or the barren and dry groanings of that same things again and again, merely to drill out the prayer to such a length, and to make a show of affection when really there is none; these are the vain repetitions here condemned. When we would fain say much, but cannot say much to the purpose; this is displeasing to God and all wise men. (2.) Much speaking, and affectation of prolixity in prayer, that is, when there is no occasion for it, is an immoderate and a demonstration of the vanity of the principle of the heart. God needs either to be informed or argued with by us, or out of mere folly and impertinence, because men love to hear themselves talk. Not that all long prayers are forbidden; Christ prayed all night, Luke 6. 12. Solomon’s was a long prayer. There is sometimes need of long prayers when our errands and our affections are extraordinary; but merely to prolong the prayer, as if that would make it more pleasing or more prevailing with God, is that which is here condemned; it is not much praying that is condemned; no, we are bid to pray always, but much speaking; the danger of this error is when we only say our prayers, not when we pray them. This caution is explained by that of Solomon, (Eccle. 5. 2.) Let thy words be few, considerate and well weighed; take with you words; (Hos. 14. 2.) choose out words, (Job. 11. 13.) and do not say every thing that comes uppermost.

2. What reasons are given against this.

(1.) This is the way of the heathen, as the heathen do; and it ill becomes christians to worship their God as the Gentiles worship theirs. The heathen were taught by the light of nature to worship God; but becoming vain in their imaginations concerning the object of their worship, no wonder they became so careless, so careless, and particularly in this instance: thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, they thought he needed many words to make him understand what was said to him, or to bring him to comply with their requests; as if he were weak and ignorant, and hard to be entreated. Thus Baal’s priests were hard at it from morning till almost night with their vain repetitions; O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us; and vain repetitions they were also accustomed to make at their sacrifice; a very concave prayer, prevailed for fire from heaven first, and then water; 1 Kings 18. 26, 36. Life-labour in prayer, though ever so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour.

(2.) It need not be your way, for your Father in heaven knoweth what things we have need of before you ask him, and therefore there is no occasion for such abundance of words. It does not follow that therefore you need not pray, but that your prayer to own your need of him and dependence on him, and to plead his promises; but therefore you are to open your case, and pour out your hearts before him, and then leave it with him.” Consider,

[1.] The God we pray to is our Father by creation, by covenant; and therefore our addresses to him should be easy, natural, and unaffected; children do not need to speak in speechless words to their parents when they want anything; and is it not strange that we should use formal, unmeaning words in praying to our heavenly Father?

Let us come to him with the disposition of children, with love, reverence, and dependance; and then they need not say many words, that are taught by the Spirit of adoption to say that one aright, Abba, Father. [2.] He is a Father that knows our case and knows our wants better than we do ourselves. He knows what things we have need of; his eyes are set upon us and joy through the earth to observe the necessities of his people, (2 Chron. 16. 9.) and he often gives before we call, (Isa. 65. 24.) and more than we ask for, (Eph. 3. 20.) and if he do not give his people what they ask, it is because he knows they do not need it, and that it is not for their good; and of that he is fitter to judge for us than we for ourselves. We need not be long, nor use many words in representing our case; he knows it better than we can tell him, only he will know it from us; (what will ye that I should do unto you?) and when we have told him what it is, we must refer ourselves to him, Lord, all my desire is before thee, Ps. 38. 9. So far is God from being wrought upon by the length or language of our prayers, that the most powerful intercessions are these which are made with groanings that cannot be uttered, Rom. 8. 26. We are not to prescribe, but subscribe to God.

9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: 10. Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: 11. Give us this day our daily bread: 12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: 13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. 14. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

When Christ had condemned what was amiss, he directs to do better; for his are reproofs of instruction. Because we know not what to pray for as we should, he would have us ask for the will of God, and then for the power to do it; we must be sensible of what we ask; we must know the end of the prayer, and the reason of the words into our mouths; after this manner therefore pray ye, v. 9. So many were the corruptions that had crept into this duty of prayer among the Jews, that Christ saw it needful to give a new directory for prayer, to show his disciples what must ordinarily be the matter and method of their prayer, which he gives in words that may very well be used as a form; as the summary or contents of the several particular prayers. Not that we are bound to the use of this form only, or of this always, if this were necessary to the consecrating of our other prayers; we are here bid to pray after this manner, with these words, or to this effect. That in Luke differs from this; we do not find it used by the apostles; we are not here taught to pray in that name of Christ, as we are afterward; we are here taught to pray that the kingdom might come which did come when the Spirit was poured out; yet, without doubt, it is very good to use it as a form, and it is a pledge of the communion of saints, it having been used by the church in all ages, at least (says Dr. Whitby) from the third century. It is our Lord’s prayer, it is of his composing, of his appointing; it is very comprehensive, yet very comprehensive. The matter is choice and necessary, the method instructive, and the expression very concise. It has much in a little, and it is requisite for the repetition of the uncommon prayers, and for the public reading of it, for it is used acceptably, no further than it is used with understanding, and without vain repetition.

The Lord’s prayer (as indeed every prayer) is a letter sent from earth to heaven. Here is the inscription of the letter, the person to whom it is directed, our Father; the place where, in heaven; the contents of it in several errands of request; the eldest, for thine is the kingdom; the seal, Amen; and if you will, the date too, this day.

Plainly thus: there are three parts of the prayer.
1. The preface, Our Father which art in heaven. Before we come to our business, there must be a solemn address to him with whom our business lies; Our Father. Intimating, that we must pray, not only alone and for ourselves, but with and for others; for we are members one of another, and are called into fellowship with each other. We are here taught to whom to pray, to God only, and not to saints and angels, for they are ignorant of us, nor to our fellow men, because they cannot give the favours we expect. We are taught how to address ourselves to God, and what title to give him, that which speaks him rather beneficial than magnificent, for we are to come boldly to the throne of grace.

1. We must address ourselves to him as our Father, and must call him so. He is a common Father: if he be our Father, he will pity us under our weaknesses and infirmities, (Ps. 103. 13.) will spare us, (Mal. 3. 17.) will make the best of our performances, though very defective, will deny us nothing that is good for us, Luke 11. 11—13. We have access with boldness to him, as to a father, and have an advocate with the Father, and the Spirit of adoption. When we come repenting of our sins, we must eye God as a Father, as the prodigal did; (Luke 15. 18. Jer. 3. 19.) when we come repented for grace, and peace, and the inheritance and blessing of sons, it is an encouragement that we come to God, not as an unreconciled, avenging Judge, but as a loving, gracious, reconciled Father in Christ, Jer. 3. 4.

2. As our Father in heaven: so in heaven as to be every where else, for the heaven cannot contain him; yet so in heaven as there to manifest his glory, for it is his throne, (Ps. 103. 19.) and it is to believers a throne of grace: thitherward we must direct our prayers, for Christ the Mediator is now in heaven, Heb. 8. 1. Heaven is out of sight, and a world of spirits, therefore our converse with God in prayer must be spiritual; it is on high, therefore in prayer we must be raised above the world, and lift up our hearts to the Father. Heaven is a land of perfect purity, and we must therefore lift up pure hands, must study to sanctify his name, who is the Holy One, and dwells in that holy place, Lev. 10. 3. From heaven God beholds the children of men, Ps. 33. 13, 14. And we must in prayer see his eye upon us: thence he has a full and clear view of all our wants and burdens and desires, and all our infirmities. It is the fundament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, Ps. 150. 1. He is not only, as a father, willing to help us, but as a heavenly Father, able to help us, able to do great things for us, more than we can ask or think; he has wherewith to supply our needs, for every good gift is from above. He is a Father, and therefore we may come to him with boldness, but a Father in heaven, and this with reverence. It is the fundament of his power likewise, as well as of his prospect, Ps. 150. 1. Thus all our prayers should be raised to heaven, which is our great aim as Christians, and that is, to be with God in heaven. God and heaven, the end of our whole conversation, must be particularly eyed in every prayer; there is the centre to which we are all tending. By prayer we send before us thither, where we profess to be going.

The petition, Our daily bread. The three first relating more immediately to God and his honour, the three last to our own concerns, both temporal and spiritual; as in the ten commandments, the four first teach us our duty toward God, and the six last our duty towards our neighbour. The method of this prayer teaches us to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then to hope that other things shall be added.

1. Hallowed be thy name. It is the same word that in other places is translated sanctified. But here the old word hallowed is retained, only because people would otherwise not understand it. The word is here, and these words, (1.) We give glory to God; it may be taken not as a petition, but as an adoration; as that, the Lord be magnified, or glorified, for God's holiness is the greatness and glory of all his perfections. We must begin our prayers with praising God, and it is very fit he should be first served, and that we should give glory to God, before we expect to receive mercy and grace from God. We must, first give thanks, and the praise of his perfections, and then let us have the benefit of them. (2.) We fix our end, and it is the right end to be aimed at, and ought to be our chief and ultimate end in all our petitions, that God may be glorified; all other requests must be in subordination to this and in pursuance of it. "Father, glorify thyself in giving me my daily bread and, personal sanctification to me, that I may be fit for the glory of thy name." (3.) We desire and pray that the name of God, that is, God himself, in all that whereby he has made himself known, may be sanctified and glorified both by us and others, and especially by himself. "Father, let thy name be glorified as a Father, and a Father in heaven; glorify thy goodness and thy highness, thy majesty and mercy. Let thy name be sanctified, for it is a holy name; no matter what becomes of our polluted names, but, Lord, what will thou do to thy great name?" When we pray that God's name may be glorified, [1.] We make a virtue of necessity; for God will sanctify his own name, whether we desire it or not; I will be exalted among the heathen, Ps. 46. 10. [2.] We ask for that which we are sure shall be granted; for when our Saviour prayed, Father, glorify thy name, it was immediately answered, I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.

2. Thy kingdom come. This petition has plainly a reference to the doctrine which Christ preached at this time, which John Baptist had preached before, and which he afterwards sent his apostles out to preach—the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The kingdom of God, or God's kingdom, which is in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, this is at hand, pray that it may come. Note, We should turn the word we hear into prayer, our hearts should echo to it; does Christ promise, surely I come quickly, our hearts should answer, even so, come. Ministers should pray over the word: when they preach, the kingdom of God is at hand, they should pray, Father, thy kingdom come. What God has promised in the gospel for prosperity, he won, not to super sede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when the accomplishment of a promise is near and at the door, when the kingdom of heaven is at hand, we should then pray for it the more earnestly; thy kingdom come; as Daniel set his face to pray for the deliverance of Israel, when he understood that the time of it was at hand, Dan. 9. 2. 3. Luke, 18. 8. It was the Jews' daily prayer to God, Let him make his kingdom reign, let his redemption flourish, and
let his Messiah come and deliver his people. De. 

Whity, ex Virtinga. "Let thy kingdom come, let the gospel be preached to all and embraced by all; let all be brought to subscribe to the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, and to embrace him as their Saviour and Sovereign. Let the bounds of the gospel-church be enlarged, the kingdom of the world be made Christ's kingdom, and all men become subjects to it, and live as becomes their character."

3. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. We pray that God's kingdom being come, we and others may be brought into obedience to all the laws and ordinances of it. By this let it appear that Christ's kingdom is come, let God's will be done; and by this let it appear that it is come as a kingdom of grace, for it introduces us to God. We make Christ king and a titular Prince, if we call him King, and do not do his will: having prayed that he may rule us, we pray that we may in every thing be ruled by him. Observe, (1.) The thing prayed for, thy will be done; "Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and mine;" (Isa. 3. 18.) I refer myself to thee, and am well satisfied that all thy counsel concerning me should be performed. In this sense Christ prays, Lord, "Behold, I bring my spirit in the hand of the Lord." (Ps. 44. 23.) He prays to do what is pleasing to thee; give me that grace which is necessary to the right knowledge of thy will, and an acceptable obedience to it. Let thy will be done conscientiously by me and others, not our own will, the will of the flesh, or the mind, not the will of men, (1 Pet. 4. 2.) much less Satan's will, (John 8. 44.) that we may neither displease God in anything we do, "ut nihil nostri conoci dissentat deo," nor be displeased at any thing God does, "ut nihil Dei disputate nobis." (2.) The pattern of it, that it may be done on earth, in this place of our trial and probation, (where our work must be done, or it never will be done,) as it is done in heaven, that place of rest and joy. We pray that earth may be made more like heaven to the observers of God's will, which, through the prevalency of Satan's will, is become so near akin to hell; and that saints may be made more likely to the holy angels in their devotion and obedience. We are on earth, blessed be God, not yet under the earth; we pray for the living only, not for the dead, that are gone down into silence.

4. Give us this day our daily bread. Because our natural being is necessary to our spiritual well-being in this world, therefore, after the things of God's glory, kingship, and kingdom, comes the concern of everyday life. Our prayers supports and comforts of this present life, which are the gifts of God, and must be asked of him, To wter iroun-Bread for the day approaching, for all the remainder of our lives. Bread for the time to come, or bread for our being and subsistence, that is, agreeable to our condition in the world, (Prov. 30. 8.) food convenient for us and our families, according to our rank and station.

Every word in this petition teaches us: (1.) We ask for bread; that teaches us sobriety and temperance; we ask for bread, not dainties, nor superfluities; that which is wholesome, though it be not nice. (2.) We ask for our bread; that teaches us honesty and industry; we do not ask for the bread out of other people's mouths, not the bread of deceit, (Prov. 26. 13.) not the bread of idleness, (Prov. 31. 27.) but the bread of necessity, but. (3.) We do not ask for that bread which teaches us not to take thought for the morrow, (ch. 6. 34.) but constantly to depend upon divine providence, as those that live from hand to mouth. (4.) We beg of God to give it us, not sell us, nor lend it us, but give it us. The greatest of men must be beholden to the mercy of God for their daily bread. (5.) We pray, "Give it to us; not to me only, but to others in common with me." This teaches us charity, and a compassionate concern for the poor and needy. It intimates also, that we ought to pray with our families; we and our household cat together, and therefore ought to pray together. (6.) We pray that God would give it us this day; which teaches us to renew the desire of our souls toward God, as the wants of our bodies are renewed; as duly as the day comes, we must pray to our heavenly Father, and reckon we should as well go a day without meat, as without prayer.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. This is connected with the former: and forgive, intimating, that unless our sins be pardoned, we can have no comfort in life, or the supports of it. Our daily bread does but feed us as lambs for the slaughter, if our sins be not pardoned. We cannot take it well that we must pay us our daily pardon, as duly as we pray for daily bread. He that is washed, needeth to wash his feet. Here we have,

(1.) A petition; Father in heaven, forgive us our debts, our debts to thee. Note, [1.] Our sins are our debts; there is a debt of duty, which, as creatures, we owe to our Creator; we do not pray to be discharged from that, but, upon the non-payment of this, there arises a debt of punishment, and the default of obedience to the will of God, we became obnoxious to the wrath of God; and for not observing the precept of the law, we stand obliged to the penalty. A debtor is liable to process, so are we: a malefactor is a debtor to the law, so are we. [2.] Our heart's desire and prayer to our heavenly Father every day should be, that he would forgive us our debts; that is, the obligation to punishment may be cancelled and vacated, that we may not come into condemnation; that we may be discharged, and have the comfort of it. In suing out the pardon of our sins, the great plea we have to rely upon, is the satisfaction that was made to the justice of God for the sin of man, by the dying of the Lord Jesus our Saviour, or rather Bait to the action, that undertook our discharge.

(2.) An argument to enforce this petition; as we forgive our debtors. This is not a plea of merit, but a plea of grace. Note, Those that come to God for the forgiveness of their sins against him, must make conscience of forgiving those who have offended them, else they curse themselves when they say the Lord's prayer. Our duty is to forgive our debtors; as to debts of money, we must not be rigorous and severe in exacting them from those that are not able to pay them out of their own hand, nor from their families; but this means debts of injury; our debtors are those that trespass against us, that smite us, (ch. 5. 39, 40.) and, in strictness of law, might be prosecuted for it; we must forbear, and forgive, and forget the affronts put upon us, and the wrongs done us; and this is a moral qualification for pardon and peace; it encourages to hope, that God will forgive us, for if there be in the general forgiveness of God, and therefore there is a perfection eminently and transcendently in himself; it will be an evidence to us that he has forgiven us, having wrought in us the condition of forgiveness.

6. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. This petition is expressed,

(1.) Negatively: Lead us not into temptation. Having prayed that the guilt of sin may be removed, (pray for another day,) and that others may not beguile us, that we may not be tempted to folly, that we may not be tempted to it. It is not as if God tempted any to sin; but "Lord, do not let Satan loose upon us; chain up that roaring lion, for he is subtle and sly;" Lord, do not leave us to ourselves, (Ps. 19. 13.) for we are very weak; Lord, do not lay stumbling-blocks and snares before us, nor put us into such circumstances as may be an occasion of falling." Temptations are to be prayed against,
both because of the discomfort and trouble of them, and because of the danger we are in of being overcome by them, and the guilt and grieve that then follow.

(2.) Positively: But deliver us from evil, and from the evil one, the devil, the tempter; keep us, that either we may not be assaulted by him, or we may not be overcome by those assaults. Or from the evil thing, sin, the worst of evils; an evil, an only evil; that evil thing which God hates, and which he will render to every man, to destroy them by. Lord, deliver us from the evil of the world, the corruption that is in the world through lust; from the evil of every condition in the world; from the evil of death, from the sting of death which is slain: deliver us from our selves, from our own evil hearts: deliver us from evil men, that they may not be a snare to us, nor we a prey to them.

III. The conclusion: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. Some refer this to David's doxology, 1 Chron. 29. 11. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness. It is, 1. A form of plea to enforce the foregoing petitions. It is our duty to plead with God in prayer, to fill our mouth with arguments, (Job 23. 4.) not to move God, but to affect ourselves; to encourage our faith, to excite our fervency, and to evidence both. Not only our plea to God, but prayer, is taken from God himself, and from that which he has made known of himself. We must wrestle with God in his own strength, both as to the matter of our pleas and the urging of them. The plea here has special reference to the three first petitions: "Father in heaven, thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom; thy will be done, for thine is the power, hallowed be thy name, for thine is the glory. And as to our own particular errands, these are encouraging: "Thine is the kingdom; thou hast the government of the world, and the protection of the saints, thy willing subjects in it." God gives and saves like a king. "Thine is the power, to maintain and support that kingdom, and to make good all thine engagements to thy people." "Thine is the glory, as the end of all that is given to, and done by, and for thy people." And therefore, "Let their praise waiteth for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer."

2. It is a form of praise and thanksgiving. The best pleading with God is praising of him; it is the way to obtain further mercy, as it qualifies us to receive it. In all our addresses to God, it is fit that praise should have a considerable share, for praise becometh the saints; they are to be to our God for a name and for a praise. It is just and equal: we praise God, and give him glory, not because he needs it—he is praised by a world of angels, but because he deserves it; and it is our duty to give him glory, in compliance with his design in revealing himself to us. Praise is the work and happiness of heaven; and all that would go to heaven hereafter, must begin this. Praise is a wholesome tendril in the bottom of us; it is, The kingdom, and the power, and the glory, it is all thine. Note, It becomes us to be copious in praising God. A true saint never thinks he can speak honourably enough of God: here there should be a gracious fluency, and this forever. Ascribing glory to God, forever, intimates an acknowledgment, that it is eternally due, and an earnest desire to be eternally doing it, with angels and saints above, Ps. 71. 14.

Lastly, To all this we are taught to affix our Amen, so be it. God's Amen is a grant; his fiat is, shall be so: our Amen is only a summary desire; our fiat is, let it be so: it is in token of our desire and assurance to be heard, that we say, Amen. Amen refers to every petition going before, and thus, in compassion to our infirmities, we are taught to knit up the whole in one word, and so to gather up, in the general, what we have lost and let slip in the particulars. It is a good grace, a goodwi 7th, God's first, our last, warming, and to destroy us, a sweet savour upon our spirits. It was of old the practice of good people to say, Amen, audibly at the end of every prayer, and it is a commendable practice, provided it be done with understanding, as the apostle directs, (1 Cor. 14. 16.) and uprightly, with life and liveliness, and inward impressions, answering to that outward expression of desire and confidence.

Most of the petitions in the Lord's prayer had been commonly used by the Jews in their devotions, or words to the same effect: but that clause in the fifth petition, As we forgive our debtors, was perfectly new, and therefore our Saviour here shows for what reason he added it, not with any personal reference upon the peevishness, litigiousness, and ill nature of the men of that generation, though there was cause enough for it, but only from the necessity and importance of the thing itself. God, in forgiving us, has a peculiar respect to our forgiving those that have injured us; and therefore, when we pray for pardon, we must mention our making conscience of that duty, not only to remind ourselves of it, but to blind ourselves to it. See that parable, ch. 18. 23. See also 2 Cor. 6. 7. And therefore it is here inculcated, v. 14, 15.

1. In a promise. If ye forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive. Not as if this were the only condition required; there must be repentance and faith, and new obedience; but as where other graces are in truth, there will be this, so this will be a good evidence of the sincerity of our other graces. He that releaseth his brother, thereby shows that he repents toward his God. Those which in the prayer are called debts, are here called trespasses, debts of injury, wrong done us in our bodies, goods, or reputation: trespasses; it is a extenuating term for offences, סומעיסות, stumbles, slips, falls. Note. It is a good evidence, and a good help of our forgiving others, to call the injuries done us by a modifying, excusing name. Call them not trespasses, but trespasses, injuries, miseries, great sins, or any other name; or, as one man in prayer, in their praise waiteth for him. This is matter of comfort and holy confidence in prayer.

2. In a threatening. But if you forgive not those that have injured you, that is a sad sign you have not the other requisite conditions, but are altogether unqualified for pardon; and therefore your Father, whom you call Father, and who, as a father, offers you his grace upon reasonable terms, will neither change the agreement, nor account for the breach, nor forgive you, and yet you be defective greatly in forgiving, you cannot expect the comfort of your pardon, but to have your spirits brought down by some affliction or other to comply with this duty. Note. Those that would find mercy with God must shew mercy to their brethren; nor can we expect that he should stretch out the hands of his favour to us, unless we lift them to him, and be hands, and arms, and feet, of mercy. If we do not forgive, we have reason to fear God will answer in anger. It has been said, prayers made in wrath are written in gall. What reason is it that God should forgive us the talents we are indebted to him, if we forgive not our brethren the pence they are indebted to us? Christ came into the world as the great Peace-Maker, not only to reconcile us to God, but one to another, and in this we must comply with
him. It is great presumption and of dangerous consequence, for any to make a light matter of that which Christ here lays such a stress upon. Men's passions shall not frustrate God's word.

16. Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. 17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

We are here cautioned against hypocrisy in fasting, as before in almsgiving, and in prayer.

1. It is here supposed that religious fasting is a duty required of the disciples of Christ, when he, in his providence, calls to it, and when the case of their own souls upon any account requires it; when the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast, ch. 9. 13. Fasting is here put last, because it is so not much a duty for its own sake, as a means to dispose us for other duties. Prayer comes in between fasting and fasting, the body and soul of both. Christ here speaks especially of private fasts, such as particular persons prescribe to themselves, as free-will offerings, commonly used among the pious Jews; some fasted one day, some two, every week; others seldom, as they saw cause. On those days they did not eat till sun-set, and then very sparingly. It was not the Pharisee's fasting twice in the week, but his fasting of it, that Christ condemned, Luke 18. They proscribed a laudable practice, and we have reason to lament it, that it is so generally neglected among Christians. Anna was much in fasting, Luke 2. 37. Cornelius fasted and prayed, Acts 10. 30. The primitive Christians were much in it, see Acts 13. 3.—14. 23. Private fasting is supposed, 1 Cor. 7. 5. It is an act of self-denial, and mortification of the flesh, a holy revenge upon ourselves, and humiliation under the hand of God. The most grown Christians must hereby own, they are so far from having anything to be proud of, that they are unworthy of their daily bread. It is a means to curb the flesh and the desires of it, and to make us more lively in religious exercises, as fulness of bread is apt to make us drowsy. Paul was in fasting often, and so he kept under his body, and brought it into subjection.

2. We are cautioned not to do this as the hypocrites did it, lest we lose the reward of it; and the more difficulty attends the duty, the greater loss it is to lose the reward of it.

Now, (1.) The hypocrites pretended fasting, when there was nothing of that contrition and humiliation of soul in them, which is the life and soul of the duty. theirs were mock-fasts, the show and shadow without the substance; they took on them to be more humbled than really they were, and so endeavoured to put a cheat upon God, than which they could not put a greater affront upon him. The fast that God has chosen, is a day to afflict the soul, not to hang down the head like a bratrush, nor for a man to spread sackcloth and ashes under him; we are quite mistaken, if we call this a fast, Isa. 58. 5. Bodily exercise, if that be all, profits little, since that is not fasting to God, even to him. Lay not up their fasting, and managed it so as that all who saw them might take notice that it was a fasting-day with them. Even on these days they appeared in the streets, whereas they should have been in their closets; and they affected a downcast look, a melancholy countenance, a slow and solemn pace; and perfectly disfigured themselves, that men might see how often they fasted, and extol them for devout, mortified men. Note, It is said that men, who have, in some measure, mastered their pleasure, which is sensual wickedness, should be ruined by their pride, which is spiritual wickedness, and no less dangerous. Here also they have their reward, that praise and applause of men which they court and covet so much; they have it, and it is their all.

3. We are directed how to manage a private fast; we must keep it private, v. 17, 18. He does not tell us how often we must fast; circumstances vary, and wisdom is profitable therein to direct; the Spirit in the word has left that to the Spirit in the heart, but take this for a rule, whenever you undertake this duty, study therein to approve yourselves to God, and not to recommend yourselves to the good opinion of men: humility must evermore attend upon our humiliation. Christ does not direct to abate any thing of the reality of the fast; he does not say, "take a little meat, or a little drink, or a little cordial," no, "let the body suffer, but lay aside the show and appearance of it; appear with thy ordinary countenance, guile, and dress; and while thou deniest thyself thy bodily refreshments, do it so as that it may not be taken notice of, no, not by the Pharisees; procure to them a look pleasing, and a holy thine head, and wash thy face, as thou dost in ordinary days, on purpose to conceal thy devotion; and then shalt be no loser in the praise of it at last; for though it be not of men, it shall be of God." Fasting is the humiliation of the soul, (Ps. 35. 13.) that is the inside of the duty; let that therefore be thy principal care, and as to the outside of it, covet not to let it be seen. If we be sincere in our solemn fasts, and humble, and trust in the providence of our witness, and his goodness for our reward, we shall find, both that he did see in secret and will reward openly. Religious fasts, if rightly kept, will shortly be recompensed with an everlasting peace. Our acceptance with God in our private fasts, should make us dead, both to the applause of men, (we must not do the duty in hopes of this,) and to the censures of men too: (we must not decline the duty in fear of them,) but whatsoever we do, we that fast, shall be recompensed, Ps. 69. 10. and yet, v. 13. As for me, let them say what they will of me, my prayer is unto thee in an acceptable time.

19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: 21. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: 23. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Worldly-mindedness is as common and as fatal a symptom of hypocrisy as any other, for by no sin can Satan have a surer and faster hold of the soul,
under the c ask of a visible and passable profession of religion, shew by this; and therefore Christ having warned us against coveting the praise of men, proceeds next to warn us against coveting the wealth of the world; in this also we must take heed, lest we be as the hypocrites are, and do as they do: the fundamental error that they are guilty of, is, that they choose the world for their reward; we must therefore take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness, in the choice we make of our treasure, our end, and our masters. 

1. In choosing the treasure we lay up. Something other every man has which he makes his treasure, his portion which his heart is upon, to which he carries all he can get, and which he depends upon for futurity. It is that good, that chief good, which Solomon speaks of with such an emphasis, Eccl. 2. 3. Something the soul will have, which it looks upon as the best thing, which it has a complacency and confidence in above other things. Now Christ designs not to deprive us of our treasure, but to direct us in the choice of it; and here we have,

1. A good caution against making the things that are seen, that are temporal, our best things, and placing our happiness in them. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. Christ's disciples had left all to follow him, let them still keep in the same. Some have identified this caution with something that is in itself, at least in our opinion, precious and valuable, and likely to stand us in stead hereafter. Now we must not lay up our treasures on earth, that is, (1.) We must not count these things the best things, not the most valuable in themselves, nor the most serviceable to us: we must not call them glory, as Laban's sons did, but see and own that they have no way to be compared with the glory that is celestial. (2.) We must not covet an abundance of these things, nor be still grasping at more and more of them, and adding to them, as men do to that which is their treasure, as never knowing when we have enough. (3.) We must not confide in them for futurity; to be our security and supply in time to come; we must not say to the gold, Thou art my hope. (4.) We must not content ourselves with them, as all we need or desire was, nor be too wise to take our part of our passage, but not with all for our portion. These things must not be made our consolation, (Luke 6. 24.) our good things, Luke 16. 25. Let us consider we are laying up, not for our posterity in this world, but for ourselves in the other world. We are put to our choice, and made in a manner our own carvers; that is ours which we lay up for ourselves. It concerns thee to choose wisely, for thou art choosing for thyself, and shalt have as thou choosest. If we know and consider ourselves what we are, what we are made for, how large our capacities are, and how long our continuance, and that our souls are ourselves, we shall see it a foolish thing to lay up our treasure on earth.

Here is a good reason given why we should not look upon earthly things as our treasure, because it is liable to loss and decay: [1.] From corruption within. That which is treasure upon earth moth and rust doth corrupt. If the treasure be laid up in fine clothes, the moth frets them, and they are gone and spoiled insensibly, when we thought them most securely laid up. If it be in corn or other cattles, as his was who had his barn full, (Luke 12. 16. 17.) rust and frets shall make them corrupt. The very things eaten by men, for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them; (Eccles. 5. 11.) eaten by mice or other vermin; manna itself bred worms; or if it grows moldy and musty; is struck, or smutted, or blasted; fruits soon rot. Or, if we understand it of silver and gold, they tarnish and cumber; they grow less with using, and grow worse with keeping; (Jam. 5. 2. 3.) the rust and the moth breed in the metal itself and in the garment itself. Note, Worldly riches have in themselves a principle of corruption and decay; they wither of themselves and make their possessors wretched. From the carnal spirit, Thieves break through and steal. Every hand of violence will be aiming at the house where the treasure is laid up; nor can any thing be laid up so safe, but we may be spoiled of it. *Ninguam ego fortuna credidi, etiam si videterum facerem agere; omnia illa quae in me indigentissime conferatur, pecuniam, mercem,公然, gloria, co loco posuit, unde fossit ea, ine metu meo, refregit.*— Never reposed confidence in fortune, even if she seemed propitious: whatever were the favours which her bounty bestowed, whether wealth, honours, or glory, I so disposed of them that it was in her power to recall them without occasioning me any alarm. Seneca Consol. ad Hetr. It is folly to make that our treasure which we may so easily be robbed of.

Good counsel, to make the joys and glories of the other world, those things not seen that are eternal, our best things, and to place our happiness in them. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Note, (1.) There are treasures in heaven, as sure as there are on this earth; and those in heaven are the only true treasures, the riches and glories and pleasures that age at God's right hand, which those that are here have not nor see, and which no one is yet able to identify perfectly. (2.) It is our wisdom to lay up our treasure in those treasures; to give all diligence to make sure our title to eternal life through Jesus Christ, and to depend upon that as our happiness, and look upon all things here below with a holy contempt, as not worthy to be compared with it. We must firmly believe there is such a happiness, and resolve to lay our treasures where they will not lose their value, and that we will have to be free of all things earthly, and to live without them; and yet give none of our present possessions to be the price of it. We must not put these treasures under the hands of corruptible stewards, lest they be dissipated, or misused, or stolen away from us. (3.) It is a great encouragement to us to lay up our treasure in heaven, that there it is safe; it will not decay of itself, no moth nor rust will corrupt it: nor can we be by force or fraud deprived of it; thieves do not break through and steal. It is a happiness above and beyond the changes and chances of time, an inheritance incorruptible.

3. A good reason why we should thus choose, and an evidence that we have done so, (v. 21.) Where your treasure is, on earth or in heaven, there will your heart be. We are therefore concerned to be right and wise in the choice of our treasure, because the temper of our minds, and consequently the temper of our ways; the course and current of our lives, is affected by it. That which is our heart, is our treasure, our life, our joy, our comfort, our heart. The heart follows the treasure, as the needle follows the lodestone, or the sunflower the sun. Where the treasure is, there the value and esteem is; there the love and affection is, Col. 3. 2. That way the desires and pursuits go, thitherward the aims and intents are levelled, and all is done with that in view. Where the treasure is, there our labours and fears are lest we come short of it; about that we are more solicitous; there our hope and trust is; (Prov. 18. 10. 11.) there our joys and delights will be; (Ps. 119. 111.) and there our thoughts will be; there the inward thought will be, the first thought, the free thought, the fixed thought, the frequent, the familiar thought. The heart is God's due, (Prov. 23. 26.) and, that he may have it, our
treasure must be laid up with him, and then our souls will be lifted up to him.

This direction about laying up our treasure, may very fitly be applied to the foregoing caution, of not doing what we do in religion to be seen of men. Our treasure is our alms, prayers, and fastings, and the reward of them; if we have done these only to gain the applause of men, and to avoid the reproach of the wicked, we have lodged it in the hands of men, and must never expect to hear any further of it. Now it is folly to do this, for the praise of men we covet so much, is liable to corruption; it will soon be rusted, and moth-eaten, and tarnished; a little folly, like a dead fly, will spoil it all, Eccl. 10. 1. Slander and calumny are thieves that break through and steal it away, and so lose all the treasure of our performances. We must rely upon God, and he will be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave.

Hypocritical services lay up nothing in heaven; (Isa. 58. 3.) the gain of them is gone, when the soul is called for, Job 27. 8. But if we have prayed and fasted and given alms, in truth and uprightness, with an eye to God and to his acceptance, and have approved ourselves to him therein, we have laid up that treasure in heaven; a book of remembrance is written in heaven for them. If we have thus disposed of our income, and shall be there rewarded, and we shall meet them again with comfort on the other side death and the grave. Hypocrites are written in the earth, (Jer. 17. 13.) but God's faithful ones have their names written in heaven, Luke 10. 20. Acceptance with God is treasure in heaven, which can neither be corrupted nor stolen. His well done shall stand for ever; and if we have thus laid up our treasure with him, with him our hearts will be; and where can they be better?

II. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the end we look at. Our concern as to this is represented by two sorts of eyes which men have, a single eye and an evil eye, v. 22. 23. The expressions here are somewhat dark because concise; we shall therefore take them in some variety of interpretation. The light of the body is the eye, that is plain; the eye is discovering and directing; the light of the world would avail us little without this light of the body; it is the light of the eye that rejoiceth the heart, (Prov. 15. 30.) but what is that which is here compared to the eye in the body?

1. The eye, that is, the heart; (so some) if that be single— ἕνα μὲν ἐνοχὸν, (so the word is frequently rendered, as Rom. 12. 2. 2 Cor. 3. 2—9. 11. 1 Cor. 10. 1.) and we read of a bountiful eye, Prov. 32. 9.) If the heart be liberally affected and stand inclined to goodness and charity, it will direct the man to christian actions, the whole conversation will be full of light, full of the evidences and instances of true christianity, that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, (Jam. 1. 27.) full of light, of good works, which are our light shining before men; but if the heart be evil, covetous, and hard, and envies, grudgings, and grudgings, (such a temper of mind is often expressed by an evil eye, Mark 7. 22. Prov. 23. 6, 7. ) the body will be full of darkness, the whole conversation will be heathenish and unchristian. The instruments of the churl are and always will be evil, but the liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa. 32. 5—8. If the light that is in us, those affections which should guide us to that which is good, be darkness, if these be corrupt and worldly, if there be not much as good nature in a man, not such a kind, with joy and good cheer, if the usurpation of the man, and the darkness in which he sits! This sense seems to agree with the context: we must lay up treasure in heaven by liberality in giving alms, and that not grudgingly but with cheerfulness, Luke 12. 33. 2 Cor. 9. 7. But these words in the parallel place do not come in upon any such occasion, Luke 11. 34. and therefore the coherence here does not determine that to be the sense of them.

3. The eye, that is, the understanding; (so some;) the practical judgment, the conscience, which is to the other faculties of the soul, as the eye is to the body, to guide and direct their motions; now if the eye be single, if it make a true and right judgment, and is disposed and determined to the due end, there will be no great concern of laying up the treasure so as to choose aright in that, it will rightly guide the affections and actions, which will all be full of the light of grace and comfort; but if this be evil and corrupt, and instead of leading the inferior powers, is led, and bribed, and biased by them, if this be erroneous and misinformed, the heart and life must needs be full of darkness, and the whole conversation corrupt. It is a concern of understanding, that the eye of the understanding be single, in darkness, Ps. 89. 5. It is said when the spirit of a man, that should be the candle of the Lord, is an ignis fatua; when the leaders of the people, the leaders of the faculties, cause them to err, for then they that are led of them are destroyed, Isa. 9. 16. An error in the practical judgment is fatal, it is that which calls evil good and good evil; (Isa. 5. 20.) therefore it concerns us to understand things aright, to order our actions as concerning things above to be without respect of persons, Col. 3. 23.

5. The eye, that is, the aims and intentions; by the eye we set our end before us, the mark we shoot at, the place we go to, we keep that in view, and direct our motion accordingly; in every thing we do in religion, there is something or other that we have in our eye; now if our eye be single, if we aim honestly, fix right ends, and move rightly towards them, if we aim purely and only at the glory of God, seek his honour and favour, and direct all entirely to him, then the eye is single: Paul's was so when he said To me to live is Christ; and if we be right here, the whole body will be full of light, all the actions will be regular and gracious, pleasing to God and comfortable to ourselves; but if this eye be evil, if, instead of aiming only at the glory of God, and our acceptance with him, we look aside at the applause of men, and while we profess to honour God, contrive to honour ourselves, and seek our own things under colour of seeking the things of Christ, this spoils all, the whole conversation will be perverse and unsteady, and the foundations being thus out of course, there can be nothing but confusion and every evil work in the superstructure. Draw the lines from the circumference to any other point but the centre, and they will cross. If the light that is in thee be not only dim, but darkness itself, it is a fundamental error, and destructive to all that follows. The end specified is the action. It is of the last importance in religion, that we be right in our aims, and make eternal things, not temporal, our scope, 2 Cor. 4. 18. The hypocrite is like the waterman, that looks one way and rows another; the true christian like the traveller, that has his journey's end in his eye. The hypocrite soars like the kite, with his eye upon the prey below, which he is ready to commence to when he has got it; the true christian soars like the lark, higher and higher, forgetting the things that are beneath.

III. We must take heed of hypocrisy and worldly-mindedness in choosing the master we serve, v. 24. No man can serve two masters. Serving two masters is contrary to the single eye; for the eye will be to the master's hand, Ps. 123. 1. 2. Our Lord Jesus here exposes the cheat with which the souls of men are to divide between God and the world, to have a treasure on earth and a treasure in heaven too; please God and please men too. Why not? says the hypocrite; it is good to have two strings to one's bow. They hope to make their religion serve their secular interest, and so turn to account both ways. The pretending mother was for dividing the
child: the Samaritans will compound between God and idols. No, says Christ, this will not do; it is a supposition that gain is godliness. 1 Tim. 6. 5. He is 1. A general maxim laid down: it is likely it was a proverb among the Jews, No man can serve two masters, much less two gods; for their commands will some time or other cross or contradict one another, and their occasions interfere. While two masters go together, a servant may follow them both; but when they part, he will run to whichever he loves; he cannot love, and observe, and cleave to both as he should. If to the one, not to the other; either this or that must be comparatively hated and despised. This truth is plain enough in common cases.

2. The application of it to the business in hand. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Mammon is a Syriac word, that signifies gain; so that whatever is this world is, or is accounted by us to be, gain, (Phil. 3. 7.) is mammon. Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is mammon. To some their belly is their mammon, and they serve that; (Phil. 3. 19.) to others their case, their sleep, their sports and pastimes are their mammon; (Prov. 6. 9.) to others worldly riches; (James 4. 4.) to others honours. The application and applause of men was the Pharisees' mammon; in a word, self, the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self, is the mammon which cannot be served in conjunction with God; for if it be served, it is in competition with him and in contradiction to him. He does not say, We must not or we should not, but we cannot serve God and Mammon; we cannot love both; (1 John 5. 21.) hold both, or hold by both in observance, obedience, attendance, trust, and dependence, for they are contrary, the one to the other.

God says, My son, give me thy heart. Mammon says, "No, give it me." God says, Be content with such things as ye have. Mammon says, "Grasp at all that ever thou canst. Rent, rent, quaque unum modo rem-Money, money, by fair means or by foul, money." God says, Defraud not, never lie, be honest and just in all thy dealings. Mammon says, "Cheat thy own father, if thou canst gain by it." God says, Be charitable. Mammon says, "Hold thy own, this giving undeems us all." God says, Be careful for nothing. Mammon says, "Be careful for every thing." God says, Keep holy the Sabbath-day. Mammon says, Make use of that day as well as any other for the world. Thus inconsistent are the commands of God and Mammon, so that we cannot serve both. Let us not then halt between God and Baal, but choose ye this day whom ye will serve, and abide by your choice.

25. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26. Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27. Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28. And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29. And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31. Therefore take no thought saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32. (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

There is scarcely any one sin against which our Lord Jesus more largely and earnestly warns his disciples, or against which he arms them with more variety of arguments, than the sin of disquieting, distracting, distrustful cares. He says, whatever it was that the Pharisees had said, that both the pressure and the heart are on the earth; and therefore he thuslargely insists upon it. Here is,

I. The prohibition laid down. It is the counsel and command of the Lord Jesus, that we take no thought about the things of this world; I say unto you. He says it as our Lawgiver, and the Sovereign of our hearts; he says it as our Comforter, and the Helper of our joy. What is it that he says? It is this, and he that has ears to hear, let him hear it. Take no thought for your life, nor yet for your bodies; (v. 25.) Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? (v. 31.) and again, (v. 34.) Take no thought, nor yet for your raiment. Be not in care. As against hypocrisy, so against worldly cares, the caution is thrice repeated, and yet no vain repetition: freeret must be upon freeret, and line upon line, to the same purpose. Enough is not little enough; it is a sin which doth excessively beset us. It intimates how pleasing it is to Christ, and of how much concern it is to ourselves, that we should live without carefulness. It is the repeated command of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, that they should not divide and pull in pieces their own minds with care about the world. There is a thought concerning the things of this life, Which is nothing less than such a care as he will have nothing to do with. It is not only lawful, but duty, such as is commended in the virtuous woman, Prov. 27. 23. The word is used concerning Paul's care of the churches, and Timothy's care for the state of souls, 2 Cor. 11. 28. Phil. 2. 20.

But the care here forbidden is, 1. A disquieting, tormenting care, which hurries the mind hither and thither, and hastes it in suspense; it is our joy in God, and a deep tap at our hope in him; while it batters the sleep, and hinders our enjoyment of ourselves, of our friends, and of what God has given us. 2. A distrustful, unbelieving thought. God has promised to provide for those that are his, all things needful for life as well as godliness, the life that now is, food and a covering; not dainties, but necessaries. He never said, They shall be fed. Now an increased time for care, and fear of wanting those supplies, spring from a disbelief of these promises, and of the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence; and that is the evil of it. As to present sustenance, we may and must use lawful means to get it, else we tempt God; we must be diligent in our callings, and prudent in proportioning our expenses to what we have, and we must pray for daily
not he do for us, who did that—what will we do? If we take care about our souls and eternity, which are more than the body, and its life, we may leave it to God to provide for us food and raiment, which are less. God has maintained our lives hitherto; if sometimes with pulse and water, that has answered the end; he has protected us and kept us alive. He that guards us against them who are opposed to us, and gives us all the good things we are in need of. If he had been pleased to kill us, to starve us, he would not so often have given his angels a charge concerning us to keep us.

2. Behold the fowls of the air, and consider the lives of the field. Here is an argument taken from God's common providence toward the inferior creatures, and their dependence, according to their capacities, upon that providence. A fine pass fallen man is come to, that he must be sent to school to the fowls of the air, and that they must teach him, Job 12. 7, 8.

1. Look upon the fowls; and learn to trust God for food, (v. 26.) and disquiet not yourselves with thoughts what you shall eat. (1.) Observe the providence of God concerning them. Look upon them, and receive instruction. There are various sorts of fowls; they are numerous, some of them ravenous, but they are all fed, and fed with food convenient for them; it is rare that any of them perish for want of food, even in winter, and there goes no little to feed them all the year round. The fowls, as they are least serviceable to man, so they are least within his care; nor, when fed upon them, do they know not how, and some of them fed best in the hardest weather; and it is your heavenly Father that feeds them; he knows all the wild fowls of the mountains, better than you know the tame ones at your own barn-door, Ps. 50. 11. Not a sparrow lights to the ground, to pick up a grain of corn, but by the providence of God, which extends itself to the meanest creatures. But that which is especially observed here is, that they are fed without any care or project of their own; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. The ant indeed does, and the bee, and they are set before us as examples of prudence and industry; but the fowls of the air do not; they make no provision for the future themselves, and yet every day, as truly as the day comes, provision is made for them, and their eyes wait on God, that great and good Housekeeper, who provides food for all fowls.

2. Improve this for your encouragement to trust in God. Are ye not much better than they? Yes, certainly you are. Note, The heirs of heaven are much better than the fowls of heaven; nobler and more excellent beings, and, by faith, they soar higher; they are of a better nature and nurture, wiser than the fowls of heaven: (Job 35. 11.) though the children of this world, that know not the judgment of the Lord, are not so wise as the stork, and the crane, and the swallow, (Jer. 8. 7.) you are dearer to God, and nearer, though the foolish man's frame is more beautiful than theirs; (Ps. 139. 14.) they are supplied by their Maker and Lord, (Ps. 17. 12.) Owner and Master; but beside all this, he is your Father, and in his account ye are of more value than many sparrows; you are his children, his first born; now he that feeds his birds surely will not starve his babies. They trust your Father's providence, and will not you trust it? In dependence upon that, they are careless for the morrow; and being so, they live the merriest lives, and all creatures, they are supplied with the branches, (Ps. 104. 12.) and, to the best of their power, they praise their Creator. If we were, by faith, as unconcerned about the morrow as they are, we should sing as cheerfully as they do; for it is worldly care that
Miss our mirth, and damp our joy, and silences our praise, as much as any thing.

(2.) Look upon the lilies, and learn to trust God for their care. That is another part of our care, what we shall put on for decency yet to cover us; for defence, to keep us warm; yea, and, with many, for dignity and ornament to make them look great and fine; and so much concerned are they for gaiety and variety in their clothing, that this care returns almost as often as that for their daily bread. Now to ease of this our care, let us consider the lilies of the field; not only look upon them, (every eye does that with pleasure,) but let us consider the experience when he deal of good to be learned from what we see every day, if we would but consider it, Prov. 6. 6.—24. 32.

[1.] Consider how frail the lilies are; they are the grass of the field. Lilies, though distinguished by their colours, are still but grass. Thus all flesh is grass, though some in the endowments of body and mind are as lilies, much admired, still they are grass; the grass of the field in nature and constitution; they stand upon the same level with others. Man's days, at best, are as grass, as the flower of the grass. 1 Pet. 1. 24. This grass to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; in a little while the place that knows us, will know us no more. The grass is the oven into which we shall be cast, and in which we shall be consumed as grass in the fire. Ps. 102. 7. Lilies are transitory matters; they not take thought for the morrow, what we shall put on, because perhaps, by to-morrow, we may have occasion for our grave-clothes.

[2.] Consider how free from care the lilies are; they toil not as men do, to earn clothing; as servants, to earn their livings; neither do they spin, as women do, to make clothing. It does not follow that we should neglect, or do carelessly, the proper business of this life; it is the praise of the virtuous woman, that she laughters hand to the spindle, makes fine linen, and sells it, Prov. 31. 19, 24. Idleness tempts God, instead of trusting him; but he that provides for the inferior creatures, without their labour, will much more provide for us, by blessing our labour, which he has made our duty. And if we should, through sickness, be unable to twist and spin, God can furnish us with what is necessary for us.

[3.] Consider how fair, how fine the lilies are; how they grow; what they grow from. The root of the lily or tulip, as other bulbous roots, is, in the winter, lost and buried under ground; yet, when spring returns, it appears, and starts up in a little time; hence it is promised to God's Israel, that they shall grow as the lily, Hos. 14. 5. Consider what they grow to. Out of that obscurity in a few weeks they come to be so very gay, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. The array of Solomon was very splendid and magnificent; he that had the peculiar treasure of kings and provinces, and so studiously affected pomp and gal- lantry, did dwell in the richest clothing, and the best attire up, that could be in the world; and yet, not so he appeared in his glory on high days. And yet, let him dress himself as fine as he could, he comes far short of the beauty of the lilies, and a bed of tulips outshines him. Let us, therefore, be more ambitious of the wisdom of Solomon, in which he was outdone by none; wisdom to do our duty in our places, rather than of the riches of Solomon, in which he was outdone by the lilies. Knowledge is the perfection of man, not beauty, much less fine clothes. Now God is here said thus to clothe the grass of the field. Note, All the excellencies of the creature flow from God, the Fountain and Spring of them. It was he that gave the horse his strength, and the lily its beauty; every creature is in itself, as well as to us, what he makes it to be.

4. Consider how instructive all this is to us. v. 30.

First, to find clothing; this teaches us not to care for it at all, nor to covet it, nor to be proud of it, nor to make the putting on of apparel an ornament, for, after all our care in this the lilies will far outdo us; we cannot dress so fine as they do, why then should we attempt to vie with them? Then adorning will soon perish, and so will ours; they are to-day, and to-morrow are cast, as other rubbish, into the oven; and the clothes we are proud of are wearing out, the gloss is soon gone, the rococo fancy, that is, our finery, as good as grass, and the garment itself is worn out; such is man in all his pomp, (Isa. 46. 6, 7,) especially rich men; (Jam. 1. 10,) they fade away in their ways.

Secondly, As to necessary clothing; this teaches us to cast the care of it upon God—Jehovah-jireh; and trust him that clothes the lilies, to provide for you what you shall put on. If he give such fine clothes to the grass, much more will he give fitting clothes to his own children; clothes that shall be warm upon them, not only when he quieteth the earth with the south wind, but when he disquiets it with the north wind, Job 37. 17. He shall much more clothe you; for you are noble creatures, of a more excellent being; if so he clothes the short-lived grass, much more will he clothe you that are made for immortal beings. And shall not he, in whom the very air breathes? clothe the morning dress of decent beauty? (Hos. 14. 7.) He shall clothe you with his true glory, and you shall be clothed with a garment fit for a king. The lily, that is, the noblest and fairest of all flowers, is ever present in God's mind; yet not as the land is full with the multitude of his riches and occasions is there an end to the glory of God, Ps. 104. 4. He will clothe the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. Observe the title he gives them, (v. 31.) Caste of little fath. This may be taken, 1. As an encouragement to true faith, though it be but weak; it entitles us to the divine care and a promise of suitable supply. Great faith shall be encomiasted, and weak faith not despised, when we have seen what we have desired before the ground, (John 4. 10, 11.) much more the sons of Zion, that are in covenant with God. 2. As a call to give God the glory that is his due, and not to rest satisfied with less. The bases in the family are fed and clothed, as well as those that are grown up, and with a special care and tenderness; say not I am but a child, but a dry tree, (Isa. 56. 3, 5.) for though poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on the earth; Or. 2. It is rather a rebuke to weak faith, though it be true, ch. 14. 21. It intimates what is at the bottom of all our inordinate care and thoughtfulness; it is owing to the weakness of our faith, and the remains of unbelief in us. If we had but more faith, we should have less care. 3. Which of you, the wisest, the strongest of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit to his stature? (v. 27.) to his age, so some; but the measure of a cubit denotes it to be meant of the stature, and the age at longest is but a span, Ps. 39. 5. Let us consider, (1.) We did not arrive at the stature we are of, by our own care and thought, but by the providence of God. An infant of a span long is grown up to be a man of six feet, and how was one cubit after another added to his stature? Not by his own foresight or contrivance; he grew he knew not how, by the power and goodness of God. Solomon never thought of, or provided for, our bodies and made them of such a size, surely will take care to provide for them. Note, God is to be acknowledged in the increase of our bodily strength and stature, and to be trusted for all needful supplies, because he has made it to appear, that he is for the body. The growing age is the thoughtless, careless age, yet we grow; and shall not he whose power is infinite, and whose goodness is perfect, still make our children to grow, and so to account for their growth? (2.) We cannot alter the stature we are of; if we would: what a foolish and ridiculous thing would it be, for a man of low stature to perplex himself, to break his sleep, and beat his brains, about it, and to be continually taking thought how he might be a cubit higher; when; after all, he knows he cannot effect it, and therefore he had better be content and
take it as it is? We are not all of a size, yet the difference in stature between one and another is not material, nor of any great account; a little man is ready to wish he were as tall as such a one, but he knows it is to no purpose, and therefore does as well as he can with it. Now as we do in reference to our bodily stature, so we should do in reference to our worldly estate. [1.] We should not covet an abnormal estate in this world, any more than we would covet the addition of a cubit to one's stature, which is a great deal in a man's height; it is enough to grow by inches; such an addition would but make one unwieldy, and a burden to one's self. [2.] We must reconcile ourselves to our state, as we do to our stature; we must set the conveniences against the inconveniences, and so make a virtue of necessity: what cannot be remedied must be made the best of. We have therefore to alter the dispositions of Providence, and therefore must acquiesce in them, accommodate ourselves to them, and relieve ourselves, as well as we can, against inconveniences, as Zachæus against the inconvenience of his stature, by climbing into the tree.

4. After all these things do the Gentiles seek, v. 32. Thoughtfulness about the world is a heathenish sin, and unbecoming Christians. The Gentiles seek these things with anxiety, and are eager for this world, because they are strangers to a better; they seek these things with care and anxiety, because they are without God in the world, and understand not his providence. They fear and worship their idols, but know not how to trust them for deliverance and supply; and, therefore, are themselves full of care; but it is a shame for Christians who build upon a nobler principle, and profess religion which teaches the contrary, not only that there is a Providence, but that there are promises made to the good of the life that now is, which teaches them a confidence in God and a contempt of the world, and gives such reasons for both; it is a shame for them to walk as Gentiles walk, and to fill their heads and hearts with these things.

5. Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things; these necessary things, food and raiment; he knows our wants, he knows our poverty; though he be in heaven, and his children on earth, he observes what the least and poorest of them has occasion for, (Rev. 2. 9.) I know thy poverty. You think, if such a good friend did but know your wants and straits, you should soon have relief; your God knows them; and he is your Father that loves you and pities you, and is ready to help you. We cannot say, our heavenly Father, who has wherewith to supply all your needs: be not therefore so weak and vain as to have anything to do with all dissecting thoughts and cares; go to thy Father; tell him, he knows thou hast need of such and such things; he asks you, Children, have you any meat? John 21. 5. Tell him whether you have or not. Though he knows our wants, he will know them from us; and when we have opened them to him, let us cheerfully refer ourselves to his wisdom, providing for good, for our supply. Therefore, we should care ourselves, not the less of the burden of care, by casting it upon God, because it is he that careth for us, (1 Pet. 5. 7.) and what needs all this ado? If he care, why should we care?

6. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, v. 33. Here is a double argument against the sin of thoughtfulness; take no thought for your life, the life of this world, the things of this world; for, (1.) You have greater and better things to trust to for your life, the life of the soul, your eternal happiness; that is the one thing needful, (Luke 10. 42.) about which you should employ your thoughts, and which is commonly neglected, in those hearts wherein worldly cares have the ascendant. If we were but more careful to please God, and to work out our own salvation, we should be less solicitous to please ourselves, and work out an estate in the world. Thoughtfulness for our souls, is the most effectual cure of thoughtfulness for the world. (2.) You have a surer and easier, a safer and a more compropensive way to obtain the necessaries of this life, than by barking, and caring, and fretting about them; and that is, by seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and, for that reason, let religion your business; say not that this is the way to starve, no, it is the way to be well provided for, even in this world. Observe here,

[1.] The great duty required; it is the sum and substance of our whole duty. "Seek first the kingdom of God; mind religion as your great and principal concern?" our duty is to seek; to desire, pursue, and aim at these things; it is a word that has in it much of the constitution of the new covenant, in favour of us; though we have not attained, but in many things fail, and come short, sincere seeking, a careful concern and earnest endeavour, are accepted.

Now observe, First, The object of this seeking; The kingdom of God, and his righteousness; we must mind heaven as our end, and holiness as our way. Seek the comforts of the kingdom of grace and glory as your felicity; aim at the kingdom and the heaven, and the glory of heaven, and make it sure; resolve not to take up short of it; seek for this glory, honour, and immortality; prefer heaven and heavenly blessings far before earth and earthly delights. We make nothing of our religion, if we do not make heaven of it. And with the happiness of this kingdom, seek the righteousness of it; God's righteousness, the righteousness which he requires to be wrought in us, and wrought in the world, such as regards that of the Scriptures and Pharisees; we must follow peace and holiness, Heb. 12. 14. Secondly, The order of it. Seek first the kingdom of God. Let your care for your souls and another world, take place of all other cares; and let all the concerns of this life be made subordinate to those of the life to come: we must seek the things of Christ more than our own things; and if ever they come in competition, we must remember to seek the things of Christ. You may have a larger concern for the things first; first in thy days, let the morning of youth be dedicated to God. Wisdom must be sought early; it is good beginning betimes to be religious. Seek this first every day; let waking thoughts be of God." Let this be our principle, to do that first which is most needful, and let him that is the first, have the first.

[2.] The gracious promise annexed; all these things, the necessary supports of life, shall be added unto you; shall be given over and above; so it is in the margin. You shall have what you seek, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, for never any sought in vain, that sought in earnest; and besides that, you shall have food and raiment, by way of overplus; as he that buys goods has paper and packthread given him into the bargain. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, 1 Tim. 4. 8. Besides, we asked wisdom, and find that and other things added to him, 2 Chron. 1. 11, 12. O what a blessed change would it make in our hearts and souls, did we but firmly believe this truth, that the best way to be comfortably provided for in this world, is to be most intent upon another world? We then begin at the right end of our work, when we begin with God. If we give diligence to make sure to ourselves the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, the things of this life, Jehovah of hosts, the Lord will provide as much, and as well, as he sees good for us, and more we would not wish for. Have we trusted him for the portion of our inheritance at our end, and shall we not trust him for the portion of our cup, in the way to it? God's Israel
were not only brought to Canaan at last, but had their charges borne through the wilderness. Of that we were more thoughtfull about the things that are not seen, that are eternal, and the less the thoughtful we should be, and the less thoughtfull we should need to be, about the things that are seen, that are temporal! Also regard not your stuff, Gen. 45. 20, 23.

7. The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof, v. 34. We must not perplex ourselves inordinate about future events, because every day brings along with it its own burden of cares and grievances, as if we look about us, and suffer not our fears to betray the succours which grace and reason offer, it brings along with it its own strength and supply too. So that we are hereby told,

(1.) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is needless; let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. If wants and troubles be renewed with the day, there are aids and provisions renewed likewise; compassion's, that are new every morning, Lam. 3. 22. The saints have a Friend that is their arm every morning, and gives out fresh supply daily, instead of looking up, the unfitness of their day requires; (Ezra 3. 4.) and so he keeps his people in a constant dependence upon him. Let us re-fer it therefore to the morrow's strength, to do the morrow's work, and bear the morrow's burden. To-morrow, and the things of it, will be provided for without us; why need we thus anxiously care for that which is so wisely cared for already? This does not forbid a prudent foresight, and preparation accordingly, but a perplexing solicitude, and a prepossession of difficulties and calamities, which may perhaps never come, or if they do, may be easily borne, and the evil of them guarded against. The meaning is, let us mind present duty, and then leave events to God; do the work of the day in its day, and then let to-morrow bring its work along with it.

(2.) That thoughtfulness for the morrow is one of those foolish and hurtful lusts, which they that will be rich fall into, and one of the many sorrows, wherewith they pierce themselves through. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This present day has trouble enough attending it, we need not accumulate burdens by anticipating our trouble, nor borrow perplexities from to-morrow's evils to add to those of this day. It is uncertain what to-morrow's God does, let what they do, it is sufficient enough to take thought about them when they come. What a folly is it to take that trouble upon ourselves this day by care and fear, which belongs to another day, and will be never the lighter when it comes? Let us not pull that upon ourselves all together at once, which Providence has wisely ordered to be borne by parcels. The conclusion of this whole matter then is, that it is the will and command of the Lord, to order the things in this dispensation not by their own tormentors, nor make their passage through this world more dark and unpleasant, by their apprehensions of troubles, than God has made it, by the troubles themselves. By our daily prayers we may procure strength to bear us up under our daily troubles, and to arm us against the temptations that attend them, and then let none of these things move us.

CHAP. VII.

This chapter continues and concludes Christ's sermon on the mount, which is purely practical, directing us to order our conversation aright, both toward God and man; for the design of the christian religion is to make men good, every way good. We have, I. Some rules concerning censure and reproof, v. 1. 2. II. Encouragements given us to pray to God for what we need, v. 7. 11. III. The necessity of strictness in conversation urged upon us, v. 13, 14. IV. A caution given us to take heed of false prophets, v. 15, 20. V. The conclusion of the whole sermon, showing the necessity of universal obedience to Christ's commands, without which we cannot expect to be happy, v. 27. VI. The impression which Christ's doctrine made upon his hearers, v. 28, 29.

1. JUDGE not, that ye be not judged.

2. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. 6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

Our Saviour is here directing us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the faults of others; and his expressions seem intended as a reproof to the Scribes and Pharisees, who were very rigid and severe, very magisterial and supercilious, in condemning all about them, as those commonly are, that are proud and conceited in justifying themselves. We have here,

I. A caution against judging, v. 1. 2. There are those whose office it is to judge—magistrates and ministers. Christ, though he made not himself a Judge, yet came not to unmakethem, for by him prince decrees justice; but this is directed to private persons, to his disciples, who shall hereafter sit in thrones judging, but not now. Now observe, 1. The prohibition; Judge not: We must judge ourselves, and judge of our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, not magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us; since our rule is, to be subject to one another. Be not many masters, Jam. 3. 1. We must not sit in the judgment-seat, to make our word a law to others, until we must not judge others. But what is that is, we must not speak evil of him, so it is explained, Jam. 4. 11. We must not defile him, nor set him at naught, Rom. 14. 10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer such injudicious things from their words and actions as they will not bear. We must use mankind not judgmental, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act, nor of what he is in himself by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are apt to be partial. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state by the same conscience, that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

2. The reason to enforce this prohibition; that ye be not judged. This intimates, (1.) That if we presume to judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. He who usurps the bench, shall be called to the bar; he shall be judged of men; commonly
none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; every one will have a stone to throw at them; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, **against every man**, shall, like him, have **every man's hand and tongue against him**; (Gen. 16. 12.) and no mercy shall be shown to the reputation of those that show no mercy to the reputation of others. Yet that is not the worst of it; they shall be judged of God; from him they shall receive the great sentence. (Rev. 20.) Both parties must appear before him, (Rom. 14. 10.) who, as he will relieve the humble sufferer, will also resist the haughty slanderer, and give him enough of judging.

(2.) That if we be modest and charitable in our censures of others, and decline judging them, and judge ourselves rather, we shall not be judged of the Lord. As God will forgive those that forgive their brethren, so he will not judge those that will not judge their brethren; (Matt. 5.) It is an evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, and shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly. See Rom. 14. 10.

The judging of those that judge others, is according to the law of retaliation; **With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged**. v. 2. The righteous God, in his judgments, often observes a rule of proportion; in the case of Atanazbeck, Judg. 1. 7. See also Rev. 13. 10. You will find that all who are unjustly and unrighteously judged and magnified in his judgments, and all flesh will be silenced before him. **With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again**; perhaps in this world, so that men may read their sin in their punishment. Let this deter us from all severity in dealing with our brother. **What then shall we do when God rises up?** Job 31. 4. What would be the case with God, if he were as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging the breach of others? If we should weigh us in the same balance? We may justly expect it, if we be extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return upon their own heads.

II. Some cautions about reproving. Because we must not judge others, which is a great sin, it does not therefore follow, that we must not reprove others, which is a great duty, and may be a means of saving a soul from death; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt.

Now observe here, I. It is not every one who is fit to reprove. Those who are themselves guilty of the faults of which they accuse others, or of worse, bring shame upon themselves, and are not likely to do good to those whom they reproving. v. 5. Here is,

(1.) A just reproof to the censorious who quarrel with their brother for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones; who are quick-sighted to spy a mote in his eye, but are not sensible of a beam in their own; nay, and will be very officious to pull out the mote out of his eye, when they are as unfit to do it as if they were themselves quite blind. Note, [1.] There are degrees in sin: some sins are common to all men, and therefore may be neglected; some are more frequent than others; some are a great sin, and may be a means of saving a soul from death; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. [2.] There are degrees in sin: some sins are common to all men, and therefore may be neglected; some are a great sin, and may be a means of saving a soul from death; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. [3.] There are many that have beams in their own eyes, and yet do not consider it. They are under the guilt and dominion of very great sins, and yet are not aware of it, but justly themselves, as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in his eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world so artfully blinds their minds, that notwithstanding, with great assurance, they say, We see. [4.] It is common for those that are most sinful themselves, and least sensible of it, to be most forward and free in judging and censoring others: the Pharisees, who were so much proud of it, and so much vain in justifying themselves, were most scornful in condemning others. They were severe upon Christ's disciples for eating with unwashed hands, which was scarcely a mote, while they encouraged men in a contempt of their parents, which was a beam. Pride and charitableness are commonly beamed in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. Nay, many of them judge of that in secret, which they have the face to punish in others when it is discovered. 

Coegi tecum, forte sit viatum de quo quereris, si te diligentem exerceris, in sinu invenies; iniquo judeo irascisti crimini tu?—Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime. Seneca, de Benefic. But, [5.] Many seem to be severely censured who are indulgent of their own, is a mark of hypocrisy. Thou hyprocrite, v. 5. Whatever such a one may pretend, it is certain that he is no enemy to sin, (if he were, he would be an enemy to his own sin,) and therefore he is not worthy of praise; nay, that it appears he is an enemy to his brother, and therefore worthy of blame. This spiritual charity must begin at home; *"For how canst thou say, when thou hast sinned before thy comrade, Let me help to reform thee, when thou takest no care to reform thyself? Thy own heart will upbraid thee with the absurdity of it; thou wilt do it with an ill grace, and thou wilt expect every one to tell thee, that vice correctis sin: physician, heal thyself;"* if free, sequar—Go you before, and I will follow." See Rom. 2. 21. [6.] The consideration of what is amiss in ourselves, though it ought not to keep us from administering freely reproving others in their faults, to bring them to repentance, and to make us very candid and charitable in judging others. Therefore restore with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself; (Gal. 6. 1.) what thou hast been, what thou art, and what thou wouldst be, if God should leave thee to thyself.

(2.) Here is a good rule for reprovers, v. 5. Go in the right method, first cast the beam out of thine own eye. Our own badness is so far from excusing us from reproving, that our being it rendered unfit to reprove, is an aggravation of our badness; I must not say, "I have a beam in my own eye, and therefore I will not help my brother with the mote out of his." A man's offence will never be his defence: but I must first reform myself, that I may thereby help to reform my brother, and may qualify myself to reprove him. Note, Those who blame others, ought to be blameless and harmless themselves. Those who are reprovers in the gate, reprovers by office, magistrates and ministers, are concerned to walk circumspectly, and to be very regular in their conversation; an elder must have a good report, 1 Tim. 3. 2, 7. The smudgers of the sanctuary were to be of pure gold. 2. It is not every one that is fit to be reproved: Give not that which is holy unto dogs, v. 6. This be considered, either, (1.) As a reason why the disciples in preaching the gospel should not preach it to any who were wicked and profane, (Christ himself preached to publicans and sinners,) but the reference is to such as they found obstinate after the gospel was preached to them, such as blas-
phemed it, and persecuted the preachers of it: let them not spend much time among such, for it would be lost labour, but let them turn to others, Acts 13. 41. So Dr. Whitby, Or, (2.) As if the Zeal of the spirit, for the glory of God, against sin, must be guided by discretion, and we must not go about to give instructions, counsels, and rebukes, much less comforts, to hardened sinners, to whom it will certainly do no good, but who will be exasperated and enraged at us. Throw a pearl to a swine, and he will resent it, as if you threw a stone at him: reproofs will be called reproaches, as they were, (Luke 11. 43. Jer. 6. 19.) therefore give not to dogs and swine, (unclean creatures) holy things. Note, [1.] Good counsel and reproach are a holy thing, and a pearl: they are ordinances of God, they are precious; as an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is the wise reprover, (Prov. 25. 12.) and a wise reprover is like an excellent oil; (Ps. 141. 5.) it is a tree of life, Prov. 3. 18. [2.] Among the generation of the wicked, there are some that are arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that they are looked upon as dogs and swine; they are impudently and notoriously vile; they have so long walked in the way of sinners, that they are sat down in the seat of the scornful; they professedly hate and despise instruction, and set at it in defiance, that they are irrecoverably and irreclaimably wicked; they return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow to her wallowing; (Jer. 8. 7.) and there are some that are arrived at such a pitch of hardness as to be hardened in their sin, and hardened in their wickedness, (Jer. 5. 29.) 3.] Reproofs of instruction are all bestowed upon such, and expose the reprover to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that they will trample the reproves under their feet, in scorn of them, and rage against them; for they are impatient of control and contradiction; and they will turn again and rend the reproves; rend their good words, which with their revellings, return them woundings words for their healing ones; rend them with persecution; Herod rent John Baptist for his faithfulness. See here what is the evidence of men's being dogs and swine. They are to be reckoned such, who hate reproofs and reprovers, and fly in the face of those who, in kindness to their souls, show them their sin and danger. These sin against the remonstrance; who shall not know that will not be worse dealt with, and helped? It is plain that God has determined to destroy such, 2 Chron. 25. 16. The rule here given is applicable to the distinguishing, sealing ordinances of the gospel; which must not be prostituted to those who are openly wicked and profane, lest holy things be thereby rendered contemptible, and unholy persons be thereby hardened. It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as dogs and swine, and not do it till after trial, and upon full evidence. Many a patient is lost, by being thought to be so, who, if means had been used, might have been saved. As we must take heed of calling the good, bad, by judging all professors to be hypocrites; so we must take heed of calling the bad, despicable, by laying all the worst to the door of sinners. [4.] Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will turn again and rend them. Let them not be righteous over much, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and previours is the blood of his subjects to him.

7. And, it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. 9. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10. Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Our Saviour, in the foregoing chapter, had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty, by which God is honoured, and which, if done aright, shall be rewarded; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given, some of which are so displeasing to flesh and blood.

I. Here is a precept in three words to the same purport, Ask, Seek, Knock; (v. 7.) that is, in one word, "Pray; pray often, pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it." Ask, as a beggar asks alms. They that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. "Ask; represent your wants and burdens to God, and refer yourselves and your affairs to God for your support and succour, and be in the habit of prayer in all your ways. Ask, as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to inquire of God, Ezek. 36. 37. Seek, as for a thing of value that we have lost; or as the merchantman that seeks goodly pearls. Seek by prayer; (Dan. 9. 3.) Knock, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door. We would be admitted to converse with God, we must be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom; sin has shut and barred the way to us; we must knock; Lord, Lord, open to us. Christ knocks at our doors, (Rev. 3. 20. Cant. 5. 2.) and allows us to knock at his, which is a favour we do not allow to common beggars. Seeking and knocking imply something more than asking and praying. I. We must not only ask; but seek; we must second our prayers with our endeavours; we must in the use of our gifts, and means, and opportunities, and do what we may to fetch him, and to bring him to us. We may not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door; we must knock, as a poor man, who asks for, else he is tempted God. When the dresser of the vineyard asked for a year's respite for the barren fig-tree, he added, I will dig about it, Luke 13. 7, 8. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it. 2. We must not only ask, but knock; we must come to God's door; we must ask, if we would be heard; we must ask, if we would be saved; we must ask for, else we are tempted God.

II. Here is a promise annexed: our labour in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, shall not be in vain: where God finds a praying heart, he will be found; if prayer be heard, God will be found; he shall give them an answer of peace. The precept is threefold, ask, seek, knock; there is precept upon precept; but the promise is sixfold, line upon line, for our encouragement; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. Now here,

1. The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, v. 7. God will meet those that attend on him: Ask, and it shall be given you; not lent you, not sold you, but given you; and what is more than free from gift? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you ask, shall be given you, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? It is but ask and have; ye have not, because ye ask not, or ask not aright: what is not
worth asking, is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. Seek, and ye shall find, and then you do not lose your labour; God is himself found of those that seek him, and if we find him we have enough. **Knock, and it shall be opened;** the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, *Who is at the door?* Hy, a friend, or a servant ticket of the promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, doubt not of admission. If the door be not opened at the first knock, continue instant in prayer; it is an affront to a friend to knock at his door, and then go away; though he tarry, yet wait.**

2. It is repeated, *v. 8.* It is to the same purpose, yet with some addition. (1.) It is made to extend to all that pray aright; *Not only you my disciples shall receive what you ask for, but every one that asketh, receiveth,* whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to the throne of grace, if they come in faith; *for God is no respecter of persons.* (2.) It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. **Every one that asketh receiveth,** they must from faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised; so sure and inviolable are the promises of God, that they do, in effect, give present possession; an active believer enters immediately, and makes the blessings promised his own. What we have in hope, according to the promise, is as sure, and should be as sweet, as what we have in hand. God hath spoken in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine, Manasseh is mine; (Ps. 108. 7. 8.) it is all mine own, if I can but make it so by believing it so. Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition; so here, *he that asketh, receiveth.* Christ hereby puts his flat to the petition; and he having all power, that is enough.

3. It is illustrated, by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their innate readiness to give their children what they ask. Christ appeals to his hearers, *What man is there of you, though never so morose and ill-humoured, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?* v. 9. 10. Whence he infers, *v. 11.* If we then being evil, yet grant your children's requests, much more will your heavenly Father give you the good things you ask. Now this is of use.

(1.) To direct our prayers and expectations. [1.] We must come to God, as children to a Father in heaven, with reverence and confidence. How naturally does the child in want or distress run to the father with its complaints; *My head, my head;* thus should the new nature send us to God for supports and supplies. [2.] We must come to him for good things, for those he gives to them that ask him; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him: we know not what is good for ourselves, (Ecc. 6. 12.) but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him; *Father, thy will be done.* The child is here supposed to ask bread, that is necessary, and a fish, that is wholesome; but if the child should foolishly ask for a stone, or a serpent, for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us hurt if we had it; he knows it, and therefore does not give it us. The children of Pharisees, Matt. 6. 5. who had been undone ere this, if we had had all we desired; this is admirably well expressed by a heathen, Junelal, Sat. 10.

\[\text{Non pro futurum aptissima quocumque dabunti dignum.} \]
\[\text{Caritatem illius home, quam alii: nos annorum} \]
\[\text{Impetus, et cava magnificae eumiziad uerti.} \]
\[\text{Conjugium petimus, partumque uidere: at illis} \]
\[\text{Natum est, qui tum, quantunque futura sit uxor.} \]

Intrust thy fortune to the pow'rs above,
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want:
In goodness, as in greatness, they excel;
Ah, that we lov'd ourselves but half so well!
We, blindly by our headstrong passions led,
Seek a companion, and desire to wed.
Then wish as we must: but to the gods alone
Our future offspring, and our wives, are known.

(2.) To encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed, if all we ask have a stone for bread, break our teeth, (though we have a hard crust to employ our teeth,) nor a serfent for a fish, to sting us; we have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. The world often gives stones for bread, and serfents for fish, but God never does; nay, we shall be heard and answered, for children are especially defended by their parents. [1.] God has put into the hearts of parents compassion to children, to succour and supply their children, according to their need. Even they that have had little conscience of duty, yet have done it, as it were by instinct. No law was ever thought necessary to oblige parents to maintain their legitimate children, nor, in Solomon's time, their illegitimate ones. [2.] He has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children; that from the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve our children, because of our desire to apply ourselves to him for relief. What love and tenderness fathers have, are from him; not from nature, but from the God of nature; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. He compares his concern for his people to that of a father for his children, (Ps. 103. 13.) nay, to that of a mother, which is usually more tender, Isa. 66. 15.—19. 14. 15. But here it is supposed, that his love, and tenderness, and goodness, far exceed that of any earthly parent; and therefore it is argued with a much more, and it is ground upon this un doubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are; *his thoughts are above theirs.* Our earthly fathers have taken care of us; we have taken care of our children; much more will God take care of his; for they are evil, orphans, that not yet have a stone for bread. Adam; they have lost much of the good nature that belonged to humanity, and among other corruptions, have that of crossness and unkindness in them; yet they give good things to their children, and they know how to give, suitably and seasonably; *much more will God, for he takes up when they forsake.* Ps. 27. 10. And, First, God is more knowing; parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so; he knows what we need, and what is fit for us. Secondly, God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into the bowls of one, yet compared with the tender mercies of our God, they would be but as a candle to the sun, or a drop to the ocean. God is more rich, and more ready, to his children, than the fathers of our flesh can be; for he is the Father of our spirits, an ever-loving, ever living Father; the heads of fathers yearn even towards undutiful children, towards prodigals, as David's toward Absalom, and will not all this seize to silence unbelief?

12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye
even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. 13. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.

Our Lord Jesus here presseth upon us that righteousness toward men which is an essential branch of true religion, and that religion toward God, which is an essential branch of universal righteousness.

I. We must make righteousness our rule, and be ruled by it, v. 12. Therefore, lay this down for your principle, to do as you would be done by; therefore, that you may conform to the foregoing precepts, which are particular, that you may not judge and censure others, go by this rule in general; you would not be censured, therefore do not censure. Or, that you may have the benefit of the foregoing promises, fitly is the law of justice subjoined to the law of prayer, for unless we be honest in our conversation, God will not hear our prayers, Isa. 1. 15.—17. 38. 6, 9. Zech. 7. 9. 13. We cannot expect to receive good things from God, if we do not fair things, and that which is honest, and lovely, and of good report, among men. We must not only be devout, but honest, else our devotion is but hypocrisy. Now here we have, 1. The rule of justice laid down: Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do; what we are to do, not only toward God, but toward men; not only towards our fellow-disciples, those of our party and persuasion, but toward men in general, all with whom we have to do. The golden rule of equity is, to do to others, as we would they should do to us. Alexander Severus, a heathen emperor, was a great admirer of this rule, had it written upon the walls of his closet, often quoted it in giving judgement, honoured Christians and his own canons, for the sake of it. Quod tibi, hoc alteri—do to others as you would they should do to you. Take it negatively, (Quod tibi fieri non vis, ne alteri feeceris;) or positively, it comes all to the same. We must not do to others the evil they have done to us, nor the evil which they would do to us, if it were in their power; nor may we do that which we think, if it were done to us, we could bear contentedly, but what we desire should be done to us. This is grounded upon that great commandment, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. As we must bear the same affection to our neighbour, that we would have borne to ourselves, so we must do the same good offices. The meaning of this rule lies in three things. (1.) We must do to our neighbour, not much more evil than we would have been suffered; that is, much reasonable; the appeal is made to our own judgment, and the discovery of our judgment is referred to that which is our own will and expectation, when it is our own case. (2.) We must put other people upon the level with ourselves, and reckon we are as much obliged to them, as they to us. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as they, and they as much bound to be benefited as we. (3.) We must, in our dealings with men, act towards ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and deal accordingly. If I were making such a one’s bargain, labouring under such a one’s infirmity and affliction, how would I desire and expect to be treated? And this is a just supposition, because we know not how soon their case may really be ours: indeed we may fear, lest 

God by his judgments should do to us as we have done to others, if we have not done as we would be done by.

A reason given to enforce this rule: This is the law and the prophets. It is the summary of that second great commandment, which is one of the two, on which hang all the law and the prophets, ch. 22. 40. We have not this in so many words, either in the law or the prophets, but it is the concurring language of the whole. All that is there said concerning our duty towards our neighbour, (and that is no less,) may be reduced to this rule. Christ has here adopted it into this law; so that both the Old Testament, and the New, agree in prescribing this to us, to do as we would be done by. By this rule the law of Christ is commanded, but the lives of christians are enjoined by it. Aut hic non evangelium, aut in non evangelism—Either this is not the gospel, or these are not christians.
godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace, we must pass, by the new birth, 1 John 3. 3, 5. This is a strait gate, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, 1 Sam. 14. 4. There must be a new heart, and a new spirit, and old things must pass away. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what is left must be all one must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a strait gate, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down. By way, we must, deep down, put off the world, put off the old man; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. The gate is strait to all, but to some stricter than to others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. The gate is strait; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, ch. 25. 10.

Secondly, That it is very narrow. We are not in heaven, as soon as we are got through the strait gate; not in Canaan as soon as we are got through the Red sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a narrow way, hedged in by the divine law, which is exceeding broad, and that makes the way narrow; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a right eye and a right hand; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our will; we must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony; must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection; we must go through many tribulations. It is ἐξερήμων, an afflicted way, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow, it is not strange that there are but few that find it and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are as well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it; but shun it; they like it not; they find it too limited and restrained. They that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-tings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, 1 Kings 20. 27. In vita alter alterum tradimus; Quomodo ad salutem reevocari potest quam nullo retrahit, et populus impellit—in the ways of wise men urge each other onward: how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forward by the multitude, without any countering influence? Seneca, Epist. 29. This discourages many, they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather if so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it; it leads to life, to present comfort in the favour of God, with all the joys that are there; to eternal life, to the hope of which at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together; (2 Pet. 1. 3.) The gate is strait and the way narrow, and up hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for all.

2. The great concern and duty of every one of us, in consideration of all this; Enter ye in at the strait gate. The matter is fairly stated; life and death, good and evil, are set before us, both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this way which will work the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but enter ye in at the strait gate; knock at it by single and constant prayers and endeavours, and it shall be opened; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, Luke 13. 24.

15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

We have here a caution against false prophets, to take heed that we be not deceived and imposed upon by them. Prophets are properly such as foretell things to come; there are some mentioned in the Old Testament, who pretended to that without warrant, and the event disproved their pretensions, as Zedekiah, 1 Kings 52. 11. and another Zedekiah, Jer. 29. 22. But false prophets did then and since the days of the church, both in and out of the church, as they did in apostasy, and as they are now. Even such as are called false prophets, and are called so by good men, are not; (Rev. 2. 2.) such are false prophets. "Take heed of those who pretend to revelation, and admit them not without sufficient proof; lest that one absurdity being admitted, a thousand follow." We who preach false doctrine in that form, and adverse to that, which is contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, to the truth which is according to godliness. The former seems to be the proper notion, of pseudoprophetas, a false or pretending prophet, but commonly the latter falls in with it; for who would hang out false colours, but with design, under pretence of them, the more successfully to attack the truth. "Well, beware of them, as it may happen that they try them, and when you have discovered their falsehood, avoid them, have nothing to do with them.
Stand upon your guard against this temptation, which commonly attends the days of reformation, and the breathings out of divine light in more than ordinary streams both high and splendid. When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. Here is, 1. A good reason for this caution; Beware of them, for they are wolves in sheep's clothing, v. 15. 1. We have need to be very cautious, because their pretences are very fair and plausible, and such as will deceive us, if we be not upon our guard. They come in sheep's clothing, in the habit of professed publicans, and consummate, which they wear a rough garment to deceive, Zeol. 13. 4. Elijah's mantle the Septuagint calls μεταχ.—a sheep-skin mantle. We must take heed of being imposed upon by men's dress and garb, as by that of the Scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, Luke 20. 46. Or it may be taken figuratively; they pretend to be sheep, and outwardly appear so innocent, harmless, meek, useful, and all that is good, as to be excelled by none; they feign themselves to be just men, and for the sake of their clothing are admitted among the sheep, which gives them an opportunity of doing them a mischief ere they are aware. They and their errors are girded with the specious pretences of sanctity and devotion. Satan turns himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14. 2. The enemy has horns like a lamb; (Rev. 13. 11.) for the number, Rev. 9, 7, 8. Seducers in language and carriage are soft as wool. Rom. 16. 18. Isa. 30. 10. 2. Because under these pretensions their designs are very malicious and mischievous; inwardly they are ravening wolves. Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing, but a false prophet is a wolf in sheep's clothing; not only not a sheep, but the worst creature; for that creature, but to tear and devour, to scatter the sheep, (John 10. 12.) to drive them from God, and from one another, into crooked paths. They that would cheat us of any truth, and possess us with error, whatever they pretend, design mischief to our souls. Paul calls them grievous wolves, Acts 20. 29. They raven for themselves, serve their own belly, (Rom. 16. 18.) make a prey of us, make a gain of us. New. Now since it is an easy thing, and withal so dangerous, to be cheated, Beware of false prophets. II. Here is a good rule to go by in this caution; we must prove all things; (1 Thess. 5. 21.) try the spirits; (1 John 4. 1.) and here we have a touchstone; ye shall know them by their fruits, v. 16—20. Observe, 1. The illustration of this comparison, of the fruit being the discovery of the tree. You cannot always distinguish them by their bark and leaves, nor by the spreading of their boughs, but by their fruits ye shall know them. The fruit is according to the tree. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them. Christ insists upon this, the agreeableness of outward expression to inward affections. For as that, (1.) If you know what the tree is, you may know what fruit to expect. Never look to gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; it is not in their nature to produce such fruits. An apple may be stuck, or a bunch of grapes may hang, upon a thorn; so may a good truth, a good word or action, be found in an ill man, but you may be sure it never grew there. Nor, (2.) If these be true, that certified hearts are like thorns and thistles, which came in with sin, are worthless, vexing, and for the fire at last. [2.] Good works are good fruit, like grapes and figs, pleasing to God and profitable to men. [3.] This good fruit is never to be expected from bad men, any more than a clean thing out of an unclean: they want an influencing, acceptable principle: out of an evil treasure will be brought forth evil things. (2.) On the other hand, if you know what the fruit is, you may, by that, perceive what the tree is. If you know the fruit of figs, you may know the tree; if the fruit of grapes, you may know the tree; if a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit; nay, it cannot but bring forth evil fruit; but then that must be reckoned the fruit of the tree, which it brings forth naturally, and which is its genuine product, and which it brings forth plentifully and constantly, and is its usual product. Men are known, not by their seditious, profane, unholy, and defaming words, and the frequent practice of such, but by their regular and constant use, and the frequent practice of the frequent frequent practice, especially those that appear to be free, and most their own, and least under the influence of external motives and inducements. 2. The application of this to the false prophets. (1.) By way of terror and threatening; (v. 19.) every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down. The very saying John the Baptist had used, ch. 3. 10. Christ could have spoken the same sense in other words; could have altered it, or given it a new turn; but he thought it no disparagement to him to say the same that John had said before him: let not ministers be ambitious of coming new expressions, nor people's ears itch for novelties; to write and speak the same things must not be grievous, for it is safe. Here is, [1.] The description of barren trees, and of their ordinary fruits, which they are, for fruit; figs: though there be fruit, if it be not good fruit, though that be done, which for the matter of it is good, if it be not done well, in a right manner, and for a right end, the tree is accounted barren. [2.] The doom of barren trees; they are, that is, certainly they shall be, hewn down, and cast into the fire: God will deal with them as men use to deal with dry trees that cumber the ground: he will mark them by some signal tokens of his displeasure; he will bar them by stripping them of their parts and gifts, will cut them down by death, and cast them into the fire of hell, a fire blown with the bellows of God's wrath, and fed with the wood of barren trees. Compare this with Ezek. 31. 12, 13. Dan. 4. 14. John 15. 6. 2. By way of trial; by their fruits ye shall know them. [1.] By the fruits of their persons, their words and actions, and the course of their conversation. If you would know whether they be right or not, observe how they live; their works will testify for them or against them. The Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's chair, and taught the law, but they were proud, and covetous, and false, and oppressive, and therefore Christ warned his disciples to beware of them and of their leaven, Mark 12. 38. If men pretend to be prophets and are immoral, that disapproves their pretensions; they are no true friends to the cross of Christ, whatever they profess, whose God is their belly, and who mind earthly things, Phil. 3. 18, 19. They are not taught nor sent of the holy God, whose lives evidence that they are led by the unclean spirit. God puts the treasure into earth men's hands, to bless not rich men, but men of God. It will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal
liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of the narrow way, we may conclude, that this persuasion comes not of him that calleth us, Gal. 5. 8. This wisdom is not from above, James 3. 15. Faith and a good conscience are held together, 1 Tim. 1. 19.—3. 9. Note, Doctrines of doubtful disputation must be tried by graces and duties of confessed certainty: those opinions come not from God that lead; sin: but if we cannot know them by their fruits, we must have recourse to the great touchstone, to the law, and to the testimony: do they speak according to that rule?

21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord; have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. 24. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: 25. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock: 26. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. 28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: 29. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.

We have here the conclusion of this long and excellent sermon, the scope of which is to show the indispensable necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ; this is designed to clench the nail, that it might fix in a sure place: he speaks this to his disciples that sat at his feet, wherever he preached, and followed him wherever he went. Had he sought his own praise among men, he would have said, that was enough; but the religion he came to establish, is in power, not in word only, (1 Cor. 4. 20.) and therefore something more is necessary.

I. He shows, by a plain remonstrance, that an outward profession of religion, however remarkable, will not bring us to heaven, unless there be a correspondent conversation, v. 21—23. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus: the keys are put into his hand; he has power to prescribe new terms of life and death, and to judge men according to them: now this is a solemn declaration pursuant to that power. Observe here, 1. Christ's law laid down, v. 21. Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, into the kingdom of grace and glory. It is an answer to that question, Psal. 15. 1. Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?—the church militant, and who shall dwell in thy holy hill?—the church triumphant.

Christ here shows, (1.) That it will not suffice to say, Lord, Lord; in word and tongue to own Christ for our Master, and to make addresses to him, and professions of him accordingly; in prayer to God, in discourse with men, we must call Christ, Lord, Lord; we say well, for so he is; (John 13. 13.) but can we imagine that by such shows, that piece of formality as this should be so recom- pensed, or that he who knows and requires the heart, should be so put off with shows for substance? Compliments among men are pieces of civility that are returned with compliments, but they are never paid as real services; and can they then be of any account with Christ? There may be a seeming im- portunity in prayer, Lord, Lord; such as it is, is answerable to outward expressions, we are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. This is not to take us off from saying, Lord, Lord; from praying, and being earnest in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the form of godliness, without the power.

(2.) That it is necessary to our happiness that we do both. He who says, Lord, Lord, but doth not the will of his Father in heaven. The will of God, as Christ's Father, is his will in the gospel, for there he is made known, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and in him our Father. Now this is his will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we love one another. This is his will, even our sanctification. If we comply not with the will of God, we mock Christ in calling him Lord, as other did, who put on him a gorgeous robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews. Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men: he that said, I go, sir, stirred never a step; (ch. 21. 30.) but these two things God has joined in his command, and let no man that puts them asunder think to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. The hypocrite's plea against the strictness of this law, offering other things in lieu of obedience, v. 22. The plea is supposed to be in that day, that great day, when every man shall appear in his own colours; when the secrets of all hearts shall be mani- fest, and among the rest, the secret pretences with which sinners now support their vain hopes. Christ knows the strength of their cause, and it is but weakness: what they now harbour in their bosoms, they will then produce in arrest of judgment to stay the doom, but it will be in vain. They put their hope with great importunity, Lord, Lord; and yet with great confidence, appealing to Christ concerning it; Lord, dost thou know, (1.) That we have prophesied in thy name? Yes, it may be so, Balaam and Caiaphas were overruled to prophesy, and Saul was against his will among the prophets, yet that did not save them. These prophesied in his name, but he did not send them: they only made use of his name to serve a turn. Note, A man may be a preacher, no have the name for the ministry, and an external call to it, and perhaps some success in it, and yet be a wicked man; may help others to heaven, and yet come short himself. (2.) That in thy name we have cast out devils? That may be so; Judas cast out devils, and yet a son of perdition. Origen says, that in his time so prevalent was the name of Christ to cast out devils, that sometimes it availed when named by wicked Christians. A man may seek the help of others, and in their name cry, Hail, devil, nay, and be a devil himself. (3.) That in thy name we have done many wonderful works. There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith; none of that faith which works by love and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is only real holiness and sanctification that is ac-
cepted of God. Grace and love are a more excellent way than removing mountains, or speaking with the tongues of men and angels, 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace. Observe, the heart of prophet was used in doing these works, and which they confided in, was the wonderfulness of them. Simon Magus wondered at the miracles, (Acts 8. 13.) and therefore would give any money for power to do the like. Observe, They had not many good works to plead: they could not pretend to have done many gracious works of piety and charity; one such would have been a better specimen of the multitude of wondrous works, which availed not at all, while they persisted in disobedience. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion, have kept fasts and given alms, and have been pres- fered of the people, and have been regarded with reigning pride, worldliness and sensuality, and want of love to God and man. Bethel is their confidence, (Jer. 48. 13.) they are haughty because of the holy mountain; (Zeph. 3. 11.) and boast that they are the temple of the Lord, Jer. 7. 4. Let us take heed of resting in external privileges and performances, lest we deceive ourselves, and perish eternally as multitudes do. Why lies the life of the wicked, he re- fects them and their plea—because they were work- ers of iniquity. Note, It is possible for men to have a great name for piety, and yet to be workers of iniquity; and those that are so will receive the greater damnation. Secret haunts of sin, kept up under the cloak of a visible profession, will be the ruin of hy- pocrites. Living in known sin nullifies men's pre- tensions, be they ever so specious. (2.) How it is exchangeable to be wiser than he that is wise, (5.) and haughtier than he that is haughty, (14.) than he who commands us, as our servants, no, not when you prophesied in my name, when you were in the height of your profes- sion, and were most extolled. This intimates, that if he had ever known them, as the Lord knew them that are his, had ever owned them and loved them as his, he would have known them, and owned them, and loved them, to the end: but he never did know them, for he always knew them to be hypocrites, and revetted at heart, as he did Judas, therefore, shall he, depart from me. Has Christ need of such guests? When he came in the flesh, he called sin- ners to him, (ch. 9. 13.) but when he shall come again in glory, he will drive sinners from him. They that would not come to him to be saved, must depart from him to be damned. To depart from Christ is the very hell of hell; it is the foundation of all the misery of the damned, to be cut off from all hope of benefit from Christ and his mediation. Those that go no further in Christ's service than a bare profes- sion, he does not accept, nor will he own them in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! How they may go to hell, by the gates of heaven! This should be an awakening word to all christians. If a preacher, one of God's chosen, be publicly disowned by Christ for working iniquity; what will become of us, if we be found such? And if we be such, we shall certainly be found such. At God's bar, a profession of religion will not bear out any man in the practice and indulgence of sin; there fore let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity.

II. He shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not put them into practice. Observe, 1. The hearers of Christ's word are here divided into two sorts; some that hear, and do what they hear; others that hear, and do not. Christ preach- ed now to a mixed multitude, and he thus separates them one from the other, as he will at the great day, when all who have heard shall be gathered before him. Christ is still speaking from heaven, and the holy word of God speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts.

1. Some that hear his sayings and do them: blessed be God that there are any such, though comparatively few. To hear Christ, is not barely to give him the hearing, but to obey him. Note, It highly concerns us all to do what we hear of the say- ings of Christ. There is no more evidence that we believe his sayings, Blessed are these ears, ch. 13. 16, 17. But if we practise not what we hear we receive that grace in vain. To do Christ's sayings is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affec- tions, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, must be conformable to Christ's sayings, and he that is the doer of his sayings, thereby doth require.

2. Those who only hear, and do not, are not his. The sayings of Christ are the direct manner in which he has enacted, but the truths he has revealed, must be done by us. They are a light, not only to our eyes, but to our feet, and are designed not only to inform our judgments, but to reform our hearts and lives; nor do we indeed believe them, if we do not live up to them. Observe, It is not enough to hear Christ's sayings, or Christ that is the doer of his say- ings, but it is not enough to hear them, and no more. We must hear, and understand them, hear them, and remember them, and hear them, and think of them, repeat them, dispute for them; but we must hear, and do them. This do and thou shalt live. Those only that hear, and do, are blessed, (Luke 11. 28.) John 13. 17.) and are akin to Christ, ch. 12. 50.

2. There are others who hear Christ's sayings and do them not; their religion rests in bare hear- ing, and goes no further; like children that have heard stories and read fables. They are full of mere notions, and indigested opinions, but their joints are weak, and they heavy and listless; they neither can stir, nor care to stir, in any good duty; they hear God's words, as if they desired to know his ways, like a people that did righteousness, but they will not do it. Ezek. 33. 30, 31. Isa. 58. 2. Thus they deceive themselves, as Micah, who thought himself happy, because he had a Levite to be his priest, though he had not the Lord to be his God. The seed is sown, but it never comes up; they see their spots in the glass of the word, but wash them not off, Jam. 1. 22, 24. Thus they put a cheat upon their own souls; for it is certain, if our hearing be not the means of our obedience, it will be the aggravation of our disobedience. Those who only hear Christ's sayings, and do them not, sit down in the midway to heaven, and that will never bring them to God's journey's end. They are akin to Christ only by the half-blood, and our law allows not such to inherit. 2. Two sorts of hearers are here represented in their true characters, and the state of their case, under the comparison of two builders; one was wise, and built upon a rock, and his building stood in a storm; the other foolish, and built upon the same foundation, and his building was taken in a

Now, (1.) The general scope of this parable teaches us that the only way to make sure work for our souls and eternity is, to hear and do the sayings of the Lord Jesus; these sayings of his in this sermon
upon the mount, which is wholly practical; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done; and thus we lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come; (1 Tim. 6. 19.) a good bond, so some read it; a bond of God's making, which secures salvation upon gospel-terms, that is a good bond; not one of our own devising, which brings salvation to our own fancies. They make sure the good part, who, like Mary, when they hear the word of Christ, sit at his feet in subjection to it: Speak, Lord, thy servant hears. (2.) The particular parts of it teach us divers good lessons.

[1.] That we have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, to make our calling and election sure, and see that we may get to heaven, and have the comfortable evidence of it; to make it sure, and sure to ourselves, that when we fail, we shall be received into everlasting habitations. Many never mind this, it is the farthest thing from their thoughts; they are building for this world, as if they were to be here always, but take no care to build for another world. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to inquire, what there is in them; and if it be secure, then, that they may get to heaven at last, and may have a well-grounded hope of it in the mean time.

[2.] That there is a rock provided for us to build this house upon, and that rock is Christ. He is laid for a Foundation, and other foundation can no man lay, Isa. 28. 16. 1 Cor. 3. 11. He is our hope, 1 Tim. 1. 1. Christ in us is so; we must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fulness of Christ's merit, for the pardon of sin, the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature, and the prevalency of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as he is made known, and made over, to us in the gospel, which is sufficient to redress all our grievances, and to answer all the necessities of our case, so that he is a Saviour to the utmost. The church is built upon this Rock, and so is every believer. He is strong and immoveable as a rock; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made ashamed of our hope.

[3.] That there is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the sayings of Christ, build their hopes upon this Rock; and it is their wisdom. Christ is our only Way to the Father, and the obedience of faith is our only way to Christ; for to them that obey him, and to them only, he becomes the Author of eternal salvation. Those build upon Christ, who, having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and count every thing but loss and dung that they may win Christ, and be found in him. Building upon a rock requires care and pains; they that would make sure of salvation sure, must give diligence. They are wise builders who begin to build so, as they may be able to finish, (Luke 14. 30.) and therefore lay a firm foundation.

[4.] That there are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this Rock, and build their hopes upon the sand; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if that were a sure token of God's favour, Hos. 12. 8. Others upon their external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through in that profession, and the reputation they have got by it. They are called christians, were baptized, go to church, hear Christ's word, say their prayers, and do nobody any harm, and, if they perish, God help a great many. This is the light of their own fire, which they walk in; this is that, upon which, with a great deal of assurance, they venture; but it is all sand, too weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

[5.] That there is a storm coming, that will try whether our hopes are bound on will try every man's work; (1 Cor. 3. 13.) will discover the foundation, Hab. 3. 13. Rain, and floods, and wind, will beat upon the house; the trial is sometimes in this world; when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, then it will be seen, who only heard the word, and who heard and practised it; then when we have occasion to use our hopes, it will be then whether they were right, and well grounded, or not. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes, and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting fruition.

[6.] That these hopes which are built upon Christ, the Rock, shall stand, and will stand the proof of the time; when the storm comes; they will be his preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing disquiet. His profession will not wither; his comforts will not fail; they will be his strength and song, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. When he comes to the last encounter, those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave; will carry him cheerfully through that dark valley; will be approved by the Judge; will stand the test of the great day; and will be crowned with endless glory, 2 Cor. 1. 12. 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds so doing, so hoping.

[7.] That those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will certainly fail them in a stormy day; will yield them no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; will be no fence against temptations to apostasy, in a time of persecution. When God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite? Job 27. 8. It is as the spider's web, and as the giving up of the ghost. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand, Job 8. 14. 15. It fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another; when a wicked man dies, his iniquity shall pursue him; when he thought it would have been turned into fruitation, it fell, and great was the fall of it. It was a great disappointment to the builder; the shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been raised, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all that attends formal professors; witness Capernaum's doom.

III. In the two last verses, we are told what impressions Christ's discourse made upon the auditory. It made an impression on his disciples, and it is probable that he said more than is here recorded; and doubtless the delivery of it from the mouth of him, into whose lips grace was poured, did mightily set it off. Now, 1. They were astonished at his doctrine; it is to be feared that few of them were brought to follow him; but for the present, they were filled with wonder. Note, It is possible for people to admire good preaching, and yet to remain in ignorance of the power of it; to be affected with a sermon, yet be sanctified. 2. The reason was because he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. The Scribes pretended to as much authority as any teachers whatsoever, and were supported by all the external advantages that could be obtained, but their preaching was mean, and flat, and jejune; they spake as those
that were not themselves masters of what they preached: the word did not come from them with any life or force; they delivered it as a school-boy says his lesson; but Christ delivered his discourse, as a judge gives his charge. He did indeed, dominion in connection—deliver his discourse with a tone of authority; his lesson, and his words, were words of Christ; upon the mountain, shown more true authority, than the Scribes in Moses's seat. Thus when Christ teaches by his Spirit in the soul, he teaches with authority. He says, Let there be light, and there is light.

CHAP. VIII.

The evangelist having in the foregoing chapters, given us a specimen of our Lord's preaching, proceeds now to give some instances of the miracles he wrought, which gain him a teacher come from God, and the great Healer of a diseased world. In this chapter we have, I. Christ's cleansing of a leper, v. 1—4. II. His curing a palsied man, v. 5—18. III. His commending two that were disposed to follow him, v. 19—22. IV. His controlling the tempest, v. 23—27. V. His casting out devils, v. 28—34.

1. WHEN he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean: And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

The first verse refers to the close of the foregoing sermon: the people that heard him were astonished at his doctrine; and the effect was, that when he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him; though he was so strict a Lawgiver, and so faithful a Reformer, they diligently attended him, and were leath to disperse, and go from him. Note, They to whom Christ has manifested himself, cannot but desire to be more acquainted with him. They who know much of Christ should covet to know more; and then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord. It is pleasing to see people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. Now was Jacob's prophecy concerning the Messiah fulfilled, that shall the God be; yet they who gathered to him did not cleave to him. They who followed him closely and constantly were but few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

In these verses we have an account of Christ's cleansing a leper. It should seem by comparing Mark 1. 40, and Luke 5. 12, that this passage, though placed, by St. Mark, after the discourse on the mount, because he would give account of his doctrines first, and then of his miracles, happened some time before; but that is not at all material. This is fitly recorded with the first of Christ's miracles. 1. Because the leprosy was looked upon, among the Jews, as a particular mark of God's displeasure: hence we find Miriam, Gehazi, and Uzziah, smitten with leprosy for one particular sin; and therefore Christ, to show that he came to turn away the wrath of God, by taking away sin, began with the cure of a leper. 2. Because this disease, as it was supposed to come immediately from the hand of God, so also it was supposed to be removed immediately by his hand, and therefore it was not attempted to be cured by physicians, but was put under the inspection of the priests, the Lord's ministers, who waited to see what God would do. And it is a common way, in the walls of a house, was altogether supernatural; and it should seem to be a disease of a quite different nature from what we now call the leprosy. The king of Israel said, Am I God, that I am sent to, to recover a man of a leprosy? 2 Kings 5. 7. Christ proved himself God, by recovering many from the leprosy, and authorizing his disciples, in his name, to do so too, (ch. 10. 7.) and it is put among the powers of the Messiah's reign. Matt. 11. 5. He also showed himself to be the Saviour of his people from their sins; for though every disease is both the fruit of sin, and a figure of it, as the disorder of the soul, yet the leprosy was in a special manner so; for it contracted such a pollution, and obliged to such a separation from holy things, as no other disease did; and therefore in the laws concerning it, (Lev. 13. and 14.) it is distinguished from other diseases, as a sicknessiness; the priest was to pronounce the party clean or unclean, according to the indications; but the honour of making the lepers clean was reserved for Christ, who was to do it as the High-Priest of our profession: he comes to do that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, Rom. 8. 3. The law discovered sin, (for by the law is the knowledge of sin,) and promised the pardon of it to him that believed (Gal. 3. 23.) as the priest did the leper, but could go no further; it could not make the comers therein perfect. But Christ takes away sin, cleanses us from it, and so perfecteth for them that are sanctified. Now here we have, I. The leper's address to Christ. If this happened, as it is here placed, after the sermon on the mount, we may suppose that the leper, though cured of his disease, it cut by his disease from the cities of Israel, yet got within hearing of Christ's sermon, and was encouraged by it, to make his application to him; for he that taught as one having authority, could heal so; and therefore he came and worshipped him, as one clothed with a divine power. His address is, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. The cleansing of him may be considered, 1. As a temporal mercy, to the body, delivered from a disease, which, though it did not threaten life, imbeddered it. And so it directs us, not only to apply ourselves to Christ, who has power over bodily diseases, for the cure of them, but it also teaches us in what manner to apply ourselves to him; with an assurance of his power, believing that he is as able to cure diseases now, as he was when on earth, but with a submission to his will: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst, and therefore, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 2. As a typical mercy. Sin is the leprosy of the soul; it shuts us out from communion with God; to which that we may be restored, it is necessary that we be cleansed from this leprosy, and this ought to be our great concern. Now observe, It is our comfort when we apply ourselves to Christ, as the great Physician, that if he will, he can take sin out of his heart, and we should, with an humble, believing boldness, go to him and tell him so. That is, (1.) We must rest ourselves upon his power; we must be confident of this, that Christ can make us clean. No
guilt is so great but that there is a sufficiency in his righteousness to atone for it; no corruption so strong, but there is a sufficiency in his grace to subdue it. God would not appear a physician in his hospital that is not for more—every man qualified for the undertaking. (3.) We must recommend ourselves to his pity; we cannot demand it as a debt, but we must humbly request it as a favour; "Lord, if thou wilt, I throw myself at thy feet, and if I perish, I will perish there."

II. Christ's answer to this address, which was very kind.

1. He put forth his hand and touched him. The leprosy was a noisome, loathsome disease, yet Christ touched him; for he did not disdain to converse with publicans and sinners, to do them good. There was a ceremonial pollution contracted by the touch of a leper; but Christ would show, that when he conversed with sinners, he was in no danger of being infected from them, the presence of the world had nothing in him. If we touch pitch, we are defiled; but Christ was separate from sinners, even when he lived among them.

2. He said, I will, be thou clean. He did not say as Elisha to Naaman, Go, wash in Jordan; did not put him upon a tedious, troublesome, chargeable course of physic, but spake the word and healed him. (1.) Here is a word of kindness, I will. I am as able to help thee, as thou art to be helped. Note, They who by faith apply themselves to Christ for mercy and grace, may be sure that he is willing, freely willing, to give them the mercy and grace they come to him for. Christ is a Physician, that does not need to be sought for, he is always in the way; does not need to be urged, while we are yet speaking he hears; does not need to be fed, he heals freely, not for price or reward. He has given all power to him, that he may work, the same as he is able to save sinners. (2.) A word of power, Be thou clean. Both a word of authority, and a power of energy, are exerted in this word. Christ heals by a word of command to us; Be thou clean; "Be willing to be clean, and use the means; cleanse thyself from all filthiness?" but there goes along with this a word of command concerning us, a word that doth the work, I will that thou be clean. Such a word as this is necessary to the moral; it is a means, a condition; it is necessary for it; and the almighty grace which speaks it, shall not be wanting to those that truly desire it.

III. The happy change hereby wrought. Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Nature works gradually, but the God of nature works immediately; he speaks, it is done: and yet he works effectually; he commands, and it stands fast. One of the first miracles Moses wrought was of leprosy. "Thou shalt not suffer a leper" (Exod. 23. 25.) for the priests under the law offered sacrifice first for their own sin, but one of Christ's first miracles was curing another of leprosy, for he had no sin of his own to atone for.

IV. The after-directions Christ gave him. It was fit that they who are cured by Christ should ever after be ruled by him.

1. See thou tell no man; "Tell no man till thou hast showed thyself to the priest, and he has pronounced thee clean; and so thou hast a legal proof, both that thou wast before a leper, and art now thoroughly cleansed." Christ would have his miracles to appear in their full light and evidence, and not to be published till they could appear so. Note, They that preach the truths of Christ should be able to prove them; to defend what they preach, and convince gainsayers. "Tell no man, till that thou hast showed thyself to the priest, lest if he hear who cured thee, he should out of spite deny to give thee a certificate of the cure, and so keep thee under confinement." Such were the priests in Christ's time, that they who had any thing to do with them had need to have been as wise as serpents.

2. Go show thyself to the priest, according to the law, Lev. 14. 2. Christ took care to have the law observed, lest he should give offence, and to show that he will have order kept up, and good discipline and respect paid to those that are in office. It may be of use to those that are cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, to have recourse to Christ's ministers, and to open their case to them, that they may assist them in their inquiries into their spiritual state, and advise, and comfort, and pray for them.

3. Offer the gift that Moses commanded, in token of thankfulness to God, and recompense to the priest for his pains; and this for a testimony unto them; either, (1.) Which Moses commanded for a testimony: the ceremonial laws were testimonies of God's authority over them, care of them, and the grace which should afterwards be revealed. Or, (2.) "Do thou offer it for a testimony, and let the priest know who cleansed thee, and how; and it shall be a testimony, that there is one among them, who does that which the high-priest cannot do. Let it remain upon record as a witness of my power, and a testimony for me to them, if they will use it and improve it; but against them, if they will not." for so Christ's word and works are testimonies.

5. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, 6. And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 10. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 11. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: 12. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way: and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

We have here an account of Christ's curing the centurion's servant of a palsy. This was done at Capernaum, where Christ now dwelt, ch. 4. 13. Christ went about doing good, and came home to do good too; every place he came to was the better for him. The persons Christ had now to do with were:

1. A centurion; he was a supplicant, a Gentile, a Roman, an officer of the army; probably commander in chief of that part of the Roman army which was quartered at Capernaum, and kept garrison there. (1.) Though he was a soldier, (and a little
piety commonly goes a great way with men of that profession; yet he was a godly man; he was eminently so. Note, God has his remnant among all sorts of people. No man's calling or place in the world will be an excuse for his unbelief and impiety; none shall say in the great day, I had been religious, and I was the best thing among a bad set of men. Three things are among the reasons of the Lord. And sometimes where grace conquers the unlikelihood, it is more than a conqueror; this soldier that was good, was very good. (2.) Though he was a Roman soldier, and his very dwelling among the Jews was a badge of their subjection to the Roman yoke, yet Christ, who was King of the Jews, favoured him; and therein it is to be observed we may not needlessly to interest ourselves in national enmities. (3.) Though he was a Gentile, yet Christ countenanced him. It is true, he went not to any of the Gentile towns, (it was the land of Canaan that was Immanuel's land, Isa. 8. 8.) yet he received addresses from Gentiles; now good old Simeon's word began to be fulfilled, that he should be a light to lighten to the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel. Matthew, in annexing this cure to that of the leper, who was a Jew, intimates this; the leprous Jews Christ touched and cured, for he preached personally to them; but the paralytic Gentiles he cured at a distance; for to them he did not go in person, but sent his word and healed them; yet in them he was more magnified.

2. The centurion's servant; he was the patient. In this also it appears, that there is no respect of persons with God; for in Christ Jesus, as there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, so there is neither bond nor free. He is as ready to heal the poorest servant, as the richest master; for himself took upon him the form of a servant, to show his regard to the meanest.

Now in the story of the cure of this servant, we may observe an interchange of graces, very remarkable between Christ and the centurion. See here,

I. The grace of the centurion working towards Christ. Can any good thing come out of a Roman soldier? any thing tolerable, much less any thing laudable? Come and see, and you will find abundance of good coming out of this centurion that was eminently bad and exemplary. Observe, our enemies redress our affections. (1.) His affectionate address to Jesus Christ, which speaks.

(1.) A pious regard to our great Master, as one able and willing to succour and relieve poor petitioners. He came to him beseeching him, not as Naaman the Syrian (a centurion too,) came to Eli- sha, demanding a cure, taking state and standing upon points of honour; but with cap in hand, as an humble sufferer. By this it seems, that he saw more in Christ than appeared at first view; saw that which commanded respect, though to those who looked no further, his visage was marred more than any man's. The officers of the army being controllers of the town, no doubt made a great figure, yet he lays by the thoughts of his post of honour, when he presses himself to Christ, and comes beseeching him. Note, the greatest of men must turn beggars, when they have to do with Christ. He owns Christ's sovereignty, in calling him Lord, and referring the case to him, and to his will, and wisdom, by a modest remonstrance, without any formal and express petition. He knew he had to do with a wise and gracious physician, to whom the opening of the eyes and the cure of the palsy, was as a matter of course. The centurion's request. A humble confession of our spiritual wants and diseases shall not fail of an answer of peace. Pour out thy complaint, and mercy shall be poured out.

(2.) A charitable regard to his poor servant. We read of many that came to Christ for their children, but this is the only instance of one that came to him for a servant: Lord, my servant lies at home sick. Note, It is the duty of masters to concern themselves for their servants, when they are in affliction.—The palsy disabled the servant for his work, and made him useless to his master. The officer, in his turn, was much more disabled, he could not even take care of himself, yet he did not turn him away when he was sick, (as that Amalekite did his servant, 1 Sam. 30. 13.) did not send him to his friends, nor let him lie by neglected, but sought out the best relief he could for him; the servant could not have done more for the master, than the master did here for the servant. The centurion's servants were very dutiful to him, (2.) and being very indifferent to himself; he was very kind to them, and that made them the more cheerfully obedient to him. As we must not despise the cause of our servants, when they contend with us, (Job 31. 13. 15.) so we must not despise their case when God contends with them; for we are made in the same mould, by the same hand, and stand upon the same level with them before God, and must not set them with the dogs of our flock. The centurion applies not to witches or wizards for his servant, but to Christ. The palsy is a disease in which the physician's skill commonly fails; it was therefore a great evidence of his faith in the power of Christ, to come to him for a cure, which was above the power of natural means to effect. Observe, how pathetically he represents his servant's case as very sad; he is sick of the palsy, (It was not paralysis simplex, but scorbutica.) We should thus concern ourselves for the souls of our children, and servants, that are spiritually sick of the palsy, the dead-palsy, that is, he is sick of that spiritual palsy which commonly makes the patient senseless of pain, but this person was grievously tormented; being young, nature was strong to struggle with the stroke, which made it painful. (It was not paralysis simplex, but scorbutica.) We should thus concern ourselves for the souls of our children, and servants, that are spiritually sick of the palsy, the dead-palsy, that is, he is sick of the palsy, which is spiritual insensibility, in that which is spiritually good; and bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, bring them to the means of healing and health.

2. Observe his great humility and self-abasement. After Christ had intimated his readiness to come and heal his servant, (v. 7.) he expressed himself with the more humbleness of mind. Note, Humble souls are made more humble, by Christ's gracious concerns and dealings with them. Observe the language of his humility; Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; (v. 8.) which speaks mean thoughts of himself, and high thoughts of our Lord Jesus. He does not say, "My servant is not worthy that thou shouldst come into his chamber, because it is in the garret?" but, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come into my house. The centurion was a great man, yet he owned his unworthiness before God. Note, Humility very well becomes persons of quality. Christ now made but a mean figure in the world, yet the centurion, looking upon him as a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, paid him this respect. Note, We should have a value and veneration for what we see of God, even in those who, in outward condition, are every way our inferiors, if we regard them as in Christ with a petition, and therefore expressed himself thus humbly. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, and to God through Christ, it becomes us to abase ourselves, and to lie low in a sense of our own unworthiness, as mean creatures and as vile sinners, to do any thing for God, to receive any good from him, or to have any thing to do with him. Observe, the more we come in faith. The more humility, the more faith; the more diffident we are of ourselves, the stronger will be our confidence in Jesus Christ. He had an assurance of faith not only that Christ could cure his servant, but,

(1.) That he could cure him at a distance. There
needed not any physical contact, as in natural operations, nor any application to the part affected; but the cure, he believed, might be wrought, without bringing the physician and patient together. We read afterwards of those, who brought him sick unto him of their faith, and he believed, and set him before him, and Christ commended their faith for a working faith. This centurion did not bring his man sick of the palsy, and Christ commend- ed his faith for a trusting faith: true faith is accept ed of Christ, though variously appearing: Christ puts the best construction upon the different methods of religion that people take, and thereby has taught us to be so too. This centurion believed, and it is undoubtedly true, that the power of Christ knows no limits, and therefore nearness and distance are alike to him. Distance of place cannot obstruct either the knowing, or working, of him that fills all places."—Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Jer. 23. 23.

(2.) That he could cure him with a word, not send him a medicine, much less a charm; but speak the word, and it shall be done. He did not question but my servant shall be healed. Herein he owns him to have a divine power, an authority to command all the creatures and powers of nature, which enables him to do whatsoever he pleases in the kingdom of nature; as at first he raised that kingdom by an almighty word, when he said, Let there be light. With men, saying and doing are two things; but not so with Christ, who is therefore the Arm of the Lord, because he is the eternal Word. His saying, He ye warned, and filled, (Jam. 2. 16.) and healed, warms, and fills, and heals.

The centurion’s faith in the power of Christ he here illustrates by the dominion he had, as a centurion, over his soldiers, as a master over his servants: he says to one, Go, and he goes, &c. They were all at his beck and command, so that as he could bring things near or far at a distance; his word was a law to them—hence, for well disciplined soldiers know that the commands of their officers are not to be disputed, but obeyed. Thus could Christ speak, and it is done; such a power had he over all bodily diseases. The centurion had this command over his soldiers, though he was himself a man under authority; not a commander in chief, but a sub-al tern officer; much more had Christ this power, who is the great and sovereign Lord of all. The centurion’s servants were very obsequious, would go and come at every the least intimation of their master’s mind. Now, [1.] Such servants we all should be to God: we must go and come at his bidding, according to the directions of his word, and the disposals of his providence; run where he sends us, return when he reminds us, and do what he appoints. What saith my Lord unto his servant? When his will is published, his must take place, and our own be set aside. [2.] Such devotion is due from all diseases are to Christ. They seize us when he sends them, they leave us when he calls them back; they have that effect upon us, upon our bodies, upon our souls, that he orders. It is a matter of comfort to all that belong to Christ, for whose good his power is exerted and engaged, that every disease has his centurion, who executes his command, is under his control, and is made to do his bidding. They have no selfish intentions of his grace. They need not fear sickness, nor must we; who can do, who see it in the hand of so good a Friend.

II. Here is the grace of Christ appearing toward this centurion; for to the gracious he will show himself gracious.

1. He complies with his address at the first word. He did but tell him his servant’s case, and was going on to beg a cure, when Christ prevented him, with this good word, and comfortable word, I will come and heal him; (v. 7.) not, I will come and see him—that had evinced him a kind Saviour; but, I will come and heal him—that shows him a mighty, an almighty Saviour; it was a great word, but no more than he could make good; for he healed him. They who wrought miracles by a derived power, did not speak thus positively, as Christ did, who wrought them by his own power, as one that had authority. When a minister is sent for to a sick friend, he can but say, I will come and pray for him; but Christ says, I will come and heal him; it is well that Christ can do more for us than our ministers can. The centurion desired he would heal his servant; he says, I will come and heal him; thus expressing more favour than he did either ask or think of. Note, Christ often outdoes the expectations of poor suppliants. See an instance of Christ’s humility, that he would make a visit to a poor soldier. He would not go down to see a noduleman’s sick child, who insisted upon his coming down, (John 4. 47—49.) but he proffers to go down to see a sick servant; thus does he regard the low estate of his people, and give more abundant honour to that part which lacked. Christ’s humility, in being willing to come, gave an example to him, and occasioned his humility, in owning himself unworthy to have him come. Note, Christ’s gracious condescensions to us, should make us the more humble and self-abasing before him.

2. He commends his faith, and takes occasion from it to speak a kind word of the poor Gentile centurion. See 10—12. See what great things a strong but self-denying faith can obtain from Jesus Christ, even of general and public concern.

(1.) As to the centurion himself; he not only approved him and accepted him, (that honour have all true believers,) but he admired him and applauded him; that honour great believers have, as Job; there is none like him in the earth.

[1.] Christ admired him for his greatness, but for his greatness. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled; not as if it were to him new and surprising, he knew the centurion’s faith, for he wrought it; but it was great and excellent, rare and uncommon, and Christ spoke of it as wonderful, to teach us what to admire; not worldly pomp and decorations, but the beauty of holiness, and the ornaments which are in the sight of God of great price. Note, the wonders of grace should affect us so that we value not only the spiritual, but the spiritual attainments more than any achievements in this world. Of those that are rich in faith, not of those that are rich in gold and silver, we should say that they have gotten all this glory, Gen. 31. 1. But whatever there is admirable in the faith of any, it must redound to the glory of Christ, who will shortly be himself admired in all them that believe, as having done in and for them marvellous things.

[2.] He commended him in what he said to them that followed. All believers shall be, in the other world, but some believers are, in this world, confessed and acknowledged by Christ before men, in his eminent appearances for them and with them. Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Now this speaks, First, Honour to the centurion; who, though not a son of Abraham’s loins, was an heir of Abraham’s faith, and of the promise. Note, That Christ seeks is faith, and wherever it is, he finds it, though but as a grain of mustard-seed. He had not found so great faith, all things considered, and in proportion to the means; as the poor widow is said to cast in more than they all, Luke 21. 3. Though the centurion was a Gentile, yet he was thus commended. Note, we must be so far from grudging, that we must be forward, to give those their due praise, that are not within our denomination or pale. Secondly, It speaks shame to Israel, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory,
the covenants, and all the assistance and encourage-
ments of faith. Note, When the Son of Man comes,
he finds little faith, and, therefore, he finds so little
fruit. Note, The attainments of some, who have
had but little helps for their souls, will aggravate
the sin and ruin of many, that have had great plenty
of the means of grace, and have not made a good
improvement of them. Christ saith, These his
faithless followers by any means he might provoke
them to a holy emulation, as Paul speaks, Rom. 11.
14. They were Abraham's seed; in jealousy for
that honour, let them not suffer themselves to be
oustripped by a Gentile, especially in that grace
for which Abraham was eminent.
(2.) As to others, Christ takes occasion from
hence, to make a comparison between Jews and Gen-
tiles, and tells them two things, which could not but
be very surprising to them who had been taught
that salvation was of the Jews.
[1.] That a great many of the Gentiles should be
saved, v. 11. The faith of the centurion was but a
specimen of the conversion of the Gentiles, and a
preface to their adoption into the church. This was
a topic our Lord Jesus took to speak of, with a
spaciousness of discourse: I say unto you, "I that
know all men;" and he could not say any thing more
pleasing to himself, or more displeasing to the Jews;
an intimation of this kind enraged the Nazarenes
against him, Luke 4. 27. Christ gives us here an
idea, First, Of the persons that shall be saved; many
from the east and the west: he had said, (ch. 7. 14.)
Few there be that find the way to life; and yet here
many, from the east, and from the west; stand in one
place; yet, when they come all together, they will
be a great many. We now see but here and there
one brought to grace; but we shall shortly see the
Captain of our salvation bringing many sons to glory.
Heb. 2. 10. He will come with ten thousands of his
saints; (Jude 14.) with such a company as no man
can number; (Rev. 7. 9.) with nations of them that
are saved. Rev. 21. 24. They shall come from the
east, and from the west; places far distant from each
other; yet they shall all meet at the right hand of
Christ, the centre of their unity. Note, God has his
remnant in all places; from the rising of the sun,
to the going down of the same, Mal. 1. 11. The elect
will be gathered from the four winds, ch. 24. 31.
They are sown in the earth, some scattered in every
country, and some in the Gentiles; that God should
propagate his religion, and be glorified amongst
them; and they are especially meant here; though
they were strangers to the covenant of promise now,
and had been long, yet who knows what hidden
ones God had among them then? As in Elijah's
time in Israel, (1 Kings 19. 14.) soon after which
they flocked into the church in great multitudes, Isa.
60. 3, 4. Note, When we come to heaven, as we
shall miss a great many there, that we thought had
been going thither, so we must meet a great many
there, that we did not expect. Secondly, Christ
gives us an idea of the salvation itself. They shall
come, shall come together, shall come together to
Christ, 2 Thess. 2. 1. 1. They shall be admitted into
the kingdom of grace on earth, into the covenant of
grace made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they
shall be met with favours from God, such as he bestows
upon the Gentiles, Gal. 3. 14. This makes
Zaccheus a son of Abraham, Luke 19. 9. 2. They
shall be admitted into the kingdom of glory in heaven.
They shall come cheerfully, flying as doves to their
windows; they shall sit down to rest from their la-
bours, as having done their day's work; sitting de-
etes continuance; while we stand, we are going,
when we sit down, we are resting. But this is a remain-
ing rest, it is a continuing city; they shall sit down,
as upon a throne; (Rev. 3. 21.) as at a table; that
is the metaphor here; they shall sit down to be
feasted; which denotes both fulness of communica-
tion, and freedom and familiarity of communion,
Luke 22. 30. They shall sit down with Abraham.
They who in this world were ever so far distant
from each other in time, place, or outward condi-
tion, shall all meet together in heaven; ancient and
moderns, Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor. The
rich man in hell sees Abraham, but Lazarus sits
beside him. Note, The Christian society is a portra
of the felicity of Heaven; and they on whom the ends of the world are come, and who are most obscure, shall share in glory with the re-
newed patriarchs.
[2.] That a great many of the Jews should perish,
v. 12. Observe,
First, A strange sentence passed: The children
of the stock shall be cut off; the Jews that persist
in unbelief, though they were by birth children of
the kingdom, yet shall be cut off from being mem-
bers of the visible church: the kingdom of God, of
which they boasted that they were the children,
shall be taken from them, and they shall become
not a people, not obtaining mercy, Rom. 11. 20.—
9. 31. In the great day it will not avail men to have
been Jews, nor Jews in name, whilst they remain
unconverted. Judas said, he was a child of the Jews;
for men will then be judged, not by what they
were called, but by what they were. If chil-
dren indeed, then heirs; but many are children in
profession, in the family, but not of it, that will come
short of the inheritance. Being born of professing
parents denominates us children of the kingdom;
but if we rest in that, and have nothing else to shew
for heaven but that, we shall be cast out.
Secondly, A strange punishment for the workers
of iniquity described: They shall be cast into outer
darkness, the darkness of those that are without,
of the Gentiles that were out of the church: into that
the Jews were cast, and into worse: they were
blinded, and hardened, and filled with terrors, as
the apostle shews, Rom. 11. 8—10. A people so
unchurched, and given up to spiritual judgments,
are in utter darkness already; but it looks further,
to the state of damned sinners in hell, to which the
other is a dismal preface. They shall be cast out
from God, and all true comfort, and cast into dark-
ness. In hell there is fire, but no light; it is utter
darkness; darkness in extremity; the highest de-
gree of darkness, without any remainder, or mix-
ture, or hope, of light; nor the least gleam or glimpse
of light. Many people are shut out of heaven, the
land of light; they who are without, are in the regions
of darkness; yet this is not the worst of it, there shall be weeping and gnash-
ing of teeth. 1. In hell there will be great grief.
"Floods of tears shed to no purpose; anguish of spiri-
tual praying eternally upon the vitals, in the sense of
the wrath of God, is the torment of the damned.
"Great indignation; the damned sinners will gnash
their teeth for spite and vexation, full of the fury of
the Lord; seeing with envy the happiness of others,
and reflecting with horror upon the former pos-
sibility of their own being happy, which is now past.
3. He cures his servant. He not only commends
his application to him, but grants him that for which
he applied, which was a real answer, v. 13. Ob-
serves,
(1.) What Christ said to him: he said that
which made the cure as great a favour to him as it was
to his servant, and much greater; as thou hast behav-
ed, so be it done to thee. The servant get a cure
of his disease, but the master got the confirmation
and approbation of his faith. Note, Christ often gives
encouraging answers to his praying people, when
they apply to him for saving grace for others. It is kind
of our God to be heard for others. God turned the
captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job
42. 10. It was a great honour which Christ put upon
this centurion, when he gave him a blank, as it were;
And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lie sick, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

They that are cured of fevers are truly cured, as cannot but be, since they are both the effect and cause of a general distemper, which is in the spirits and humors in the body; and it is a sure proof of the power of Christ, as many of them are immediately healed by his word, and the rest speedily recover by it.

II. Here is a general account of the many cures that Christ wrought. This cure of Peter's mother-in-law brought him abundance of patients. "He healed such a one; why not me? Such a one's friend, why not mine?" Now we are here told,

1. What he did, v. 16. (1.) He cast out devils; cast out the evil spirits with his word. There may be much of Satan's agency, by their power and their desiring, in these cures of disease; and several causes may be assigned, as in Job's boils, especially in the diseases of the mind; but, about the time of Christ's being in the world, there seems to have been more than an ordinary letting loose of the devil, to possess and vex the bodies of people; he came, having great wrath, for he knew that his time was short; and God wisely ordered it so, that Christ might have the fairer and more frequent opportunities of shewing his power, and of showing the purpose and design of his coming into the world, which was to disarm and dispossess Satan, to break his power, and to destroy his works; and his success was as glorious as his design was gracious. (2.) He healed all that were sick; all without exception, though the patient was ever so mean, and the case ever so bad.

2. How the scripture was herein fulfilled, v. 17. The accomplishment of the dispensation proprely was about the thing Christ had in his eye, and the great proof of his being the Messiah: among other things, it was written of him, (Isa. 53. 4.) Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: it is referred to, 1 Pet. 2. 24. and there it is construed, he hath borne our sins; here it is referred to, and is construed, he hath borne our sicknesses: our sins make our sicknesses, our griefs: Christ bore away sin by the merit of his death, and bore away sickness by the miracles of his life; nay, though those miracles are ceased, we may say, that
he bore our sicknesses then, when he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree; for sin is both the cause and the sting of sickness. Many are the diseases and calamities to which we are liable in the body; and there is more, in this one line of the gospels, support and comfort under them, than in all the writings of the philosophers—that Jesus Christ bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; he bore them before us; though he was never sick, yet he was hungry, and thirsty, and weary, and troubled in spirit, sorrowful and very heavy: he bore them for us in his passion, and bears them with us in comparison, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities: and thus he bears them off from us, and makes them sit light, if it be not our own fault. Observe how emphatically it is expressed here: Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses; he was both able and willing to interpose in that matter, and concerned to deal with our infirmities and sicknesses, as our Physician; that part of the calamity of the human nature was his particular care, which he evidenced by his great readiness to cure diseases; and he is no less powerful, no less tender now, for we are sure that never were any the worse for going to heaven.

18. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19. And a certain Scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath nowhere to lay his head. 21. And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

Here is,
1. Christ’s removing to the other side of the sea of Tiberias, and his ordering his disciples, whose boats attended him, to get their transport-vessels ready, in order to it, v. 18. The influences of this Sun of righteousness were not to be confined to one place, but diffused all the country over; he must go about to do good; the necessities of souls called to him, Come over, and help us; (Acts 16. 9.) he removed when he saw great multitudes about him. Though by this it appeared that they were desirous to have him there, he knew there were others as desirous to have him with them, and they must have their share of him: his being acceptable and useful in one place, was no objection against, but a reason for, his going to another. Thus he would try the multitudes that were about him, whether their zeal would carry them to follow him, and attend on him, when his preaching was removed to some distance. Many would be glad of such steps, if they could have them at next door, who will not be at the pains to follow them to the other side; and thus Christ shook off those who were less zealous, and the perfect were made manifest.
2. Christ’s communication with two, who, upon his remove to the other side, were loth to stay behind, and had a mind to follow him, not as others, who were his followers of an large, but to come into close discipleship, which the rest were not able of; and it carried such a face of strictness as they could not like, nor be well reconciled to; but here is an account of two who seemed desirous to come into communion, and yet were not right; which is here given, as a specimen of the hindrances by which many are kept from closing with Christ, and cleaving to him; and a warning to us, to set out in following Christ, so as that we may not come short; to lay such a foundation, as that our building may stand.
We have the Christ, managing with two different tempers, one quick and desirous of the other dull and heavy; and his instructions are adapted to each of them, and designed for our use.
1. Here is one that was too hasty in promising; and he was a certain scribe, (v. 12.) a scholar, a learned man, one of those that studied and expound-ed the law; generally we find them in the gospels to be persons of no good character; usually coupled with the Pharisees, as enemies to Christ and his doctrine. Where is the scribe? 1 Cor. 1. 20. He is very sel-dom following Christ; yet here was one that bid pretty fair for discipleship, a Saul among the pharisees. Now observe,
1. How he expressed his forwardness; Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. I know not how any man could have spoken better. His profession of a self-dedication to Christ, is, [1.] Very ready, and seems to be ex nemo moveri—from his unbiassed inclination; he is not called to it by Christ, nor urged by any of the disciples, but, of his own accord, he proffers himself to be a close follower of Christ; he is not a pressed man, but a volunteer. [2.] Very resolute; he seems to be at a point in this matter; he does not say, I have a mind to follow thee; but, I will do it. [3.] It was unlimited and without reserve; I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; not only to the other side of the country, but if it were to the utmost regions of the world. Now we should think ourselves sure of such a man as this; and yet it appears, by Christ’s answer, that his resolution was rash, his ends low and carnal: either he did not consider at all, or not the way which was to be travelled; he saw the mysteries Christ wrought, and hoped he would set up a temporal kingdom, and he wished to apply betimes for a share in it. Note, There are many resolutions for religion, produced by some sudden pangs of conviction, and taken up without due consideration, that prove abortive, and come to nothing: soon ripe, soon rotten.
2. How Christ tried his forwardness, whether it was true or not, v. 19. He let him know that this Son of man, whom he is so eager to follow, has no where to lay his head, v. 20. Now from this account of Christ’s deep poverty, we observe,
1. That it is strange in itself, that the Son of God, when he came into the world, should put himself into such a very low condition, as to want the convenience of a certain resting-place, which the meaner of the creatures have. If he would take our nature upon him, one would think, he should have taken it in its best estate and circumstances: no, he takes it in its worst. See here, First, How well provided for the inferior creatures are: The foxes have holes; though they are not only not useful, but hurtful, to man, yet God provides holes for them, in which they are earthed: man endeavours to destroy them, but they thus are sheltered by the wisdom of God. The birds of the air, though they take no care for themselves, yet are taken care of, and have nests; (Ps. 104. 17.) nests in the field; some of them nests in the house; in God’s courts, Ps. 84. 3. Secondly, How poorly the Lord Jesus was provided for. It may encourage us to trust God for necessa-ries, that the beasts and birds have such good provision; and may comfort us, if we want what we need, and are burdened. Note, Our Lord Jesus, when he was here in the world, submitted to the disgraces and distresses of extreme poverty; for our sakes he became poor, very poor. He had not a settlement, had not a place of repose, not a house of his own, to put his head in, not a pillow of his
ten, to lay his head on. He and his disciples lived upon the charity of well-disposed people, that ministered to him of their substance, Luke 8. 2. Christ submitted to this, not only that he might in all respects humble himself, and fulfill the scriptures, which spake of him as poor and needy, but that he might shew us the vanity of worldly wealth, and teach us to look upon it with a holy contempt; that he might teach us better things for us, and so make us rich, 2 Cor. 8. 9.

[2.] It is strange that such a declaration should be made on this occasion. When a Scribe offered to follow Christ, one would think he would have encouraged him, and said, Come, and I will take care of thee; one Scribe might be capable of doing him more credit and service than twelve fishermen: but Christ saw his heart, and answered to the thoughts of them, which were tend to do to-day; it is come to Christ. First, The Scribe's resolve seems to have been sudden; and Christ would have us, when we take upon us a profession of religion, to sit down, and count the cost, (Luke 14. 28.) to do it intelligently, and with consideration, and choose the way of godliness, not because we know no other, but because we know no better. It is no advantage to take up a profession of religion, ere they are aware: They that take up a profession of religion, and then, off again, in a fret; let them, therefore, take time, and they will have done the sooner; let him that will follow Christ know the worst of it, and expect to lie hard, and fare hard. Secondly, His resolve seems to have been from a worldly, covetous principle. He saw what abundance of cures Christ wrought, and concluded that he had large fees, and would get an estate quickly, and therefore, he would follow him in hopes of being made rich with him; but Christ rectifies his mistake, and tells him, he was so far from growing rich, that he had not a place to lay his head on; and that if he follow him, he cannot expect to fare better than he fared. Note, Christ will accept none for his followers that aim at worldly advantages in following him, or design to make any thing but heaven of their religion. We have reason to think that this Scribe, hereupon, went away sorrowful, being disappointed of the gain which he thought would turn to account; he is not for following Christ, unless he can get by him.

1. Here is another that was too slow in performing. Delay in execution is as bad on the one hand, as precipitancy in resolution is on the other; when we have taken time to consider, and then have determined, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow, which we should do to-day. This candidate for the ministry was one of Christ's disciples already, (v. 21.) a follower of him at large. Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, from an ancient tradition, that this was Philip; he seems to be better qualified and disposed than the former, because not so confident and presumptuous: a bold, eager, over-forward temper is not the most promising in religious things; the last are first, and the first last. Now observe here.

(1.) The excuse that this disciple made, to defer an immediate attendance on Christ; (v. 21.) Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Before I come to be a close and constant follower of thee, let me be allowed to perform this last office of respect to my father; and in the mean time, let it suffice to be a hearer of thee now and then, when I can spare time. His father (some think) was sick, or dying, or dead; other things, he was only aged, and not likely in a course of nature to continue long; for he desired leave to attend upon him in his sickness, at his death, and to his grave, and then he would be at Christ's service. This seemed a reasonable request, and yet it was not right. He had not the zeal he should have had for the work, and therefore pleaded this, because it seemed a plausible plea. Note, An unwilling mind never wants an excuse. The meaning of Non vacat, is, Non placeat—The want of leisure is the want of inclination. We will suppose it to come from a true filial affection and respect for his father, yet still the preference should have been given to Christ. Note, Many are hindered from and in the way of serious godliness, by an over-concern for their families and relations; these lawful things they are above all, as if God is neglected and postponed, under colour of discharging our debts to the world; here therefore we have need to double our guard.

(2.) Christ's disallowing of this excuse; (v. 22.) Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and, no doubt, power accompanied this word to him, as to others, and he did follow Christ, and cleaved to him, as Ruth to Naomi, when the Scribe, in the verses before, like Orpah, took leave of him. That said, I will follow thee; to this Christ said, Follow me; comparing them together, it is intimated that we are brought to Christ by the force of his call to us, not of our promise to him; it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that willeth; he calls whom he will, Rom. 9. 16. And farther, Note, Though chosen vessels may make excuses, and decline to follow Christ; divinity calls a great while, yet Christ will at length answer their excuses, conquer their unwillingness, and bring them to his feet; when Christ calls, he will overcome, and make the call effectual, 1 Sam. 3. 10. His excuse is laid aside as insufficient; Let the dead bury their dead. It is a proverbial expression; Let one dead man bury another; rather let them lie unburied, than that the service of Christ should be neglected. Let the dead spiritually bury the dead corporally; let worldly offices be left to worldly people; do not thou encumber thyself with them. Burying the dead, and especially a dead father, is a good work, but it is not thy work at this time; it may be done as well by others, that are not called and qualified, as thou art, to be employed for Christ; thou hast something else to do, and must not defer that. Note, Piety to God must be preferred before preferment, not so much, though, that a great and needful part of our religion. The New-Testament under the law, were not to mourn for their own parents, because they were holy to the Lord; (Num. 6. 6—8.) nor was the High-Priest to defile himself for the dead, no, not for his own father, Lev. 21. 11, 12. And Christ requires of those who would follow him, that they hate father and mother; (Luke 14. 26.) love them less than God; we must compare the negled of and disesteem our nearest relations, when they come in competition with Christ, and either our doing for him, or our suffering for him.

23. And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. 24. And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful? Where be thy faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!

Christ had given sailing orders to his disciples, (v. 18.) that they should depart to the other side;
the sea of Tiberias, into the country of Gadara, in the tribe of Gad, which lay east of Jordan; thither he would go to rescue a poor creature that was possessed with a legion of devils, though he foresaw how he should be affronted there. Now, 1. he chose to go by water. It had not been much about, if he had gone by land; but he chose to cross the lake, that he might have occasion to manifest himself the God of the sea as well as of the dry land, and to show that there is life and strength in devils, as well as on earth. It is a comfort to those who go down to the sea in ships, and are often in perils there, to reflect that they have a Saviour to trust in, and pray to, who knows what it is to be at sea, and to be in storms there. But observe, when he went to sea, he had no yacht or pleasure-boat to attend him, but made use of his disciples' fishing-boats; so poorly was he used upon this occasion, and his disciples so little thought of those that would rest with Christ hereafter must follow him now wherever he leads them, into a ship or into a prison, as well as into a palace. Now observe, 1. The peril and perplexity of the disciples in this voyage; and in this appeared the truth of what Christ had just now said, that those who follow him must be content upon calamities, v. 20.

1. There arose a very great storm, v. 24. Christ could have prevented this storm, and have ordered them a pleasant passage, but that would not have been so much for his glory and the confirmation of their faith as their deliverance was: this storm was for their sakes, as John 11. 4. One would have expected, that having Christ with them, they should have had a very favourable gale, but it is quite otherwise; for Christ would show that they who were passing with him over the ocean of this world to the other side, must expect storms by the way. The church is tossed with tempests; (Isa. 54. 11.) it is the only upper region that enjoys a perpetual calm, this lower one is ever and anon disturbed and disturbing.

2. This storm was as little in this storm. We never read of Christ's sleeping, but at this time; he was in watchings often, and continued all night in prayer to God: this was a sleep, not of security, like Jonah's in a storm, but of holy serenity, and dependence upon his Father: he slept, to shew that he was really and truly man, and subject to the sinless infirmities of our nature: his work made him weary and sleepy, and he had no guilt, no fear within, to disturb his repose. Trough that can any their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm, (Ps. 4. 8.) as Peter, Acts 12. 6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awakened.

3. The poor disciples, though used to the sea, were afraid: though that can any their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm, (Ps. 4. 8.) as Peter, Acts 12. 6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awakened. The poor disciples, though used to the sea, were afraid: though that can any their heads upon the pillow of a clear conscience, may sleep quietly and sweetly in a storm, (Ps. 4. 8.) as Peter, Acts 12. 6. He slept at this time, to try the faith of his disciples, whether they could trust him when he seemed to slight them. He slept not so much with a desire to be refreshed, as with a design to be awakened. Their prayer has life in it, Lord, save us, we perish. (1.) He believed he could save them; they begged he would. Christ's errand into the world was to save, but those only shall be saved, that call on the name of the Lord. Acts 2. 21. They who by faith are interested in the eternal salvation wrought out by Christ, may with a humble confidence apply themselves to him for temporal deliverances. Observe, They call him Lord, and then pray, Save us. Note, Christ will save none but those that are willing to take him for their Lord; for he is a Prince and a Saviour. (2.) Their plea is, He perish; which was, [1.] The language of their fervency; they pray as men in earnest, that beg for their lives; it becomes us thus to strive and wrestle in prayer; therefore Christ says, Reckless of our security, make haste to the throne of grace. [2.] It was the language of their perplexity; they pray as men that are afraid, that want for their lives, it becomes us thus to strive and wrestle in prayer; therefore Christ says, Reckless of our security, make haste to the throne of grace.

II. The power and grace of Jesus Christ put forth for their succour; then the Lord Jesus awaked, as one refreshed, Ps. 78. 65. Christ may sleep when his church is in a storm, but he will not out-sleep himself; the time, the set time to favour his disturbed church, will come, Ps. 102. 13. He rebuked the disciples; and they were immediately calm. He rebuked the disciples, and they were immediately calm. He rebuked the disciples, and they were immediately calm. He rebuked the disciples, and they were immediately calm. He rebuked the disciples, and they were immediately calm.

1. He rebuked the disciples; (v. 25.) Why are ye so little faith? Take heart, and be of good courage. He did not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears. Christ reproved them first, and then delivered them; this is his method, to prepare us for a mercy, and then to give it us. Observe, (1.) His dislike of their fears; Why are ye so fearful? Ye, my disciples? Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, let heathen mariners tremble in their ships, but you shall not be so. Inquire into the reasons of your fear, and weigh them. (2.) His discovery of the cause and spring of their fears; O ye of little faith. Many that have true faith are weak in it, and it does but little. Note, [1.] Christ's disciples are apt to be disquieted with fears in a stormy day, to torment themselves with jealousies that things are bad with them, and dismal conclusions that they will be worse. [2.] The prevalence of our inordinate fears in a stormy day is owing to the weakness of our faith, which would be as an anchor to the soul, and would ply the ear of prayer.

By faith we might see through the storm to the quiet shore, and encourage ourselves with hope that we shall weather our point. (3.) The fearfulness of Christ's disciples in a storm, and their unbelief, the cause of it, are very displeasing to the Lord Jesus, who will not suffer dishonour upon him, and create disturbance to themselves.

2. He rebuked the wind; the former he did as the God of grace, and the Sovereign of the heart, who can do what he pleases in us; this he did as the God of nature, the Sovereign of the world, who can do what he pleases for us. It is the same power that stills the noise of the sea, and the tempest of fear. Ps. 63. 7. Suddenly he rebuked the wind, and there was a stillness, a calm, a rest, a peace, a sleep of the storm, a quietness of the waves, and a stillness of the spirits of the disciples; for it is God that maketh all the winds to blow, and the angel of death to march; and when he will he makes the storm to cease, and the tempest to be no more, and the wind to be still. This excited their astonishment; (v. 27.) The men marvelled. They had been long acquainted with the sea, and never saw a storm so immediately
28. And when he was come to the other side, into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.

29. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

30. And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.

31. And the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.

32. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters:

33. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.

34. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

We have here the story of Christ's casting the devils out of two men that were possessed. The scope of this chapter is to show the divine power of Christ, by the instances of his dominion over bodily diseases, which to us are irresistible; over winds and waves, which to us are yet more uncontrollable; and lastly, over devils, which to us are most formidable of all. Christ has not only all power in heaven and earth and all deep places, but has the keys of hell too. 

Principalities and powers were made subject to him, even while he was in his estate of humiliation, as an earnest of what should be at his entrance into his glory; (Eph. 1. 21.) he spoiled them, Col. 2. 13. It was observed in general, (c. 8.) that Christ cast out the spirits into a herd of swine; here we have a particular instance of it, which had some circumstances more remarkable than the rest. This miracle wrought in the country of the Gergesenes; some think, they were the remains of the old Gogmashites, Deut. 7. 1. Though Christ was sent chiefly to the lost sheaf of the house of Israel, yet some sallies he made among the borderers, as here, to gain this victory over Satan, which was a specimen of the conquest of his legions in the Gentile world. The general instance which this gives us of Christ's power over Satan, and his designs against him to disarm and dispossess him, we have here especially discovered to us the way and manner of evil spirits in their enmity to man. Observe, concerning this legion of devils, What work they made where they were, and where they went.

1. They dwelt among the tombs; thence they came when they met Christ. The Devil having the power of death, not as judge, but as executioner, he delighted to converse among the trophies of his victory, the dead bodies of men; but there, where he thought himself in his greatest triumph and elevation, as afterwards in Golgotha, the place of a skull, did Christ conquer and subdue him. Conversing among the graves increased the melancholy and frown of the poor possessed creatures, and so strengthened the hold he had of them: by their bodily distemper, and also made them more formidable to other people, who generally startle at anything that athirst among them.

2. They were exceeding fierce; not only ungovernable themselves, but mischievous to others, frightening many, having hurt some; so that no man durst pass that way. Note, The Devil bears malice to mankind, and shows it, by making men spiritue and malicious one to another. Mutual enmities, where there should be mutual endearments and assistance, are effects and evidences of Satan's enmity to the whole race: he casts one into a wolf, a bear, a devil, to another—Homo homini lupus. Where Satan rules in a man spiritually, by those lusts that war in the members, pride, envy, malice, revenge, they make him unfit for human society, as unworthy of it, and as much an enemy to the comfort of it, as these poor possessed creatures were.

3. They bid defiance to Jesus Christ, and discountenanced all interest in him, v. 29. Nor was this overcome by any of the power of God. Here was a combination of the devils, that notwithstanding the mischief they studied to do by and to these poor creatures, yet they could not keep them from meeting Jesus Christ, who ordered the matter so as to meet them. It was his overpowering hand that dragged these unclean spirits into his presence, which they dreaded more than anything else: his chains could hold them, when the chains men made for them could not. But, being brought before him, they protested against his jurisdiction, and broke out into a rage. What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Here is,

(1.) One word the Devil spoke like a saint; he addressed himself to Christ as Jesus the Son of God; a good word, and at this time, when it was a truth but in the proving, it was a great word too, what flesh and blood did not reveal to Peter, ch. 16. 16. Even the devil the devilish and believe, and confess Christ to be the Son of God, and yet they are devils still, which makes their enmity to Christ so much the more wicked, and indeed a perfect torment to themselves; for how can it be otherwise, to oppose one they know to, the be Son of God? Note, It is not knowledge, but love, that distinguishes saints from devils. He is the first-born of hell, that knows Christ, and yet hates him, and will not be subject to him by his love. Here the Devil made a doubt whether Christs were the Son of God or not, and would have persuaded him to question it, (ch. 4. 3.) but now he readily owns it,
Note, Though God's children may be much disquieted in an hour of temptation, by Satan's questioning their relation to God as a Father, yet the Spirit of adoption shall at length clear it up to them so much to their satisfaction, as to set it even above the Devil's contradiction.

(2.) Two words that he said like a devil, like himself.

[1.] A word of defiance; "What have we to do with thee?" Now, First, It is true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Saviour, for he took not on him the nature of the angels that fell, nor did he lay hold on them; (Heb. 2. 16.) they are in no relation to him, they neither have, nor hope for, any benefit by him. O the depth of this mystery of divine love, that fallen man hath so much to do with Christ, when fallen angels have nothing to do with him! Surely here was torment enough before the time, to be forced to own the excellency that is in Christ, and yet that he has no interest in him. Note, It is possible for men to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet have nothing to do with him. Secondly, It is as true, that the devils desire not to have any thing to do with Christ as a Ruler; they hate him, they are filled with enmity against him, they stand in opposition to him, and are in open rebellion against his crown and sceptre. See whose language they speak, that will have nothing to do with the gospel of Christ, with his laws and ordinances, that throw off his yoke, that break his bands in sunder, and will not have him to reign over them; that say to the Almighty Jesus, Depart from us: they are of their father the Devil, they do his lusts, and speak his language. Thirdly, It is not true, that the devils have nothing to do with Christ as a Judge; for they have, and they know it. These devils could not say, What hast thou to do with us? could not deny that the Son of God is the Judge of devils; to his judgment they are bound over in chains of darkness, which they would shake off, and shake off the thought of.

[2.] A word of dread and depreciation; "Art thou come hither, to torment us—to cast us out from these men, and to restrain us from doing the hurt we would do?" Note, To be turned out, and tied up, from doing mischief, is a torment to the Devil, all whose comfort and satisfaction are man's misery and destruction. Should not we then count it our heaven to be doing well, and reckon that our torment, whether within or without, that hinders us from well-doing? Now must we be tormented by thee before the time? Note, First, There is a time in which devils must be restrained, but not permitted to act in their proper strength, and no further; they will then be made close prisoners; they have now some ease; they will then be in torment without ease. This they here take for granted, and ask not never to be tormented, (despair of relief is the misery of their case,) but they beg that they may not be tormented before the time; for though they knew not when the day of judgment should be, they knew it was near; and the more they knew it, the more they have a certain fearful looking for of that judgment, and fiery indignation, upon every approach of Christ, and every check that is given to their power and rage. The very sight of Christ, and his word of command to come out of the man, made them thus apprehensive of their torment. Thus the devils believe, and tremble, Jam. 2. 19. It is their own enmity to God and man that puts them upon the rack, and tortures them before the time. The most desperate sinners, whose damnation is sealed, yet can not quite harden their hearts against the surprise of fearfulness, when they see the day approaching.

II. Let us now see what work they made where they went, when they were turned out of the men possessed, and that was into a herd of swine, which was a good way off; v. 56. These Gergesenes, though living on the other side Jordan, were Jews. What reason could there be, that, instead of cattle, which were unclean, and not to be eaten nor touched? Probably, lying in the outskirts of the land, there were many Gentiles among them, to whom this herd of swine belonged: or they kept them to be sold, or bartered, to the Romans, with whom they had now great dealings, and who were admirers of swine's flesh. Now observe, 1. How the devils seized the swine. Though they were a good way off, and, one would think, out of danger, yet the devils had an eye upon them, to do them a mischief: for they go up and down, seeking to devour, seeking an opportunity, and they seek not long but they find. Now here, (1.) They asked leave to enter into the swine; (v. 31.) they brought him, with all earnestness, If thou canst cast us out, command we to depart into the herd of swine. Hereby, [1.] They discover their desire of inclination to do mischief, and what a pleasure it is to them: those, therefore, are their children, and resemble them, whose sleep departed from them, except they cause some to fall, Prov. 4. 16. "Let us go into the herd of swine, any where rather than into the place of torment, any where to do mischief." If they might not be suffered to hurt men in their bodies, they would hurt them in their goods, and in that too they intend hurt to their souls, by making Christ a burthen to them: such malicious devices hath that old subtle serpent! [2.] They own Christ's power over them; that, without his sufferance and permission, they could not so much as hurt a swine. This is comfortable to all the Lord's people, that, though the Devil's power be very great, yet it is limited, and not equal to his malice; (what would become of us, if it were?) especially that it is under the control of our Lord Jesus, our most faithful, powerful Friend and Saviour; that Satan and his instruments can go no further than he is pleased to permit; here shall their proud waves be stayed.

(2.) They had leave, Christ said unto them, Go, (v. 32.) as God did to Satan, when he desired leave to afflict Job. Note, God does often, for wise and holy reasons, permit Satan to do mischief. He may not be permitted to do all he would and can, but he may be permitted to do what he would, if it be for some good. They might not be permitted to harm the people, but he might be permitted to make them the means of Satan's service, to do mischief as he would. When one set them to do the mischief he would, and even by it serve his own purposes. The devils are not only Christ's captives, but his vassals; his dominion over them appears in the harm they do, as well as in the hindrance of them from doing more. Thus even their wrath is made to praise Christ, and the remainder of it he does and will restrain. Christ permitted this, [1.] For the conviction of the Sdulencies that were in the earth, of the power of demons, and of the influence of spirits, and would not own that there were such beings, because they could not see them. Now Christ would, by this, bring it as near as might be to an ocular demonstration of the being, multitude, power, and malice, of evil spirits, that, if they were not hereby convinced, they might be left inexcusable in their infidelity. We see not the wind, but it is moved; (Joel 2. 30.) that we may say, when we see the earth and houses blown down by it. [2.] For the punishment of the Gadarenes, who perhaps, though Jews, took a liberty to eat swine's flesh, contrary to the law: however, their keeping swine bordered upon evil; and Christ would also shew what a hellish crew they were delivered from, which, if he had permitted it, would soon have choked them, as they did their swine. The devils, in obedience to Christ's
command, came out of the men, and, having permission, when they were come out, immediately they went into the herd of swine. See what an industrious enemy Satan is, and how expeditions; he will lose no time in doing mischief. Observe, 2. Whether they hurried them, where they had seized them. They were not bid to save their lives, and, therefore, they were made to run violently down a steep place into the sea, where they all perished, to the number of about two thousand, Mark 5. 13. Note, The possession which the Devil gets is for destruction. Thus the Devil hurry's people to hurries them, in that which they have resolved against, which they know will be short and griev to them; with what a force doth the evil spirit work in the children of disobedience, when by so many foolish and hurtful lusts they are brought to act in direct contradiction, not only to religion, but to right reason, and their interest in this world! Thus, likewise, he hurry's them to ruin, for he is Apollon and Abaddon, the great destroyer. By his lists what men do, they are drowned in destruction and heredon. This is Satan's will, to scatter up and to devour; miserable then is the condition of those that are led captive by his will. They are hurried into a worse lake than this, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Observe, 3. What effect had this upon the owners. The report of it was soon brought them by the swineherds; what was done seemed to be more concerning for the loss of the swine than of the servants, for they went not to tell what was befallen to the possession of the devil till the swine were lost, v. 33. Christ went not into the city, but the news of his being there did, by which he was willing to feel how their pulse beat, and what influence it had upon them, and then act accordingly. Now, (1.) Their curiosity brought them out to see Jesus. The whole city came out to meet him, that they might be able to say, they had seen a man who did such wonderful works. Thus they go out, in profession, to meet Christ for compassion, for he has no real affection for him, nor desire to know him. (2.) Their covetousness made them willing to be rid of him. Instead of inviting him into their city, or bringing their sick to him to be healed, they desired him to depart out their coasts, as if they had borne the words of the devils, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou son of God? And now the devils had what they aimed at in drowning the swine; they did it, and then made them believe that Christ had done it, and so prejudiced them against him. He seduced our first parents, by possessing them with hard thoughts of God, and kept the Gadarenes from Christ, by suggesting that he came into their country to destroy their cattle, and that he would do more hurt than good; for though he had cured two men, yet he had drowned two thousand swine. Thus the Devil makes tares in God's field, does mischief in the christian church, and then lays the blame upon Christianity, and incenses men against that. They besought him that he would depart, lest, like Moses in Egypt, he should proceed to some other plague. Note, There are a great many who prefer their swine before their selves, and are soon short of Christ, and salvation by him. They desire Christ to depart out of their hearts, and will not suffer his name to be a place in them, because he and his word will be the destruction of their brutish lusts—those swine which they give up themselves to feed. And justly will Christ forsake those that are weary of him, and say to them hereafter, Depart, ye cursed, who now say to the Almighty, Depart from us. 

is both able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, and as willing as he is able. His power and pity appear here in the good offices he did, 1. To the bodies of people, in curing the palsy, (v. 26.) and rhoealer's daughter, and healing the bloody issue; (v. 18., 19.) giving sight to two blind men; (v. 27., 31.) casting the Devil out of one possessed; (v. 32., 34.) and healing all manner of sickness and plagues. 2. To the souls of people in forgiving sins; (v. 2.) calling Matthew, and conversing freely with publicans and sinners; (v. 9., 13.) considering the frame of his disciples, with a reference to the duty of teaching; (v. 14., 15.) selecting the gospel, and in compassion to the multitude, providing preaching for them; (v. 35., 38.) Thus did he prove himself to be, as undoubtedly he is, the skilful, faithful Physician, both of soul and body, who heals them, and for all the maladies of both; for which we must, therefore, cleave unto him, and glorify him both with our bodies, and with our spirits, which are his, in return to him for his kindness to both.

1. And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. 2. And beheld, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. 3. And, behold, certain of the Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. 4. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? 5. For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? Or to say, Arise, and walk? 6. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. 7. And he arose, and departed to his house. 8. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

The first words of this chapter oblige us to look back to the close of that which precedes it, where we find the Gadarenes so resenting the less of their swine, that they were disgusted with Christ's company, and besought him to depart out of their coasts. Now here it is, He entered into a ship, and passed over. They bid him never to come again, took them at their word, and we never read that he came into their coasts again. Now here observe, 1. His justice—that he left them. Note, Christ will not tarry where he is not welcome. In righteous judgment, he forsakes those places and persons that are weary of him, but abides with those that covet and court his stay. If the unbeliever will depart from Christ, let the unbeliever depart: Isa. 33. 23. His peril, 1 Cor. 7. 15. 2. His patience—that he did not depart from the destroying judgment behind him, to punish them, as they deserved, for their contempt and contumacy. How easily, how justly, might we have sent them after their swine, who were already so much under the Devil's power. The provocation, indeed, was very great; but he put it up, and passed it by, and without any resentment or upbraiding, he entered into a ship, and passed over. This was the day of his patience; he came not to destroy the lives, but to save them; not to kill, but to cure. Spiritual judgments agree more with the constitution of gospel-times; yet some observe, that in these bloody wars which the Romans made upon the Jews, which began not many years after this, they first besieged the town of Gadara, where these Gadarenes dwelt. Note, Those that drive Christ from

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We have, in this chapter, remarkable instances of the power and pity of the Lord Jesus, sufficient to convince us that he

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them, draw all miseries upon them. Wo unto us, if God depart from us.

He came into his own city, Capernaum, the principal place of his residence at present (Mark 2: 1.) and therefore called his own city. He had himself testified, that a prophet is least honoured in his own country and city, yet thither he came; for he sought not his own honour; but, being in a state of humiliation, he was content to be despised of the people. At Capernaum all the circumstances recorded in this chapter happened, and are, therefore, put together here, though, in the narrative of but Christ, other events are intercalated. When the Gadarees desired Christ to depart, they of Capernaum received him. If Christ be affronted by some, there are others in whom he will be glorious; if one will not, another will.

Now the first occurrence, after Christ's return to Capernaum, as recorded in these verses, was the case of the man sick of the palsy. In which we may observe,

I. The faith of his friends in bringing him to Christ. His distemper was such, that he could not come to Christ himself, but as he was carried. Note, Even the halt and the lame may be brought to Christ, and they shall not be rejected by him. If we do as well as we can, he will accept of us. Christ heals not only the bodies of sick men, but the souls of sick minds. Little faith brings but little to Christ himself, but he will have an eye to the faith of those that bring them, and it shall not be in vain. Jesus saw their faith, the faith of the palsyman's friends; and, as he acted upon their faith, so he was pleased to act upon their faith. His act was to take necessity,
Christ had a divine mission. His miracles, especially his miraculous cures, confirm what he said of himself, that he was the Son of God; the cure, which appeared in his curés proved him sent of God; and the faith that appeared in them proved him sent of God, to heal and save. The God of truth would not set his seal to a lie. [2.] It had a particular cagery in this case. The palsy was but a symptom of the disease of sin; now he made it to appear, that he could effectually cure the original disease, by the immediate removal of that symptom; so it was between that and the sickness, that he had power to remove the punishment, no doubt, had power to remit sin. The Scribes stood much upon a legal righteousness, and placed their confidence in that, and made no great matter of the forgiveness of sins, the doctrine upon which Christ hereby designed to put honour, and to show that his great errand to the world was, to save him from their sins.

V. The immediate cure of the sick man. Christ turned from disputing with them, and spoke healing to him. The most necessary arguments must not divert us from doing the good that our hand finds to do. He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house; and a healing, quickening, strengthening power accompanied this word; [v. 7.] he arose and departed to his house. Now, 1. Christ fulfilled his commission. He is God, and he powerfully did it himself. 2. He showed all the power to be carried upon his head, and that he had strength to carry it. 2. He sent him to his house, to be a blessing to his family, where he had been so long a burden; and did not take him along with him for a show, which those would do in such a case, who seek the honour that comes from men.

VI. The immediate cure of the sick man, which this made upon the multitude, (v. 8.) they marvelled and glorified God. Note, All our wonder should help to enlarge our hearts in glorifying God, who alone does marvellous things. They glorified God for what he had done for this poor man. Note, Others' mercies should be our praises, and we should give him thanks for them, for we are members one of another. Though few of this multitude were so convinced, as to be brought to believe in Christ, and to follow him, yet they admired him, ministers, and followed him. Contrast this with the man to whom God had given such power. Note, God must be glorified in all the power that is given men to do good. For all power is originally his; it is in him, as the Fountain, in men, as the cisterns.

9. And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. 10. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. 11. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? 12. But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 13. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In these verses we have an account of the grace and favour of Christ to poor publicans, particularly to Matthew. What he did to the bodies of people was to make way for a kind design he had upon their souls. Now observe,

I. The call of Matthew, the penman of this gospel. Mark and Luke call him Levi; it was ordinary for the same persons to have two names; perhaps Matthew was the name he was most known by as a publican, and, therefore, in his humility, he called himself by that name, rather than by the more honourable name of Levi. Some think Christ gave them the name of Matthew when he called them to be his apostles; as Simon, he summoned Peter. Matthew signifies, the gift of God. Ministers are God's gifts to the church; their ministry, and their ability for it, are God's gifts to them. Now observe,

1. The posture that Christ's call found Matthew in. He was sitting at the receipt of custom, for he was a publican, Luke 5. 27. He was a custom-house officer at the port of Capernaum, or an exciseman, collector of the land-tax. Now, (1.) He was in his calling, as the rest of them whom Christ called, ch. 4. 18. Note, As Satan chooses to come, with his temptations, to those that are idle, so Christ chooses to come, with his calls, to those that are employed. But, (2.) It was a calling of ill fame among serious people; because it was attended with so much corruption and temptation, and there were so few in that business that were honest men. Matthew himself himself shows who those were that were not. Matthew himself himself shows how this calling was ill estimated by the world. St. Paul, (1 Tim. 1. 13.) that the grace of Christ in calling him might be the more magnified, and to show, that God has his remnant among all sorts of people. None can justify themselves in their unbelief, by their calling in the world; for there is no sinful calling, but some have been saved out of it, and no lawful calling, but some have been saved in it.

II. The preventing power of this call. We find not that Matthew looked after Christ, or had any inclination to follow him, though some of his kindred were already disciples of Christ, but Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness. He is found of those that seek him not. Christ spoke first; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen us. He said, Follow me; and the same divine, almighty power accomplished this work, to convert Matthew, which attended that, where two or three were gathered together, (v. 6.) and was accompanied with the man sick of the palsy. Note, A saving change is wrought in the soul by Christ as the Author, and his word as the means. His gospel is the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1. 16. The call was effectual, for he came at the call; he arose, and followed him immediately; neither denied, nor deferred his obedience. The power of divine grace soon answers and overcomes all objections. Neither his commission for his place, nor his gains by it, could detain him, when Christ called him. He conferreth not with flesh and blood, Gal. 1. 15, 16. He quitted his post, and his hopes of preferment in that way; and through we find the disciples that were fishers, occasionally fishing again afterwards, we never find Matthew at the receipt of custom again.

II. Christ's converse with publicans and sinners upon this occasion; Christ called Matthew, and introduce himself into an acquaintance with the people of that profession. Jesus sat at meat in the house, v. 10. The other evangelists tell us, that Matthew made a great feast, which the poor fishermen, when they were called, were not able to do. But when he comes to speak of this himself, he neither tells us that it was his own house, nor that it was a feast, but only that he sat at meat in the house; preserving the remembrance of the magnificent favour to the publicans rather than of the respect he had paid to Christ. Note, It will becomes us to speak sparingly of our good deeds. Now observe, 1. When Matthew invited Christ,
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he invited his disciples to come along with him. Note, That they welcome Christ, must welcome all that are his, for his sake, and let them have a room in their hearts. 2. He invited many publicans and sinners. This was a most extraordinary thing. This was the aim at this treat, that he might have a opportunity of bringing his old associates acquainted with Christ. He knew by experience, what their temptations were, and pitted them; knew by experience what the grace of Christ could do, and would not despair concerning them. Note, They who are effectually brought to Christ themselves, cannot but be desirous, that others also may be brought to him, and ambitious of contributing something towards it. True grace will not contentedly eat its morsels alone, but will invite others. When by the conversion of Matthew the fraternity was broken, presently his house was filled with publicans, and surely some of them will follow him, as he followed Christ. Thus did Andrew and Philip, John 1., 41, 43. — See Judg. 14, 9.

III. The displeasure of the Pharisees at this, v. 11. They cavilled at it; why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? Here observe, 1. That Christ was quarrelled with. It was not the least of his sufferings, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. None was more quarrelled with by men, than he that came to take up the great quarrel of the world, and divide it between himself and himself the honour due to an incarnate Deity, which was to be justified in what he spake, and to have all he said readily subscribed to; for though he never spoke or did any thing amiss, every thing he said and did was found fault with. Thus he taught us to expect and prepare for reproach, and so bear it patiently. 2. They that quarrelled with him were the Pharisees; a proud generation of men, conceited of themselves, and censorious of others; of the same temper with those in the prophet's time, who said, Stand by thyself, come not near me; I am holier than thou; they were very strict in avoiding sinners, but not in avoiding sin; none greater zealots than they, for the form of godliness, nor greater enemies to the power of it. They were for keeping up the traditions of the elders to a nicety, and so propagating the form and letter of religion, while they were so far from the spirit. They wished, as the Pharisees, to have a law, and a law-keeper. 3. They brought their cavil, not to Christ himself; they had not the courage to face it him, but to his disciples. The disciples were in the same company, but the quarrel is with the master; for they would not have done it, if he had not; and they thought it worse in him who was a prophet, than in them; his dignity, they thought, should set him at a greater distance from such company than others. Being offended at the master, they quarrel with the disciples. Note, It concerns christians to be able to vindicate and justify Christ, and his doctrines and laws, and to be ready always to give an answer to those that ask them a reason of the hope that is in them, 1 Pet. 3., 15. While he is an advocate for us in heaven, let us be advocates for him on earth, and make his reproach our own. 4. The complaint was against Christ himself, not against his associates, with wicked people is against the law of God; (Ps. 119, 115. — 1.) and perhaps by accusing Christ of this to his disciples, they hoped to tempt them from him, to put them out of concet with him, and so to bring them over to themselves to be their disciples, who kept better company; for they compassed sea and land to make disciples. To be intimate with publicans, was against the tradition of the elders; and therefore, they looked upon it as a heinous thing. They were angry with Christ for this, (1.) Because they wished ill to him, and sought occasion to misrepresent him. Note, It is an easy and very common thing to put the worst constructions upon the best words and actions. (2.) Because they wished no good to publicans and sinners, but envied Christ's favour to them, and were grieved to see them brought to repentance. Note, It may justly be suspected, that they have not the grace of God themselves, who grudge others a share in that grace, who are not possessed of it.

IV. The defence that Christ made for himself and his disciples, in justification of their converse with publicans and sinners. The disciples, it should seem, being yet weak, were to seek for an answer to the Pharisees' cavil, and, therefore, bring it to Christ, and he heard it. (v. 12.) or perhaps overheard them reproaching him and his disciples. Let him alone to vindicate himself and to plead his own cause, to answer for himself and for us too. Two things he urges in his defence.

1. The necessity and exigence of the case of the publicans, which called aloud for his help, and therefore justified him in conversing with them for their good. It was the extreme necessity of poor, lost sinners, that brought Christ from the pure regions above, to these impure ones; and the same was it, that brought him into this company which was thought impure. Now, 1.) He proves the necessity of the case of the publicans: they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. The publicans are sick, and they need one to help and heal them, which the Pharisees think they are not. 2.) He explains the sickness of the soul: sinners are spiritually sick. Original corruptions are the diseases of the soul, actual transgressions are its wounds, or the eruptions of the disease. It is deforming, weakening, disquieting, wasting, killing, but, blessed be God, not incurable. 2.) Jesus Christ is the great Physician of souls. His curing of bodily diseases signified this, that he averse with healing under his fingers. He is a skilful, faith, communicative physician, and it is his office and business to heal the sick. Wise and good men should be as physicians to all about them; Christ was so. Hunc accipient versus on ones habet sapientem, quem versus Verga suas medicus.—A wise man cherishes towards all around him, the feelings of a physician for his patient. Seneca de Const. [3.] Sin-sick souls have need of this Physician. Pharisees care not for sick publicans; they were grieved, of course the publicans were; they were not sick; the publicans were; the Pharisees were, they were sick; they were sick. The Pharisees desired not the knowledge of Christ's word and ways, not because they had no need of him, but because they thought they had none. See John 9., 40, 41.

2.) He proves, that their necessity did sufficiently justify his conduct, in conversing familiarly with them, and that he ought not to be blamed for it; for that necessity made it an act of charity, which ought always to be entered on before the formalities of a religious profession, in which benediction and munificence are far better than magnificence, as much as substance is, than shows or shadows. Those duties, which are of moral and natural obligation, are to take place even of those divine laws, which are positive and ritual, much more of those impositions of men, and traditions of the elders, which make God's laws heavy and burdensome unto men. This he proves (v. 3.) by a passage quoted out of Hos. 6., 6. I will have mercy and not sacrifice. That morose separation from the society of publicans, which the Pharisees enjoined, was less than sacrifice; but Christ's conversing with them was more than an act of common mercy, and therefore to be preferred before it.
It to do well ourselves is better than sacrifice, as Samuel shows, (1 Sam. 15. 22, 23.) much more to do good to others. Christ's conversing with sinners is here called mercy: to promote the conversion of souls is the greatest act of mercy imaginable; it is saving a soul from death, Jam. 5. 20. Observe how Christ prizes this, Go ye and learn what that meaneth. Note, It is not enough to be acquainted with the letter of scripture, but we must learn to understand the meaning of it. And they have best learned the meaning of the scriptures, that have learned how to apply them as a reproof to their own faults, and a rule for their own practice. This scripture which Christ quoted, shewed not only to, and to him, but, [1.] To show wherein true religion consists; not in external observances; not in meats and drinks and shows of sactity; not in little particular opinions and doubtful disputations, but in doing all the good we can to the bodies and souls of others; in righteousness and peace; in visiting the fatherless and widows, [2.] To condemn the Pharisaical hypocrisy of those who place religion in rituals, more than in morals, ch. 23. They espouse those forms of godliness which may be made consistent with, and perhaps subservient to, their pride, covetousness, ambition, and malice, while they hate that power of it which is mortifying to those lusts.

2. He urges the nature and end of his own commission. He must keep to his orders, and prosecute that for which he was appointed to be the great Teacher; now says he, righteous but sinners to repentance, and therefore must converse with publicans. Observe, (1.) What his errand was; it was to call to repentance. This was his first text, (ch. 4. 17.) and it was the tendency of all his sermons. Note, The gospel-call is a call to repentance; a call to us to change our mind and to change our way. (2.) With whom his errand lay; not with the righteous, but with sinners. That is, [1.] If the children of men had not been sinners, there had been no occasion for Christ's coming among them. He is the Saviour, not of man as man, but of man as fallen. Had the first Adam continued in his original righteousness, we had not needed a second Adam. [2.] Therefore his greatest business lies with the greatest sinners; the more dangerous the sick man's case is, the more occasion there is for the physician's help. Christ came into the world to save sinners, but especially to the chief; (1 Tim. 1. 15.) to call not those so much, who, though sinners, are comparatively righteous, but the worst of sinners. [3.] The more sensible any sinners are of their sinfulness, the more welcome will Christ and his gospel be to them; and every one chooses to go where his company is desired, not to those who would rather have his room. Christ came not with an expectation of succeeding among the righteous, who cannot entertain to, and therefore there will sooner he sick of their Saviour, than sick of their sins, but among the convinced, humble sinners; to them Christ will come, for to them he will be welcome.

14. Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? 15. And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. 16. No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment: for that which is put in to fill it up, taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. 17. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.

The objections which were made against Christ and his disciples, gave occasion to some of the most profitable of his discourses; thus are the interests of truth often served, even by the opposition it meets with from gain-sayers, and thus the wisdom of Christ brings good out of evil. This is the third instance of it in this chapter; his discourse of his power to forgive sin, and his readiness to receive sinners, was occasioned by the cavils of Scribes and Pharisees; so here, from a reflection upon the conduct of his family, arose a discourse concerning a tenderness for it. Observe, I. The objection which the disciples of John made against Christ's disciples, for not fasting so often as they did; which they are charged with, as another instance of the looseness of their profession, besides that of eating with publicans and sinners; and it is therefore suggested to them, that they should change that profession for another more strict. It appears by the other evangelists, (Mark 2. 18. and Luke 5. 33.) that the disciples of the Pharisees joined with them, and we have reason to suspect that they imitated them, making use of John's disciples as their spokesmen, because they, being more in favour with Christ and his disciples, could do it more plausibly. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to set good men together by the ears: if the people of God differ in their sentiments, designing men will take that occasion to sow discord, and to incense them one against another, and alienate them one from another; and so make a division between John and of Jesus clash, we have reason to suspect the Pharisees have been at work underhand blowing the coals. Now the complaint is, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not? It is pity the duties of religion, which ought to be the confirmations of holy love, should be made the occasion of strife and contention; but they often are so, as here; where we may observe, How they boasted of their own fasting. He and the Pharisees fast often. Fasting has in all ages of the church been consecrated, upon special occasions, to the service of religion; the Pharisees were much in it; many of them kept two fast-days in a week, and yet the generality of them were hypocrites and bad men. Note, False and formal professors often excite others in outward acts of devotion, and even of mortification. The disciples of John fasted often, partly in compliance with their master's practice, for he came neither eating nor drinking; (ch. 11. 18.) and people are apt to imitate their leaders, though not always from the same inward principle; partly in compliance with their master's doctrine of repentance. Note, The severer part of religion is often most minded by those that are yet under the discipline of the spirit, as a spirit of bondage, whereas these are in their place, we must pass through them to that life of delight in God and dependence on him, to which these should lead. Now they come to Christ to tell him that they fasted often, at least they thought it often. Note, Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, Prov. 20. 6. There is a proneness in professors to brag of their own performances in religion, especially if there be any thing extraordinary in them; nay, and not only to boast of them before men, but to lead them before God, and confide in them as a righteousness.
2. How they blamed Christ's disciples for not fasting on an occasion as they did. *Thy disciples fast not.* They could not but know, that Christ had instructed his disciples to keep their fasts private, and to manage themselves so as that they might not appear unto men to fast; and, therefore, it was very uncharitable in them to conclude they did not fast, because they did not proclaim their fasts. Note, We must not judge of people's religion, by that which falls under the public eye, but by what we ourselves observe. But suppose it was so, that Christ's disciples did not fast so often or so long as they did, why truly they would therefore have it thought, that they had more religion in them than Christ's disciples had. Note, It is common for vain professors to make themselves a standard in religion, by which to try and measure persons and things, as if all who differed from them were in an equal or inferior state. But this diffe red, that they, did too little, and all that did more than they, did too much; which is a plain evidence of their want of humility and charity.

3. How they brought this complaint to Christ. Note, If Christ's disciples, either by omission or commission, give offence, Christ himself will be sure to hear of it, and be reflected upon for it. *O Jesus, are these thy disciples?* Therefore, for the sake of Christ, we are concerned to conduct ourselves well. *Observe,* The quarrel with Christ was brought to the disciples, (v. 11.) the quarrel with the disciples was brought to Christ; (v. 14.) this is the way of sowing discord and killing love, to set people against ministers, ministers against people, and one friend against another.

II. The apology which Christ made for his disciples in this matter. Christ might have upbraided John's disciples with the former part of their question, *Why do ye fast often?* "Nay, you know best why you do it; but the truth is, many abound in external instances of devotion, that scarcely do themselves know why and wherefore." But he only vindicates the practice of his disciples; when they had nothing to say for themselves, he had something ready to say for them. Note, As it is wisdom's honour to be justified of all her children, so it is her children's happiness to be all justified of wisdom.

What do we according to the precept and pattern of Christ, he will be sure to hear us out in, and we may with confidence leave it to him to clear up our integrity.

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*But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Herbert.*

The things Christ pleads in defence of their not fasting.

1. That it was not a season proper for that duty: (v. 13.) *Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them?* Observe, Christ's answer is so framed, as that it might sufficiently justify the practice of his own disciples, and yet not condemn the institution of John, or the practice of his disciples. When the Pharisees fomented this dispute, they hoped Christ would cast blame, either on his own disciples, or on John's, but he did neither. Note, When at any time we are unjustly censured, our care must be only to clear ourselves, not to recriminate, or throw dirt upon others; and such a variety may there be of circumstances, as may justify us in our practice, without hardening our hearts, for the sake of the body, rather than of their other work.

Now his argument is taken from the common usage of joy and rejoicing during the continuance of marriage solemnities; when all instances of melancholy and sorrow are looked upon as improper and absurd, as it was at Samson's wedding, Judges 14. 17. Note, (1.) The disciples of Christ were the children of the bride-chamber, invited to the wedding-feast, and welcomed there; the disciples of the Pharisees were not so, but children of the bond-woman, (Gal. 4. 25, 31.) continuing under a dispensation of darkness and terror. Note, The faithful followers of Christ, who have the Spirit of adoption, have the spirit of bondage no more, and cannot any longer feel the spirit of bondage and fear, cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, Hos. 9. 1. (2.) The disciples of Christ had the bridegroom with them, which the disciples of John had not; their master was now cast into prison, and lay there in continual danger of his life, and therefore it was seasonable for them to fast of grief. Such a day would come upon the disciples of Christ, in which they might be taken from them, when they should be deprived of his bodily presence, and then should they fast. The thoughts of parting grieved them when he was going, John 16. 6. *Tribulation and affliction befall them when he was gone,* and gave them occasion of mourning and praying, that is, of religious fasting.

Note, [1.] *Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of a great number of children of the bride-chamber.* Christ speaks of himself to John's disciples under this similitude, because that John had used it, when he called himself a friend of the bridegroom, John 3. 29. And if they would by this hint call to mind what their master then said, they would answer themselves. [2.] The condition of those who are the children of the bride-chamber is so circuitous, and so various, as it may be the man of however high degree, they may reach this world; they sing of mercy and judgment. [3.] It is mercy or melancholy with the children of the bride-chamber, according as they have more or less of the bridegroom's presence. When he is with them, the candle of God shines upon their head, and all is well; but when he is withdrawn, though but for a small moment, they are troubled, and walk heavily; the presence and nearness of the sun makes day spring, the summer, his absence and distance, night and winter. Christ is all in all to the church's joy. [4.] Every duty is to be done in its proper season. See Eccles. 7. 14. Jam. 5. 13. There is a time to mourn and a time to laugh, to each of which we should accommodate ourselves, and bring forth fruit in due season. In fasts, regard is to be had to the methods of God's grace towards us; when he mourns to us, we must lament; and also to the dispensations of his providence concerning us; there are times when the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning; regard is likewise to be had to any special work before us, ch. 17. 21. Acts 13. 2. 2. That they had not strength sufficient for that duty. This is set forth in two similitudes, one, of putting new wine into old bottles, which does but burst the bottles, v. 17. Christ's disciples were not able to bear these severe exercises so well as those of John and of the Pharisees, which the learned Dr. Whitby gives this reason for: There were among the Jews not only sects of the Pharisees and Essenes, who led an austere life, but also schools of the samie pharisees, who frequently lived in mountains and deserts, and were many of them Nazarites; they had also private academies to train men up in a strict discipline; and possibly from these many of John's disciples might come, and many of the Pharisees; whereas Christ's disciples, being taken immediately from their callings, had not been used to such religious austerities, or other things, as were required by the bridegroom, rather unfit for their other work.

Note, (1.) Some duties of religion are harder and more difficult than others, like new cloth, and new wine, which require most intemperance of mind, and are most displeasing to flesh and blood; such are religious fasting and the duties that attend it. (2.) The best of Christ's disciples pass through a state of infancy; all the trees in Christ's garden must bear fruit, or all his scholars in the same form; there are babes in Christ and grown men. (3.) In
18. While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. 19. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did his disciples. 20. (And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: 21. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. 22. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.) 23. And when Jesus came into the ruler’s house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise. 24. He said unto them, Give place; for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. 25. But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. 26. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.

We have here two passages of story put together: that of the raising of Jairus’ daughter to life, and that of the curing of the woman that had the bloody issue, as he was going to Jairus’ house, which is introduced in a parenthesis, in the midst of the other; for Christ’s miracles were thick sown, and interwoven; the work of him that sent him was his daily work. He was called to do these good works from speaking the things foregoing, in answer to the envious of the Pharisees, v. 18. While he spake these things; and we may suppose it a pleasing interruption given to that unpleasant work of disputa- tion, which, though sometimes needful, a good man will gladly leave, to go about a work of devotion or charity. Here is, 1. The mode of address to Christ, v. 18. A certain ruler, a ruler of the synagogue, came and worshipped him. Have any of the rulers believed on him? Yes, here was one, a church-ruler, whose faith condemned the unbelief of the rest of the rulers. This ruler had a little daughter, of twelve years old, just dead, and this breach made upon his family com- forts was the occasion of his coming to Christ. Note, In trouble we should visit God: the death of our relations should drive us to Christ, who is our life; it is well if any thing will do it. When affliction is in our families, we must not sit down astonished, but, as Job, fall down and worship. Now observe, 1. His humility in this address to Christ. He came with his criad to Christ himself, and did not send a servant. Note, It is no disparagement to us to come direct to the Lord Jesus. He worshipped him, bowed the knee to him, and gave him all imaginable respect. Note, They that would receive mercy from Christ must give honour to Christ. 2. His faith in this address; “My daughter is even now dead, and though any other physician would now come too late, (nothing more absurd than fast morts, in medecina—absurd for his doctor,) Christ comes not too late; he is a physician after death, for he is the resurrection and the life; O come then, and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.” This was quite above the power of nature, (a privation ad habitum non datur regressus—life once lost cannot be restored,) yet within the power of Christ, who has life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will. Now Christ works in an ordinary way, not by force and not against the current, he then did not in faith bring him such a request as this; while there is life there is hope, and room for prayer; but when our friends are dead, the case is determined; we shall go to them, but they shall not return to us. But while Christ was here upon earth working miracles, such a confidence as this was not only allowable but very commendable. 11. The readiness of Christ to comply with his address, v. 19. Jesus immediately arose, left his company, and followed him; he was not only willing to grant him what he desired, in raising his daughter to life, but to gratify him so far as to come to his house to do it. Surely he never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. He denied to go along with the nobleman, who said, Sir, come down, ere my child die, (John 4. 48, 49, 50.) yet he went along with the ruler of the synagogue, who said, Sir, come down, and my child shall live. The variety of methods which Christ took in working his miracles, is perhaps to be attributed to the different frame and temper of mind, which they were in who applied to him, which he who searcheth the heart, perfectly knew, and accommodated himself to. He knows what is in man, and what course to take with him. And observe, when Jesus followed him, so did his disciples, whom he had chosen for his companions; it was not for state, or that he might come with observation, that he took his attendants with him, but that they might be the witnesses of his miracles, who were hereafter to be the preachers of his doctrine. 111. The healing of the poor woman’s bloody issue. I call her a poor woman, not only because her case was piteous, but because, though she had something in the world, she had disorders which rendered her destitute of the cure of her distemper, and was never the better; which was a double aggravation of the misery of her condition, that she had been full, but was now empty; and that she had impoverished herself for the recovery of her health, and yet had not her health neither. This woman was diseased with a constant issue of blood twelve years; (v. 20.) a disease, which was not only weakening and wasting, but which made her the most unclean, and shut her out from the courts of the Lord’s house; but it did not cut her off from approaching to Christ. She applied herself to Christ, and received mercy from him, by the way, as he followed the ruler, whose daughter was dead, to whom a would be a
great encouragement, and a help to keep up his faith in the power of Christ. So graciously does Christ consider the frame, and consult the case, of weak believers. [163]

1. The woman's great faith in Christ, and in his power. Her disease was of such a nature, that her modesty would not suffer her to seek openly to Christ for a cure, as others did, but, by a peculiar impulse of the Spirit of faith, she believed him to have such an overwhelming fulness of healing virtue, that the very touch of his garment would be her cure. This, perhaps, had something of fancy mixed with faith; for she had heard but this way of application to Christ, unless, as some think, she had an eye to the raising of the dead man by the touch of Elisha's bones, 2 Kings 13. 21. But what weakness of understanding there was in it, Christ was pleased to overlook, and to accept the sincerity and strength of her faith; for he eateth the honey-comb with the honey, Cant. 4. 11. She believed she should be healed if she did but touch the very hem of his garment, the extremity of it. Note, There is virtue in every thing that belongs to Christ. The holy oil with which the high-priest was anointed, ran down to the skirts of his garments, Ps. 133. 2. Such a fulness of grace is there in Christ, that from it we may all receive, John 1. 16.

2. Christ's great favour to this woman. He did not despise (as he might have done) his healing influence from the touch of his garment. He called her dead patient to stand upon a cure unknown to any one else, though she could not think to do it unknown to him. And now she was well content to be gone, for she had what she came for, but Christ was not willing to let her go; he will not only have his power magnified in her cure, but his grace magnified in her comfort and commendation: the triumphs of her faith must be to her praise and honour. He turned about to see for her, (v. 22.) and soon discovered her. Note, It is great encouragement to humble Christians, that they who hide themselves from men, are known to Christ, who sees in secret their applications to heaven when most private. Now here,

(1.) He puts gladness into her heart, by that word, Daughter, be of good comfort. She feared being chidden for coming clandestinely, but she is encouraged to be of good courage. He called her daughter with the tenderness of a father, as he did to the man sick of the palsy, (v. 2.) whom he called son. Note, Christ has comforts ready for the daughters of Zion, that are of a sorrowful spirit, as Hannah was, 1 Sam. 1. 15. Believing women are Christ's daughters, and he will own them as such. [2.] He bids her be of good comfort: she has reason to be so, if Christ own her for a daughter. Note, the saint's consolation is founded in their adoption. His bidding her be comforted, brought comfort with it, as his saying be ye whole, brought health with it. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be comforted, and it is his prerogative to command comfort to troubled spirits. He creates the fruit of his lips, peace, Isa. 57. 19.

3. He puts honour upon her faith. That grace of all others gave most honour to Christ, and therefore he puts most honour upon it; Thy faith has made thee whole. By, faith she obtained a good report. And as of all graces Christ puts the greatest honour upon faith, so of all believers he puts the greatest honour upon those that are most humble; as here on this woman, who had more faith than she thought she had. She has reason to be of good comfort, not only because she was made whole, but because her faith had made her whole; that is, [1.] She was spiritually healed; that cure was wrought in her which is the proper fruit and effect of faith, the pardon of sin and the work of grace. Note, We may then be abundantly comforted in our temporal mercies when they are accompanied with those spiritual blessings that resemble them; our food and raiment will be comfortable, when by faith we are fed with the bread of life, and clothed with the clothing of righteousness. [2.] Her bodily cure was the fruit of faith, of her faith, and that made it a happy, comfortable cure indeed. They out of whom the devils were cast, were helped by Christ's grave comforts rather by the faith of others; (v. 21.) but it is thy faith that has made thee whole. Note, Temporal mercies are then comforts indeed to us, when they are received by faith. If, when in pursuit of mercy, we pray for it in faith, with an eye to the promise, and in dependence upon that, if we desired it for the sake of God's glory, and with a resignation to God's will, and have our hearts enlarged by it in faith, love, and obedience, we may then say, it was received by faith.

IV. The posture in which he found the ruler's house, v. 15. He saw the people and the minstrels, or musicians, making a noise. The house was in a hurry; such work does death make, when it comes into a family; and, perhaps, the necessary cares that arise at such a time, when our dead is to be decently buried out of our sight, give some useful ill

v. Sometimes, when the sorrow of the world prevails, it is difficult for Christ and his comforts to enter. They that harden themselves in sorrow, and, like Rachel, refuse to be comforted, should think they hear Christ saving to their disquieting thoughts, Give place: "Make room for him who is the Consolation of Israel, and brings with him strong consolations, strong enough to overcome the confusion and tyranny of these worldly griefs, if he may but be admitted into the soul." He gives a good reason why they should not thus disquiet themselves and one another; The mourner is not comforted, but strengthened. 1. This was eminently true of this maid, that was immediately to be raised to life; she was really dead, but not so to Christ, who knew within himself what he would do, and could do, and who had determined to make her death but as a sleep. There is little more difference between
sleep and death, but in continuance; whatever other difference there is, it is but a dream. This death must be but of short continuance, and therefore is but a sleep, like one night's rest. He that quickens the dead, may well call the things which be not as though they were, Rom. 4. 17. 2. It is in a sense true of all that die, chiefly of them that die in the Lord. Now: They live again, and there is a new and everlasting life. All nations and languages, for the softening of that which is so dreadful, and withal so unavoidable, and the reconceiving of themselves to it, have agreed to call it so. It is said, even of the wicked kings, that they slept with their fathers; and of those that shall arise to everlasting contempt, that they sleep in the dust, Dan. 12. 2. It is not the sleep of the soul; its activity ceases not; but the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, regardless and disregarded, wrapped up in darkness and obscurity. Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. But the death of the righteous is in a special manner to be looked upon as a sleep, Isa. 57. 2. They sleep in Jesus; (1 Thess. 4. 14.) they not only rest from the toils and labours of the day, but rest in hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall awake refreshed, wake to a new life, which shall be to be richly dressed and crowned, and wake to sleep no more. (2.) The consideration of this should moderate our grief at the death of our dear relations: "say not, they are lost; no, they are but gone before; say not, they are slain, no, they are but fallen asleep; and the apostle speaks of it as an absurd thing to imagine that they that are fallen asleep in Christ are punished; (1 Cor. 15. 19.) give place, therefore, to these confusions which the covenant of grace ministers, fetched from the future state, and the glory to be revealed."

Now could it be thought that such a comfortable word as this, from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, should be ridiculed as it was? They laughed him to scorn. These people lived in Capernaum, knew Christ's character, that he never spake a rash or foolish word; they knew how many mighty works he had done; so that if they did not understand what he meant by this, they might at least have been silent in expectation of the issue. Note, The words and works of Christ which cannot be understood, yet are not therefore to be despised. We must adore the mystery of divine sayings, even when they seem to contradict what we think ourselves most confident of. Yet even this tended to the confirmation of the miracle; for it seems she was so apparently dead, that it was thought a very ridiculous thing to say otherwise.

VI. The raising of the damsel to life by the power of Christ, v. 23. "The people were put forth. Note, Scorner that laugh at what they see and hear that is above their capacity, are not proper judges of the wonderful works of Christ, the glory of which lies not in pomp, but in power. The widow's son at Nain was not raised from the dead openly, but this damsel privately; for Capernaum, that had slighted the lesser miracles of restoring health, was unworthy to see the greater, of restoring life; these pearls were not to be cast before those that would trample them under their feet. Christ went in and took her by the hand, as it were to awake her, and to help her up, prosecuting his own metaphor of her being asleep. The high-priest, the Levitical priest, the Levitical order (Lev. 21. 10, 11.) but Christ touched the dead. The Levitical priesthood leaves the dead in their uncleanness, and therefore keeps at a distance from them, because it cannot remedy them; but Christ, having power to raise the dead, is above the infection, and therefore is not shy of touching them. He took her by the hand, and the maid arose. So easily, so effectually was the miracle wrought; not by prayer, as Elijah did, (1 Kings 17. 21.) and Elisha, (2 Kings 4. 35.) but by a touch. They did it as servants, he as a Son, as a God, to whom belong the names from death. Note, Jesus Christ is the Lord of souls, he commands them forth, and commands them back, when and as he pleases. Dead souls are not raised to spiritual life, unless Christ take them by the hand, when he is come. He helps us up, or we lie still.

VII. The general notice that was taken of this miracle, though it was wrought privately; v. 26. The fame thereof went abroad into all that land; it was the common subject of discourse. Note, Christ's works are more talked of than considered and improved. And doubtless, they that heard only the report of Christ's miracles, were accountable for that as well as they that were eye-witnesses of them. Though we at this distance have not seen Christ's miracles, yet having an authentic history of them, we are bound, upon the credit of that, to receive his doctrine; and blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed, John 20. 29.

27. And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. 28. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. 29. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. 30. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them saying, See that no man know it. 31. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. 32. As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. 33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitude marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. 34. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. In these verses we have an account of two more miracles wrought together by our Saviour.

1. The giving of sight to two blind men, v. 27—31. Christ is the Fountain of light as well as life; and as, by raising the dead, he showed himself to be the same that at first breathed into man the breath of life, so, by giving sight to the blind, he showed himself to be the same that at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness. Observe, The impartation of sight to the blind men to Christ. He was returning from the ruler's house to his own lodgings, and these blind men followed him, as beggars do, with their incessant cries, v. 27. He that cured diseases so easily, so effectually, and, withal, at so cheap a rate, shall have patients enough. As for other things, so he is famed for an Oculist. Observe, (1.) The time, which these blind men came to Christ; Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. The promise made to David, that of his lines the Messiah should come, was well known, and the Messiah was therefore commonly called the Son of David. At this time there was a general expectation of his appearing; these blind men knew, and own, and proclaim it in the streets of Capernaum, that he is come, and that this is he; which aggravates the folly and sin of the chief priests and Phar.
Christ is able to do for us, by the power of his merit and intercession in heaven, of his Spirit and grace in the heart, and of his providence and dominion in the world. To believe the power of Christ, is not only to assure ourselves of it, but to account ourselves to it, and encourage ourselves in it.

To this question they give an immediate answer, without hesitation; they said, Yea, Lord. Though he had kept them in suspense a while, and had not helped them at first, they honestly imputed that to his wisdom, not to his weakness, and were still confident of his ability.

The measures of mercy are laid up in the power of Christ, are laid out and wrought for those that trust in him, Ps. 31. 19.

3. The cure that Christ wrought on them; he touched their eyes, v. 29. This he did to encourage their faith, which, by his delay, he had tried, and to show that he gives sight to blind souls by the operations of his grace accompanying the word, anointing the eyes with eyesalve: and he put the cure upon their faith, According to your faith be it unto you. When they begged for a cure, he inquired into their faith, (v. 28.) Believe ye that I am able? He did not inquire into their wealth, whether they were able to pay him for a cure; nor into their reputation, should he get credit by curing them; but into their faith; and now they had professed their faith he referred the matter to that: "I know you do believe, and that ye are able; but that faith is not all; according to your faith be it unto you;" According to your faith be it unto you. This speaks, (1.) His knowledge of the sincerity of their faith, and his acceptance and approbation of it. Note, It is a great comfort to true believers, that Jesus Christ knows their faith, and is well pleased with it. Though it be weak, through others do not discern it, though they themselves are ready to question it, it is known to him. (2.) His desire that all who believe may take what he came to give; Believe ye that I am able, take what you come for. Note, They who apply themselves to Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with according to their faith; not according to their fines, not according to their profession, but, according to their faith; that is, unbelievers cannot expect to find any favour with God, but true believers may be sure to find all that favour which is offered in the gospel, according to their faith. "I know you do believe, and therefore I give you the cure; But that faith is stronger or weaker; We are not straitened in Christ, let us not then be straitened in ourselves.

4. The charge he gave them to keep it private, (v. 30.) See that no man know it. He gave them this charge, (1.) To set us an example of that humility and lowliness of mind, which he would have us to learn of him. Note, In the good we do, we must not seek our own praise, but only the glory of God: It must be more our care and endeavour to be useful, than to be known and observed to be so, Prov. 20. 6.—25. 27. Thus Christ seconded the rule he had given, Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. (2.) Some think that Christ, in keeping it private, showed his displeasure against the people of Capernaum, who had seen so many mighty works in Jesus of Nazareth, and yet would not believe: Thus he scourged some of those who should proclaim the works of Christ, is a judgment to any place or people; and it is just with Christ, to deny the means of conviction to those that are obstinate in their infidelity; and to shroud the light from those that shut their eyes against it. (3.) He did it in discretion for his own preservation; because the more he was proclaimed, the more his power would perplex the thoughts of all who should have an eye to his coming interest among the people. (4.) Dr. Whitby gives another reason, which is very considerable, why Christ sometimes concealed his miracles, and afterwards forbid the publishing of his transfiguration; because he would not indulge that pernicious conceit which obtained among the Jews, that their...
Messiah should be a temporal prince, and so give occasion to the people to attempt the setting up of his kingdom, by tumults and seditions, as they offered to do, John 6. 15. But when, after his resurrection, (which was the full proof of his mission,) his spiritual kingdom was set up, then that danger was over, and they must be published to all nations. And he observes, that the miracles which Christ wrought among the Gentiles and the Samaritans, were ordered to be published, because with them there was that danger.

But honour is like the shadow, which, as it flies from those that follow it, so it follows those that fly from it; (v. 31.) They spread abroad his fame. This was more an act of zeal, than of prudence; and though it may be excused as honestly meant for the honour of Christ, yet it cannot be justified, being done against a particular charge. Whenever we profess to direct our attention to the glory of God, we must see to it that the action be according to the will of God.

11. The healing of a dumb man, that was possessed with a devil. And here observe,

1. His case, which was very sad. He was under the power of the devil in this particular instance, that he was disabled from speaking; v. 32. See the calamitous state of this world, and how varied the afflictions are among mankind. We have no sooner dismissed two blind men, but we meet with a dumb man. How thankful should we be to God for our sight and speech! See the malice of Satan against mankind, and how many ways he shows it! This man's dumbness was the effect of his being possessed with a devil; but it was better he should be unable to say any thing, than be forced to say, as those demons did. (ch. 8. 29.) But this had been done to the two blind men, and the dumb devil than a blaspheming one. When the devil gets possession of a soul, it is made silent as to any thing that is good; dumb in prayers and praises, which the devil is a sworn enemy to. This poor creature they brought to Christ, who entertained not only those that came of themselves in their own faith, but those that were brought to him by their friends in the faith of others. They had in the just shall live eternally by his faith, yet temporal mercies may be bestowed on us with an eye to their faith who are intercessors on our behalf. They brought him in just as the blind man went out. See how unwearyed Christ was in doing good; how closely one good work followed another! Treasures of mercy, wondrous mercy, are hid in him; which may be continually communicated, but can never be exhausted.

2. His cure, which was very sudden, (v. 33.) When the devil was cast out, the dumb spake. Note, Christ's cures strike at the root, and remove the effect by taking away the cause; they open the lips, by breaking Satan's power in the soul. In sanctification he heals the waters by casting salt into the spring. When Christ, by his grace, casts the devil out of a soul, presently the dumb speaks. When Paul was converted, behold, he prays; then the dumb speaks. (2 Cor. 11. 13.)

3. The consequences of this cure.

(1.) The multitudes marvelled; and well they might; few believed, many wondered. The admiration of the common people is sooner raised than any other affectation. It was foretold, that the new song, the New-Testament song, should be sung for marvellous works, Ps. 98. 1. They said, It was never so seen in Israel, and therefore never so seen anywhere; for no people experienced such wonders of mercy as Israel did. There had been those in Israel that were famous for working miracles, but Christ excelled them all. The miracles Moses wrought had reference to Israel as a people, but Christ's were brought home to particular persons.

(2.) The Pharisees blasphemed, v. 34. When they could not gainsay the convincing evidence of these miracles, they gathered them upon the devil, as if they had been wrought by compact and collusion: he casteth out devils (say they,) by the prince of the devils—a suggestion horrid beyond expression; we shall hear more of it afterwards, and Christ's answer to it; (ch. 12. 25.) only observe here, how evil men and seducers were worse and soon (2 Tim. 3. 13.) and it be both true and his punishment. Their quarrels with Christ for taking upon him to forgive sin, (v. 3.) for conversing with publicans and sinners, (v. 11.) for not fasting, (v. 14.) though spiritual enough, yet had some colour of piety, purity, and devotion in them; but this (which they are left to, to punish them for these,) breathes nothing but malice and falsehood, and hellish enmity in the highest degree; it is diabolism all over. And observe, it is the devil they so marvelled at, and they said, and this was all they could say.

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. 36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. 37. Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: 38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into the harvest.

Here is,

1. A conclusion of the foregoing account of Christ's preaching and miracles; (v. 35.) He went about all the cities teaching and healing. This is the same we had before, ch. 4. 23.) There it is in the more particular record of Christ's preaching, (ch. 5. 6. and 7.) and of his cures, (ch. 8. and 9.) and here it is elegantly repeated in the close of these instances, as the quod erat demonstrandum—the point to be proved; as if the evangelist should say, "Now I hope I have made it out, by an induction of particulars, that Christ preached and healed; for you have had the heads of his sermons, and some few instances of his cures, which were warranted to confirm his doctrine; and these were written that you might believe." Some think that this was a second parabola in Galilee, like the former; he visited again those whom he had before preached to. Though the Pharisees cavilled at him and opposed him, he went on with his work; he preached the gospel of the kingdom. He told them of a kingdom of grace and glory, now to be set up under the government of a Mediator: this was gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings of great joy.

Observe how Christ in his preaching had respect.

1. To the private towns. He visited not only the great and wealthy cities, but the poor, obscure villages; there he preached, there he healed. The souls of those that are meanest in the world are as precious to Christ, and should be to us, as the souls of those that make the greatest figure. Rich and poor meet together in him, citizens and beasts: his righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages must be rehearsed, Judges 5. 11.

2. To the public worship. He taught in their synagogues, (1.) That he might bear a testimony to solemn assemblies, even then when there were cor
raptions in them. We must not forsake the assemble-
ing of ourselves together, as also the
callings of our God and Lord. (2.) That he might have an opportunity of preach-
ing there, where people were gathered together, with an expectation to hear. Thus, even where the gospel-church was founded, and christian meetings erected, the apostles often preached in the syna-
gogues of the Jews. It is the wisdom of the prudent, to make the best of that which is.

1. He pitied them, and was concerned for them; (v. 36.) He was moved with compassion on them; not upon a temporal account, as he pitied the blind, dumb, and withered, but upon a spiritual account. He was concerned to see them ignorant and careless, and ready to perish for lack of vision. Note, Jesus Christ is a very compassionate Friend to precious souls; here his bowels do swell in a special manner yearn. It was pity to souls that brought him from heaven to earth, and there to the cross. Misery is the ob-
ject of mercy; and the miseries of sinful, self-de-
stroying souls, are the greatest miseries. Christ's emo-
tions those most that pity themselves least; so should we. The most Christian compassion is compassion to souls; it is most Christ-like.

See what moved this pity. (1.) They fainted; they were destitute, vexed, wearied. They strayed, sosome; were lost one from another; The staff of bands was broken, Zech. 11. 14. They wanted help for their souls, and had none at hand that was good for any thing. The Scribes and Pharisees filled them with vain notions, burdened them with the tradi-
tions of the elders, deluded them into many mis-
takes, while they were not instructed in their duty, nor acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law; therefore they fainted; for what spiritual health, and life, and vigour can there be in that soul, that is filled with husks and ashes, in-
stead of the bread of life? 10. Like a sheep, and when gone astray, more helpless, shiftless, and exposed, or more unfit to find the way home again; sinful souls are as lost sheep; they need the care of shep-

derds to bring them back. The teachers the Jews then had, pretended to be shepherds, yet Christ says they had no shepherds, for they were worse than none; idio-shepherds that led them away, instead of leading them; that astray, instead of feeding it; such shepherds as were described, Jer. 23. 1, &c. Ezek. 24. 2, 8c. Note, The case of those people is very pitiable, who either have no ministers at all, or those that are as bad as none; that seek their own things, not the things of Christ and souls.

2. He excited his disciples to pray for them. His pity was for the souls of these people. It appears, (Luke 6. 12, 13.) that when he was at this occasion, before he sent out his apostles, he did himself spend a great deal of time in prayer. Note, These we pity we should pray for. Having spoken to God for them, he turns to his disciples, and tells them,

(1.) How the case stood; (v. 57.) The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. People desired good preaching, but there were few good preachers. There was a great deal of work to be done, and a great deal of good likely to be done, but there wanted hands to do it. (1.) It was an ex-
ceptional thing for the apostles to be required. It was not strange, that there were multitudes that needed instruction, but it was what does not often happen, that they who needed it, desired it, and were forward to receive it. They that were ill taught were desirous to be better taught; people's expectations were raised, and there was such a mov-
ing of affections as promised well. Note, It is a good thing, to see people's loves growing, but not for them. The valleys are then covered over with corn, and there are hopes it may be well gathered in. That is a gale of opportunity, that calls for a double care and diligence in the improvement of; a harvest-
day should be a busy day. (2.) It was pity when it was so, that the labourers should be so few; that the corn should be shed and spoil, and not upon the' head: and not only the disciples must be few, but the labourers very few. Note, It is ill with the church, when good work stands still, or goes slowly on, for want of good workmen; when it is so, the labourers that there are, have need to be very busy.

(2.) What was their duty in this case, (v. 38.) Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest. Note, The melancholy aspect of the times, and the deplo-

dable state of the precious souls, should much excite us to quicken prayer. When things look discouraging, we should pray more, and then we should complain and fear less. And we should adapt our prayers to the present exigencies of the church; such an un-
derstanding we ought to have of the times, as to know, not only what Israel ought to do, but what Israel ought to pray for. Note, (1.) God is the Lord of the harvest; my Father is the husbandman, John 14. 1. It is the vineyard of the Lord of hosts, Isa. 5. 7. It is for him, and to him, and to his service and honour, that the harvest is gathered in. Ye are God's husbandry; (1 Cor. 3. 9.) his thriving, and the corn of his floor, Isa. 21. 10. He orders every thing concerning the harvest as he pleases; when and where the labourers shall work, and how long; and it is very comfortable to those who wish well to the harvest, to find that their own selves presides in it, who will be sure to order all for the best. (2.) Mi-

nisters are, and should be, labourers in God's har-

vest; the ministry is a work, and must be attended to accordingly; his harvest-work, which is needful work; work that requires every thing to be done in its season, and diligence to do it thoroughly; but it is pleasant work; they reap in joy, and the joy of the preachers of the gospel is a great reward; Isa. 61. 7. (3.) He that receiveth wages, he that receiveth the hire of the labourers that reap down God's field, shall not be kept back, as theirs was, Jer. 3. 4. (3.) It is God's work to send forth labourers; Christ makes ministers; (Eph. 4. 11.) the office is of his appointing, the qualifications of his working, the call of his giving. They will not be owned nor paid as public officers, as in other things; they must themselves be qualified, uncall ed. How shall they preach except they be sent? (4.) All that love Christ and souls, should show it by their earnest prayers to God, especial-
ly when the harvest is plentiful, that he would send forth more skillful, faithful, wise, and industri-
ous labourers into his harvest; that he would raise up such instruments, as be in the harvest, and the edification of souls; he would give them a spirit for the work, call them to it, and succeed them in it; that he would give them wisdom to win souls,
that he would thrust forth labourers, so some; intimating unwillingness in them to go forth, because of their own weakness and the people's badness, and opposition from men that endeavour to thrust them out of the harvest; but we should pray that all contradiction from within, and from without, may be conquered and got over. Christ puts his friends upon praying this, just before he sends them forth in to labour in the harvest. Note, It is a good sign God is about to bestow some special mercy upon a people, when he stirs up those that have an interest at the throne of grace, to pray for it, Ps. 10. 17. Further observe, that Christ said this to his disciples, who were to be employed as labourers. They must pray, First, That God would send them forth. Here am I, Lord, send me, Isa. 6. 8. The sending forth, or calling, is the most likely to be successful; Paul is a chosen vessel, for behold he prays, Acts 9. 11, 15. Secondly, That he would send others forth. Note, Not the people only, but those who are themselves ministers, should pray for the increase of ministers. Though self-interest makes those that seek their own things desirous to be placed alone, (the fewer ministers the more preferments,) yet those that love the house of Christ, desire more workmen, that more work may be done, though they be eclipsed by it.

CHAP. X.

This chapter is an ordination sermon, which our Lord Jesus preached, when he advanced his twelve disciples to the deaconship. In the close of the foregoing chapter, he had stirred up them and others to pray that God would send forth labourers, and here we have an immediate answer to that prayer; while they are yet speaking he hears and performs. What we pray for, according to Christ's direction, shall be given. Now here we have, I. The general commission that was given them, v. 1. 11. The names of the persons to whom this commission was given, v. 2. 4. III. The instructions that were given them, which are very full and particular: 1. Concerning the services they were to do; their preaching; their working miracles; to whom they must apply themselves; how they must behave themselves; and in what method they must proceed, v. 5. 13. 2. Concerning the sufferings they were to undergo. They are told what they should suffer, and from whom; counsels are given them what course to take when persecuted, and encouragements to bear up cheerfully under their sufferings, v. 16. 42. These things, though primarily intended for direction to the apostles, are of use to all Christ's ministers, with whom, by his word, Christ is, and will he always to the end of the world. 1. AND when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. 2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother: James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3. Philip, and Bar-tholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alpheus; and Leb-beus, whose surname was Thaddæus; 4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. Here we are told, 1. Who they were that Christ ordained to be his apostles or ambassadors; they were his disciples, v. 1. He had called them some time before to be disciples, his immediate followers and constant attendants, and he then told them that they should be made fishers of men, which promise he now performed. Note, Christ commonly confers honours and graces by degrees; the light of both, like that of the morning, shines more and more. All this while Christ had kept these twelve, 1. In a state of probation. Though he knew what is in man, though he knew from the first what was in them, (John 6. 70.) yet he took this method to give an example to his church. Note, The ministry being a great trust, it is fit that men should be tried while they are in it, till they be first proved, 1 Tim. 3. 10. Therefore hands must not be laid suddenly on any man, but let him first be observed as a candidate and probationer, a proposant, (that is the term the French churches use,) because some men's sins go before, others follow, 1 Tim. 3. 2. 2. In a state of preparation. All this while he had been fitting them for this great work. Note, Thesedisciples must first be prepared and qualified, in some measure, for it. He prepared them, 1. By taking them to be with him; Note, The best preparative for the work of the ministry, is acquaintance and communion with Jesus Christ. They that would serve Christ, must first be with him, (John 12. 26.) Paul had Christ revealed, not only to him, but in him, before he went to preach him among the Gentiles, Gal. 1. 16. By the frequent exercise of prayer and meditation, that fellowship with Christ must be maintained and kept up, which is a requisite qualification for the work of the ministry. 2. By teaching them; they were with him as scholars or pupils, and he taught them privately, besides the benefit they derived from his public preaching: he opened the scriptures to them, and opened their understandings to understand the scriptures; to them it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, and to them they were made plain. Note, They that design to be teachers must first learn; they must receive, that they may give; they must be able to teach others, 2 Tim. 2. 2. Gospel-truths must be first committed to them, before they be commissioned to be gospel-ministers. To give men authority to teach others, that have not an ability, is but a mockery to God and the church; it is an injustice to the persons that receive it, and a great injury to the cause of God. Note, In the case of their commission, he gave them more ample instructions, Acts 1. 3. II. What the commission was that he gave them. 1. He called them to him, v. 1. He had called them to come after him before, now he calls them to be with him, admits them to his company, and will not let them keep at such a distance as they had hitherto observed. They that humble themselves shall thus be exalted. The priests under the law were said to draw near and approach unto God, nearer than the people; the same may be said of gospel-ministers; they are called to draw near to Christ, which, as it is an honour, so should strike an awe upon them, remembering that Christ will not be satisfied with the formalities of their service, if it is observable, that when the disciples were to be instructed, they came unto him of their own accord, ch. 5. 1. But now they were to be ordained, he called them. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ to be more forward to learn than to teach. In the sense of our own ignorance, we must seek opportunities to be taught; and in the same sense we must wait for a call, a clear call, ere we take upon us to teach others; for no man ought to take this honour upon himself. 2. He gave them power, εξουσία, authority in his name, to command men to obedience, and for the confirmation of that authority, to command devils too into a subjection. Note, All rightful authority is derived from Jesus Christ. All power is given to him without limitation, and the subordinate powers that be, are ordained of him. Some of his honour
he put on his ministers, as Moses put some of his on Joshua. Note, It is an undeniable proof of the fulness of power which Christ used as Mediator, that he could impart his power to those he employed, and enable them to work the same miracles that he wrought in his name. He gave them power over unclean spirits and over all manner of sickness. Note, The design of the gospel was to conquer the devil and to cure the world. These preachers were sent out destitute of all external advantages to recommend them; they had no wealth, nor learning, nor titles of honour, and they made a very mean figure. But remember, it required much that they should have some extraordinary power to advance them above the Scribes.

(1.) He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out. Note, The power that is committed to the ministers of Christ, is directly levelled against the devil and his kingdom. The devil, as an unclean spirit, is working both in doctrinal errors, (Rev. 16. 13.) and in practical debauchery; (2 Pet. 2. 16.) and in both these, ministers have a charge against him. Christ gave them power to cast him out of the bodies of people; but that was to signify the destruction of his spiritual kingdom, and all the works of the devil; for which purpose the Son of God was manifested.

(2.) He gave them power to heal all manner of sickness. He authorized them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, to prove that it was of God; and they were to work useful miracles for the illustration of it, to prove that it is not only faithful, but well worthy of all acceptance; that the design of the gospel is to heal and save. Moses’s miracles were many of them for destruction; those Mahomet pretended to, were for ostentation; but the miracles Christ wrought, and appointed his apostles to perform, were all for edification, and evince him to be, not only the great Teacher and Ruler, but the great Redeemer, of the world. Observe what an emphasis is laid upon the extent of their power to all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease, without the exception even of those that are reckoned incurable, and the reproach of physicians. Note, In the grace of the gospel there is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady. There is no spiritual disease so malignant, so inveterate, but there is a sufficiency of power in Christ for the cure of it. Let none therefore say there is no hope, or that the breach is wide as the sea that cannot be healed.

III. The number and names of those that were commissioned; they are made apostles, that is, messengers. An angel, and an apostle, both signify the same thing—one sent on an errand, so an ambassado- dor. All faithful ministers are sent of Christ, but they that were first, and immediately, sent by him, are eminently called apostles, the prime ministers of state in his kingdom. Yet this was but the infancy of their office; it was when Christ ascended on high that he gave some apostles, Eph. 4. 11. Christ himself is called an Apostle, (Heb. 3. 1.) for he was sent of God, and so established. The prophets were called God’s messengers.

1. Their number was twelve, referring to the number of the tribes of Israel, and the sons of Jacob that were the patriarchs of those tribes. The gospel church must be the Israel of God; the Jews must be first invited into it; the apostles must be spiritual fathers, to beget a seed to Christ. Israel after the flesh is to be rejected for their infidelity, these twelve, therefore, are appointed to be the fathers of another Israel. These twelve, by their doctrine, were to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Luke 22. 30. These were the twelve stars that made up the church’s crown; (Rev. 12. 1.) the twelve foundations of the new Jerusalem, (Rev. 21.

12. 14.) typified by the twelve precious stones in Aaron’s breast-plate, the twelve leaves on the table of shew-bread, the twelve wells of water at Elim.

This was that famous jury (and to make it a grand jury, Poule was added to it) that was imperfectly inquired between the King of kings, and the body of mankind; and, in this chapter, they have their charge given them, by him to whom all judgment was committed.

2. Their names are here left upon record, and it is their honour; yet in this they had more reason to rejoice, that their names were written in heaven, (Rev. 14.) while the high and mighty names of the great ones of the earth are buried in the dust. Observe,

(1.) There are some of these twelve apostles, of whom we know no more, from the scripture, than their names; as Bartholomew, and Simon the Canaanite; and yet they were faithful servants to Christ and his church. Note, All the good ministers of Christ are not alike famous, nor their actions alike celebrated.

(2.) They are named by couples; for at first they were sent forth two and two, because two are better than one; they would be serviceable to each other, and the more serviceable jointly to Christ and souls; what one forgot the other would remember, and out of the mouth of two witnesses every word would be established. These three couples of them were brethren; Peter and Andrew, James and John, and the other James and Lebbeus. Note, Friendship and fellowship ought to be kept up among relations, and to be made serviceable to religion. It is an excellent thing, when brethren by nature are brethren by grace, and those two bonds strengthen each other.

(3.) Peter is named first, because he was first called; or because he was the most forward man; or the apostles were given him to begin with the mouth of the rest of the apostles, nor is there the least mark of any supremacy that was given to him, or ever claimed by him, in this sacred college.

(4.) Matthew, the penman of this gospel, is here joined with Thomas, (v. 3.) but in two things there is a variation from the accounts of Mark and Luke; Mark 3. 18. Luke 6. 15. There, Matthew is put first; in that order it appears he was ordained before Thomas; but here, in his own catalogue, Thomas is put first. Note, It well becomes the disciples of Christ, in honour to prefer one another. There, he is only called Matthew, here Matthew the publican, the toll-gatherer or collector of the customs, who was called from that infamous company to be an apostle. Note, It is good for those who are advanced to honour with Christ, to look unto the rock whence they were hewn; often to remember what they were before Christ called them, that thereby they may be kept humble, and divine grace may be the more glorified. Matthew the apostle was Matthew the publican.

(5.) Simon is called the Canaanite, or rather the Canaean, (v. 10.) which signifies, that he was probably he was born; or Simon the Zelot, which some make to be the signification of Katanien.

(6.) Judas Iscariot is always named last, and with that black brand upon his name, who also betrayed him; which intimates, that from the first, Christ knew what a wretch he was, that he had a devil, and would prove a traitor; yet Christ took him among his apostles, that it might not be a surprise and discouragement to his church, if, at any time, the vilest scandals should break out in the best societies. Such spots there have been in our feasts of charity; tares among the wheat, wolves among the sheep; but there is a day of discovery and separation coming, when hypocrites shall be unmasked.
and discarded. Neither the apostleship, nor the rest of the apostles, were ever the worse for Judas's being one of the twelve, while his wickedness was concealed and did not break out.

5. These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: 6. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7. And, as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. 8. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. 9. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass, in your purses: 10. Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. 11. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. 12. And when ye come into an house, salute it. 13. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. 14. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet. 15. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.

We have here the instructions that Christ gave to his disciples, when, he gave them their commission. Whether this charge was given them in a continued discourse, or the several articles of it hinted to them at several times, is not material: in this, if they preach them. Jacob's blessing his sons, is called his commanding them, and with these commands Christ commanded a blessing. Observe,

1. The people to whom he sent them. These ambassadors are directed what places to go to.

1. Not to the Gentiles nor the Samaritans. They must not go into the way of the Gentiles, nor into any road out of the land of Israel, whatever temptations they might have. The Gentiles must not have the gospel brought them, till the Jews have first refused it. As to the Samaritans, who were the posterity of that menedel people that the king of Assyria plant

II. The preaching work which he appointed them. He did not send them forth without an errand: no, As ye go, preach, v. 7. They were to itinerant preachers: wherever they came they must proclaim the beginning of the gospel, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Not that they must say nothing else, but this must be their text: on this subject they must engage. let people know that it is

13. The mission of the Messiah, who is the Lord from heaven, is now to be set up according to the scriptures; from whence it follows, that men must repent of their sins and forsake them, that they might be admitted to the privileges of that kingdom. It is said, (Mark 6. 12.) they went out and preached that men should repent, which was the proper use and application of this doctrine, concerning the approach of the kingdom of heaven. They must, therefore, be prepared to hear more of this long looked for Messiah shortly, and must be ready to receive his doctrine, to believe in him, and to submit to his yoke. The preaching of this was like the morning light, to give notice of the approach of the rising sun. How unlike was this to the preaching of Jonah, which proclaimed ruin at hand! Jonah 3. 4. This proclaims salvation at hand, nigh them that fear God; much and truly mighty to them in whom is the kingdom of heaven at hand; not so much the personal presence of the king; that must not be boasted upon; but a spiritual kingdom which is to be set up, when his bodily presence is removed, in the hearts of men.

Now this was the same that John the Baptist and Christ had preached before. Note, People need to have good truths pressed again and again, for fear they should forget them. If they preach them, let them be new learnings, or if they be old truths, let them be new affections, they are as if they were fresh to us. Christ, in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. 13. 8. Afterwards, indeed, when the Spirit was poured out, and the christian church was formed, this kingdom of heaven came, which was now spoken of as at hand: but the kingdom of heaven must still be the subject of our preaching: now it is come, we must tell people it is come, and must lay before them the precepts and privileges of it; and there is a kingdom of glory yet to come, which we must speak of as at hand, and quicken people to diligence from the consideration of that.

III. The power he gave them to work miracles for the confirmation of their doctrine, v. 8. When he sent them to preach the same doctrine that he had preached, he empowered them to confirm it, by the same divine seals, which could never he set to a lie. This is not necessary now the kingdom of God is come; to call for miracles now, is to lay again the foundation when the building is reared. The point being settled, and the doctrine of Christ sufficiently attested, by the miracles which Christ and his apostles wrought, it is tempting God to ask for more signs. They are directed here,

2. To use their power in these cases, not, Go and remove mountains, or "fetch fire from heaven," but heal the sick, cleanse the lepers. They are sent abroad as public blessings, to intimate to the world, that love and goodness were the spirit and
genius of that gospel which they came to preach, and of that kingdom which they were employed to set up. By this it would appear, that they were the servants of that God who is good and does good, and whose mercy is over all his works; and that the intention of the doctrine they preached, was to heal sick souls, and to raise those that were dead in sin; and that this was the thing they were designed not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles, but to use it to heal the sick, and to make them whole; and the doctrine which they were to preach was that of repentance towards God, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, which is here mentioned, for though we read not of their raising any to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet they were instrumental to do many to spiritual life.

2. In doing good freely; freely ye have received. Those that had power to heal all diseases, had an opportunity to enrich themselves; who would not purchase such easy, certain curing at an adequate price? They were designed not to make a gain of the power they had to work miracles, but to use it to heal the sick, and to make them whole; and the doctrine which they were to preach was that of repentance towards God, and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, which is here mentioned, for though we read not of their raising any to life before the resurrection of Christ, yet they were instrumental to do many to spiritual life.

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make the best of that which is, to abide by it, and not be for shifting upon every dislike or inconvenience.

(2.) In strange houses. When they had found the house of one they thought worthy, they must at their entrance salute it. In those common civilities, be_better than with pride, in too great luxury. Think it not a disparagement, to invite yourselves into a house, nor stand upon the jametillo of being invited. Salute the family. [1.] To draw on further discourse, and so introduce your message. " (From matters of common conversation, we may insensibly pass into that communication which is good to the use of edifying.) [2.] "To try whether you are welcome or not; you will take time or receive you here; a servant will be sent to the apostles went out backed with the authority of the Son of God himself; yet their instructions were, when they came into a house, not to command it, but to salute it; for love's sake rather to behe wth, is the evangelical way, Phil. 8. 9. Souls are first drawn to Christ with the cords of a man, and kept to him by the bands of love, Hos. 11. 4. When Peter made the first offer of the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile, Peter was first saluted; see Acts 10. 25, for the Gentiles courted that which the Jews were courted to.

When they had saluted the family after a godly sort, they must, by the return, judge concerning the family, and proceed accordingly. Note, The eye of God is upon us, to observe what entertainment we give to good people and good ministers; if the house be worthy, let your peace come and rest upon it; if not, let it return to you, v. 13. It seems then that after they had inquired for the most worthy, (v. 11.) it was possible they might light upon those that were unworthy. Note, Though it is wisdom to hearken to, yet it is folly to rely upon, common report and opinion; we ought to use a judgment of discretion, and to see with our own eyes. The wisdom of the prudent is himself to understand his own way.

Note, 1. To this solemn salutation.

First, For satisfaction to the apostles. The common salutation was, peace be unto you; this, as they used it, was turned into gospel; it was the peace of God, the peace of the kingdom of heaven that they wished. Now lest they should make a scruple of pronouncing this blessing upon all promiscuously, because many were utterly unworthy of it, this is to clear them of that scruple; Christ tells them that the peace of God may be said to all, and that it should be given to all, as the gospel-preacher was made to all indefinitely, and that they should leave it to God who knows the heart and every man's true character, to determine the issue of it. If the house be worthy, it will reap the benefit of your blessing; if not, there is no harm done, you will not lose the benefit of it; it shall return to you, as David's prayers for his ungrateful enemies did, Ps. 35. 13. Note, It is not the business of those who proclaim the gospel, to be scrupulous for the salvation of all, to conduct ourselves courteously to all, for that is our part, and then to leave it with God to determine what effect it shall have upon them, for that is his part.

Secondly, For direction to them. If, upon your salutation, it appear that they are indeed worthy, let them have more of your company, and so let your peace come upon them; preach the gospel to them, peace by Jesus Christ; but if otherwise, if they carry it rudely to you, and shut their doors against you, let your peace, as much as in you lies, return to you. Retract what you have said, and turn your backs upon them; by slighting this, they have made themselves unworthy of the rest of your salutation. Note, Great blessings are often lost by a neglect seemingly small and inconsiderable, when men are in their probation and upon their behaviour. Thus Esau lost his birthright, (Gen. 25. 34.) and Saul his kingdom, 1 Sam. 13. 15, 14.

2. They are here directed how to carry it toward those that were refusers of them. The case is put, (v. 14.) of those that would not receive them, for or against their will, (as if it was now become) they think that now they had such a doctrine to preach, and such a power to work miracles for the confirmation of it, no doubt but they should be universally entertained and made welcome: they are, therefore, told before, that there would be those that would slight them, and put contempt on them and their message. Note, The best and most powerful preachers of the gospel must expect to meet with some, that will not think it an instance of respect to them the hearing, nor show them any token of respect. Many turn a deaf ear, even to the joyful sound, and will not hearken to the voice of the charmers, charm they never so wisely. Observe, "They will not receive you, and they will not hear your words." Note, Contempt of the gospel, and contempt of gospel-ministers, commonly go together, and they will either of them be construed into contempt of Christ, and will be reckoned for accordingly.

Now in this case we have here,

(1.) The directions given to the apostles what to do. They must depart out of that house or city. Note, The gospel will not tarry long with those that put it away from them. At their departure they must shake off the dust of their feet, [1.] In detestation of their wickedness; it was so abominable, that it did even pollute the ground they went upon, which must therefore be shaken off as a filthy thing. The apostles must have no fellowship nor communion with them; must not so much as carry away the dust of their city with them. The work of them that turn aside shall not leave to me, Ps. 101. 3. The prophet was not to eat or drink in Bethel, 1 Kings 13. 9. [2.] As a denunciation of wrath against them. It was to signify, that they were base and unprofitable, and the gospel should depart from them, and cast dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mark 6. 11. Compare Jam. 5. 3. See this practised, Acts 13. 31.—18. 6. Note, They who despise God and his gospel shall be lightly esteemed.

(2.) The doom passed upon such wilful refusants, v. 15. It shall be more tolerable, in the day of judgment, for the land of Sodom, as with much more than the dust of the apostles' feet, which they left behind them, would witness against them, and be brought in as evidence, that the gospel had been preached to them, Mark 6. 11. Note, [1.] There is a day of judgment coming, when all those that refused the gospel will certainly be called to account for it; however they now make a jest of it. They that would not hear the doctrine that would save them, shall be made to hear the sentence that will ruin them. Their judgment is respite till that day. [2.] There are different degrees of punishment in that day. All the sins of the refuse are intolerable, but some will be more so than others. Some sinners sink deeper into hell than others, and are beaten with more stripes. [3.] The condemnation of those that reject the gospel, will in that day be severer and heavier than that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom is said to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, Jude 7. But that vengeance will come with an aggravation upon those that despise the great salvation. Sodom and Go
morrah were exceedingly wicked, (Gen. 13, 14,) and that which filled up the measure of their iniquity was, that they received not the angels that were sent to them, but abused them, (Gen. 19, 4, 5,) and hearten- ed not to their words, ver. 14. And yet it will be more tolerable for them, than for those who receive not Christ's ministers, and hearken not to their words. God's wrath against them will be more flaming, and their own reflections upon them will be as much more the Son, remember, will sound most dreadfully in the ears of such as had a fair offer made them of eternal life, and chose death rather. The iniquity of Israel, when God sent them his servants the prophets, is represented, as upon that account, more heinous than the iniquity of Sodom, (Ezek. 16, 48, 49,) much more now he sent them his Son the great prophet.

16. Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. 17. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; 18. And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, to a testimony against them and the Gentiles. 19. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. 20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. 21. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. 23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come. 24. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his Lord. 25. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? 26. Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. 27. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house-tops. 28. And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. 30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. 32. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. 34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. 37. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. 40. He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. 41. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

All these verses relate to the sufferings of Christ's ministers in their work, which they are here taught to expect, and prepare for; they are directed also how to bear them, and how to go on with their work in the midst of them. This part of the sermon looks further than to their present mission: for we find not that they met with any great hardships or persecutions while Christ was with them, nor were they well able to bear them; but they are here forewarned of the troubles they should meet with, when, after Christ's correction, their commission should be enlarged, and the kingdom of heaven, which was now at hand, should be actually set up; they dream ed of nothing then, but outward pomp and power; but Christ tells them, they must expect greater sufferings than they were yet called to; that they should then be made prisoners, when they expected to be made princes. It is good to be told what troubles we may hereafter meet with, that we may provide accordingly, and may not boast, as if we had put off the harness, when we are yet but girding it on.

We have here intermixed, I. Predictions of trouble; and, II. Prescriptions of counsel and comfort, with reference to it.

I. We have here predictions of trouble, which the disciples should meet with in their work; Christ we may hereafter meet with, when we will have them go on, as he went on himself; and he foretold them, not only that the troubles might not be a surprise to them, and so a shock to their faith, but that, being the accomplishment of a prediction, they might be a confirmation to their faith. He tells them what they should suffer, and from whom.

1. What they should suffer: hard things to be sure; for, Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, v. 16. And what may a flock of
poor, helpless, unguarded sheep expect, in the midst of a herd of ravenous wolves, but to be worried and torn. Note, Wicked men are like wolves, in whose nature it is to devour and destroy. God's people, and especially his ministers, are like sheep among them, of a contrary nature and disposition, exposed to them, and commonly an easy prey to them. It looked unkind in Christ to expose them to so much danger, who had left all to follow him; but he knew that not for the present, but in the end, when in the greatest day they shall be set on his right hand, would be a recompense sufficient for sufferings as well as services. They are as sheep among wolves; that is frightful; but Christ sends them forth, that is comfortable; for he that sends them forth, will protect them, and bear them out. But that they might know the worst, he tells them particularly what they must expect.

(1.) They must expect to be hated, (v. 22.) "Ye shall be hated for my name's sake: that is the root of all the rest, and a bitter root it is. Note, Those whom Christ loves, the world hates; as whom the court blesses the country curses. If the world hated Christ without cause, (John 15. 25.) no marvel if it hated those that bore his image and served his interests. We hate what is nauseous, and they are counted as the offscouring of all things, 1 Cor. 4. 13. The world's reproach is the physician's prescription; counted the troubles of the land, (1 Kings 18. 17.) and the tormentors of their neighbours, Rev. 11. 10. It is grievous to be hated, and to be the object of so much ill-will, but it is for thy name's sake; which, as it speaks the true reason of the hatred, whatever is pretended, so it speaks comfort to them who are thus hated; it is for a good cause, and they have a good friend that shares with them in it, and takes it to himself."

(2.) They must expect to be apprehended and arraigned as malefactors. Their restless malice is restless malice, and they will not only attempt, but will prevail, to deliver you up to the councils, (v. 17. 18.) to the bench of aldermen or justices, that take care of the public peace. Note, A deal of mischief is often done to good men, under colour of law and justice. In the place of judgement there is fear of those that persecute wickedness, Eccl. 5. 16. They must be shunted, but only justly; sent to the courts, but from governors and kings, the supreme magistrates. To be brought before them, under such black representations as were commonly made of Christ's disciples, was dreadful and dangerous; for the wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion. We find this often fulfilled in the acts of the apostles."

(3.) They must expect to be put to death; (v. 21.) "They shall deliver them to death, to death in state, with pomp and solemnity, when it shows itself most as the king of terrors. The malice of the enemies rages so high as to inflict this; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after: the faith and patience of the saints stand so firm as to expect this; Neither count I my life dear to myself: the wisdom of Christ permits it, knowing how to make the blood of the martyrs the seal of the truth, and the seed of the church."

By this noble army's not loving their lives to the death, Satan has been vanquished, and the kingdom of Christ and its interests greatly advanced, Rev. 11. 11. They were put to death as criminals, so the enemies meant it, but really as sacrifices, (Phil. 2. 17.) 2 Tim. 4. 6.) as burnt-offerings, sacrifices of acknowledgment to the honour of God, and in his truth and cause."

(4.) They must expect, in the midst of these sufferings, to be bribed with the most odious and ignominious names and characters that can be. Persecutors would be ashamed in this world, if they did not first dress up those in bear-skins whom they thus bait, and represent them in such colours as may serve to justify such cruelties. The blackest of all the ill characters they give them is here stated; they call them Beelzebub, the name of the prince of the devils, v. 25. They represent them as ring-leaders of the interest of the kingdom of darkness, and since every one thinks he hates the devil, thus they endeavour to make them odious to all mankind. See; and be amazed to see, how this world is imposed upon; how even enemies are represented as his friends: the apostle goes down to the devil's kingdom, were called devils. Thus men laid to their charge, not only things which they knew not, but things which they abhorred, and were directly contrary to, and the reverse of. [2.] Satan's sworn servants would be thought to be his enemies, and they never more effectually do his work, than when they pretend to be fighting against him. Many that by them selves are nearest akin to the devil, are most apt to father others upon him; and those that paint him on others' clothes, have him reigning in their own hearts. It is well there is a day coming, when (as it follows here, v. 26.) that which is hid will be brought to light."

(5.) These sufferings are here represented by a sword and division, v. 34, 35. Think not that I am come to send peace, temporal peace and outward peace, but I come to send war, and the sword, to destroy the world, and to make it a bloody place, so that not one of his followers shall be left; but I come to set them in opposition to the world, and as its enemies, and as enemies of the world, in one respect, as the world's accuser, Christ came to give us peace with God, peace in our consciences, peace with our brethren, but in the world ye shall have tribulation. Note, They mistake the design of the gospel, who think their profession of it will secure them from its effects; they will certainly expose them to, trouble in this world. If all the world would receive Christ, there would then follow a universal peace, but while there are and will be so many that reject him, (and those not only the children of this world, but the seed of the serpent,) the children of God, that are called out of the world, must expect to feel the fruits of their enmity."

[1.] Look not for peace, but a sword. Christ came to give the sword of the word, with which his people were to conquer the world. By this sword he worked this word has made, (Rev. 6. 4.—19. 21.) and the sword of persecution, with which the world fights against the disciples, being cut to the heart with the sword of the word, (Acts 7. 54.) and tormented by the testimony of Christ's witnesses, (Rev. 11. 10.) and cruel work this sword made. Christ sent that gospel, which gives occasion for the drawing of this sword, and so may be said to send this sword; he orders his church into a suffering state for the trial and praise of his people's graces, and the filling up of the measure of their enemies' sins."

[2.] Look not for peace, but division, (v. 35.) I am come to set men at variance. This effect of the preaching of the gospel, is not the fault of the gospel, but of those who do not receive it. When some believe the things that are spoken, and others believe them not, the faith of those that believe condemns those that believe not, and, therefore, they have an enmity against them that believe. Note, The most violent and implacable feuds have ever been those that have arisen from difference in religion; no enmity like that of the persecutors, no resolution like that of the persecuted. Thus Christ tells his disciples what they should suffer, and these were hard sayings; if they could bear these, they could bear any thing. Note, Christ has dealt fairly and faithfully with us, in telling us the worst we shall meet with in his service; and he would have us deal so with ourselves, in sitting down and counting the cost.
2. They are here told from whom, and by whom, they should suffer these hard things. Surely hell itself must be let loose, and devils, those desperate and despairing spirits, that have no part nor lot in the great salvation, must become incarnate, ere such spiteful enemies could be found to a doctrine, the substance of which was good will toward men, and the reconciling of the world to God; no, would you think it? All this mischief arises to the preachers of the gospel, from those to whom they came to preach salvation. Thus the blood-thirsty hate the upright, and hate his soul, (Prov. 29. 10.) and therefore heaven is so much opposed on earth, because earth is so much under the power of hell, Eph. 2. 2.

These hard things Christ's disciples must suffer, (1.) From men, (v. 17.) "Beware of men; you will have need to stand upon your guard, even against those who are of the same nature with you"—such is the duplicity and degeneracy of that sort, (homo homini lupus—man is a wolf to man,) crafty and politic as men, but cruel and barbarous as beasts, and wholly divorced of the thing called humanity. Note, Persecuting rage and enmity turn men into brutes, into devils; Paul at Ephesus fought with beasts in the shape of men, 1 Cor. 15. 32. It is a sad pass that the world is come to, when the best friends of the gospel should disallow the friends of men. It aggravates the troubles of Christ's sufferers, that they arise from those who are bone of their bone, made of the same blood. Persecutors are, in this respect, worse than beasts, that they prey upon those of their own kind; "Sievis inter se convenit turris—Even savage bears agree among themselves." It is very grievous to have men rise up against us, (Ps. 124.) from whom we might expect protection and support; men would not do so to devils, and not saints; natural men, (1 Cor. 2. 14.) men of this world, Ps. 17. 14. Saints are more than men, and are redeemed from among men, and therefore are hated by them. The nature of man, if it be not sanctified, is the worst nature in the world next to that of devils. They are men, and therefore subordinate, dependent, dying creatures; they are men, but, they are but men, (Ps. 9. 29.) and who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die? Isa. 51. 12. Beware of the men, So Dr. Hammond; those you are acquainted with, the men of the Jewish sanhedrim, which disallowed Christ, 1 Pet. 2. 4.

(2.) From professing men, men that have a form of godliness, and make a show of religion. They will scourge you in their synagogues, their places of meeting for the worship of God, and for the exercise of their church-discipline: so that they looked upon the scourging of Christ's ministers to be a branch of their religion. Paul was five times scourged in the synagogues, 2 Cor. 11. 24. The Jews, under colour of zeal for Moses, were the most bitter persecutors of Christ and Christianity, and placed those outrages to the score of their religion. Note, Christ's disciples are never in a worse case than his persecutors, that scourge them in their synagogues, cast them out and kill them, and think they do God good service, (John 16. 2.) and say, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa. 66. 5. Zech. 11. 4, 5. But the synagogue will be so far from consecrating the persecution, that the persecution, doubtless, profits, and desecrates the synagogue.

(3.) From great men, and men in authority. The Jews did not only scourge them, which was the utmost their remaining power extended to, but when they could go no further themselves, they delivered them up to the Roman powers, as they did Christ, John 18. 30. Ye shall be brought before governors and kings, (v. 18.) who, having more power, are in a capacity of doing the more mischief. Governors and kings receive their power from Christ, (Prov. 8. 15.) and should be his servants, and his church's protectors and nursing-fathers, but they often use their power against Christ, and oppressors of his church.

The kings of the earth set themselves in his kingdom, Ps. 2. 1, 2. Acts 4. 25, 26. Note, It has often happened the lot of good men to have great men for their enemies.

(4.) From all men, (v. 22.) Ye shall be hated of all men, of all wicked men, and these are the generality of men, for the whole world lies in wickedness. So few are there that love, and own, and connnence Christ's righteous cause, that we may say, the friends of it are as rare souls as they are all gone away, and, therefore, eat up my people, Ps. 14. 3. As far as the apostasy from God goes, so far the enmity against the saints goes; sometimes it appears more general than at other times, but there is something of this poison lurking in the hearts of all the children of disobedience. The world hates you, for it wonders after the beast, Rev. 13. 3. Every man is a liar, and therefore a hater of truth.

(5.) From those of their own kindred. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, v. 21. A man shall be, upon this account, at variance with his own father; nay, and those of the weaker and tenderer sex too shall become persecutors and persecuted; the persecuting daughter will be against the believing mother, where natural affection and filial duty do not; and, therefore, she should so soon extinguish the quarrel; and then, so marvellous if the daughter-in-law be against the mother-in-law; where, too often, the coldness of love seek's occasion of contention, v. 23. In general, (v. 36.) A man's foes shall be they of his own household. They who should be his friends, will be incensed against him for embracing Christianity, and especially for adhering to it when it comes to be persecuted, and will join with those that are his enemies. The strongest bonds of relative love and duty have often been broken through, by an enmity against Christ and his doctrine. Such has been the power of prejudice against the true religion, and zeal for a false one, that all other regards, the most natural and sacred, the most engaging and endearing, have been sacrificed to these Molochs. They who rage against the Lord, and bear his name, are answered ones, break even these bonds in sunder, and cast away even these cords from them, Ps. 2. 2, 3. Christ's spouse suffers hard things from the anger of her own mother's children, Cant. 1. 6. Sufferings from such are more grievous; nothing cuts more than this, It was thou, a man, mine equal; (Ps. 55. 12, 13.) and the enmity of such is commonly most implacable; a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, Prov. 18. 19. The martyrlogies, both ancient and modern, are full of instances of this. Upon the whole matter, it appears, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution; and through many tribulations we must expect to enter into the kingdom of God.

II. With these predictions of trouble, we have here prescriptions of counsels and comforts for a time of trial. He sends them out exposed to danger in deed, and expecting it, but well armed with instructions and encouragements, sufficient to bear them up, and bear them out, in all these trials. Let us gather up what he says,

1. By way of counsel and direction in several things.

(1.) Be ye wise as serpents, v. 16. "You may be so;" (so some take it, only as a permission;) "you may be as wary as you please, provided you be harmless as doves." But it is rather to be taken as a precept, recommending to us that wisdom of the prudent, which is to understand his way, as useful at all times, but especially in suffering times. Therefore, because you are exposed, as sheep among wolves;
be ye wise as serpents; not wise as foxes, whose cunning is to deceive others, but as serpents, whose policy is only to defend themselves, and to shift for their own safety. The disciples of Christ are hated and persecuted as serpents, and their ruin is sought, and, therefore, they need the serpent's wisdom.

Note, It is the will of Christ that his people and ministers, being so much exposed to troubles in this world, as they usually are, should not needlessly expose themselves, but use all fair and lawful means for their own preservation. Christ gave us an example of this wisdom, ch. 21. 24, 25.—22. 17, 18, 19. John 8. 6, 7. besides the many escapes he made out of the hands of his enemies, till his hour was come. See an instance of St. Paul's wisdom, Acts 23. 6, 7.

In the cause of Christ we must sit loose to life and all its comforts, but must not be prodigal of them. It is the wisdom of the serpent, to secure his head, that hit to cast not by chance. They are sent forth among wolves, therefore must be as wise as serpents, but they are sent forth as shepherds, therefore must be harmless as doves. We must be wise, not to wrong ourselves, but rather so than wrong any one else; must use the harmless-ness of the dove to bear twenty injuries, rather than the subtlety of the serpent to offer or to return one. Note, It is the continual care of all Christ's disciples, to be innocent and inoffensive in word and deed, especially in consideration of the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a dove-like spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them, nor be provoked by them: David coveted the wings of a dove, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. The Spirit descended on Christ as a dove, and all became the Church of the Spirit of Christ, a dove-like spirit, made for love, not for war.

(3.) Beware of men, v. 17. Be always upon your guard, and avoid dangerous company; take heed what you say and do, and presume not too far upon any man's fidelity; be jealous of the most plausible pretensions; trust not in a friend, no, not in the wife of thy bosom, Micah 7. 5. Note, It becomes those who are gracious to be cautious, for we are taught to set the Contemporary value of all the enemies they are in the midst of. We have need of a dove-like spirit, when we are beset with birds of prey, that we may neither provoke them, nor be provoked by them: David coveted the wings of a dove, on which to fly away and be at rest, rather than the wings of a hawk. The Spirit descended on Christ as a dove, and all became the Church of the Spirit of Christ, a dove-like spirit, made for love, not for war.

(4.) Take no thought, how or what ye shall speak, v. 19. When ye are brought before magistrates, conduct yourself decently, but afflict not yourselves with care how you shall come off. A prudent thought there must be, but not an anxious, perplexing, disquieting thought; let this care be cast upon God, as well as that—what you shall eat and what you shall drink. Do not study to make fine speeches, ad captandum benevolentiam—to ingratiat yourselves; affect not quaint expressions, flowery of wit, and laboured periods, which only serve to gild a bad cause, the gold of a good one needs it not. It argues a deficiency of your cause, to be solicitous in this respect. But it is not sufficient to oppose it itself. You know upon what grounds you go, and then verbaque praeviam rem non invisa sequuntur—suitable expressions will readily occur. Never any spoke better before governors and kings than those three champions, who took no thought before, what they should speak: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter, Dan. 3. 16. See Ps. 119. 46. Note, The disciples of Christ must be more thoughtful, how to do well, than how to speak well; how to keep their integrity, than how to vindicate it. Non magna logiumur, sed verum—Our lives, not boasting words, form the best apology.

(5.) When they persecute you in this city, flee to another city. While therefore, though you may go out of the way of danger, though you must not go out of the way of duty. Observe Christ's care of his disciples, in providing places of retreat and shelter for them; ordering it so, that persecution rages not in all places at the same time; but when one city is made too hot for them, another is reserved for a cooler shade, and a little sanctuary; a favour to be used and not to be slighted; yet always with this proviso, Do not make that your escape; for then it is not a door of God's opening. We have many examples to this rule in the history both of Christ and his apostles, in the application of all which to particular cases, wisdom and integrity are profitable to direct.

(6.) Fear them not, v. 26. For they can but kill the body. Note, It is the duty and interest of Christ's disciples, not to fear the greatest of their adversaries. They who truly fear God, need not fear man; and they who are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble. The fear of man brings a snare, a perplexing snare, that disturbs our peace; an entangling snare, by which we are drawn into sin; and, therefore, it must be carefully watched, and striven, and prayed against. Be the times never so difficult, enemies never so outrageous, and events never so threatening, yet need we not fear; yet will we not fear, though the earth be moved, we have so good a God, so good a cause, and so good a hope through grace.

Yes, this is soon said, but when it comes to the trial, racks and tortures, dungeons and gallies, axes and gibbets, fire and faggot, are terrible things, enough to make the stoutest heart to tremble, and to start back, especially when it is plain, that they may be avoided by a few declining steps, and, therefore, to fortify us against this temptation, we have further:

[1.] A good reason against this fear, taken from the limited power of the enemies; they kill the body, that is the utmost their rage can extend to; hitherto they can go, if God permit them, but no further; they are not able to kill the soul, nor to do it any hurt, and the soul is the man. By this it appears, that the soul does not (as some dream) fall asleep at death, nor deprived of thought and perception long before the killing of the body would be the killing of the soul too. The soul is killed when it is separated from God and his love, which is its life, and is made a vessel of his wrath; now this is out of the reach of their power. Tribulation, distress, and persecution may separate us from all the world, but cannot part between us and God, cannot make us either not to love him, or not to be loved by him, Rev. 2. 10, 11. If, therefore, we are troubled about our souls, as our jewels, we should be less afraid of men, whose power cannot rob us of them; they can but kill the body, which would quickly die of itself, not the soul, which will enjoy itself and its God in spite of them. They can but crush the cabinet: a heathen set the tyrant at defiance with this, Tundu caput

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Anaxarch, Anaxarchum non beds—you may abuse the case of Anaxarchus, you cannot injure Anaxarchus himself. The pearl of price is untouched. Seneca undertakes to make it out, and the whole is most naturally. Science is no evil to him. Si maximum illud ultra quod nihil habere potest, aut sevisium domini minuitur, in quo injuriam sumum fortuna consumit, aqua placidique animo acerbitum ac scimus mortem malum non esse ob hoc ne in iuriam gudem.—If with calmness and composure we meet that last extremity, beyond which injured laws and merciless punishments have put the last injury in which fortune terminates her dominion, we know that death is not an evil, because it does not occasion the slightest injury. Seneca de Constantia.

[2.] A good remedy against it, and that is, to fear God. Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Note, First, Hell is the destruction both of soul and body; not of the body only, but the soul being of both; it is the ruin of the whole man; if the soul be lost, the body is lost too. They sinned together; the body was the soul's tempter to sin, and its tool in sin, and they must eternally suffer together. Secondly, This destruction comes from the power of God: he is able to destroy; it is a destruction from his glorious power; (2. Thess. 1. 9.) he will in it make his power known; not only his another, but also his glory, his power, in a short sentence, Rom. 9. 22. Thirdly, God is therefore to be feared, even by the best saints in this world. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men to stand in awe of him. If, according to his fear, so is his wrath, then according to his wrath so should his fear be, especially, because none knows the power of his anger, Ps. 90. 11. When Adam, in innocency, was awed by a threatening, let none of Christ's disciples think that they need not the restraint of a holy fear. Hathly is the man that fears always. The God of Abraham, who was then dead, is called the Fear of Isaac, who was yet alive, Gen. 31. 42, 53. Fourthly, The fear of God and of his power reigning in the soul, will be a sovereign antidote against the fear of man. It is better to fall under the frowns of all the world, than under God's frowns, and therefore, as it is in the world, it is most safe for us, to obey God rather than men, Acts 4. 19. They who are afraid of a man that shall die, forget the Lord their Maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13. Neh. 4. 14.

(7.) What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: (v. 27.) "whatever hazards you run, go on with your work, publishing and proclaiming the everlasting gospel to all the world; that is your business, mind that. The design of the enemies is not merely to destroy you, but to suppress that, and, therefore, whatever be the consequence, publish that." What I tell you, that speak ye. Note, That which the apostles have delivered to us, is the same that they received from Jesus Christ, Heb. 2. 3. They spake what he told them—that, all that, and nothing but that. Those ambassadors, however, are intrusted with a secret in darkness, in the ear, in corners, in parables. Many things Christ spake openly, and nothing in secret varying from what he preached in public, John 18. 20. But the particular instructions which he gave his disciples after his resurrection, concerning the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were whispered in the ear, (Acts 1. 3.) for then he never showed himself openly. But the public proclamations he made in the light, and upon the house-tops: for the doctrine of the gospel is what all are concerned in, (Prov. 1. 20, 21—8. 2, 3.) therefore he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. The first indication of the reception of the Gentiles into the church, was upon a house-top, Acts 10. 9. Note, There is no part of Christ's gospel that needs, upon any account, to be concealed; the whole counsel of God must be revealed, Acts 20. 27. In never so mixed a multitude let it be plainly and fully delivered.

By thy of comfort and encouragement. Here is very much said to that purpose, and all little enough, considering the many hardships they were to grapple with, throughout the course of their ministry, and their present weakness, which was such, as that, without some powerful support, they could scarcely bear even the prospect of such usage; Christ therefore shows them why they should be of good cheer.

[1.] That their sufferings were for a testimony against them and the Gentiles, v. 18. When the Jewish consistory transfers you to the Roman governors, that they may have you put to death, your being hurried thus from one judgment-seat to another, will help to make your testimony the more public, and will give you an opportunity of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; nay, you will testify to them, and against them, by the very troubles you undergo. Note, God's people, and especially God's ministers, are his witnesses, (Isa. 43. 10.) not only in their doing work, but in their suffering work. Hence they are called martyrs—witnesses for Christ, that his truths are of undoubted certainty and value; and being witnesses for him, they are witnesses against those who oppose him and his gospel. The sufferings of the martyrs, as they witness to the truth of the gospel they profess, so they are testimonies of the enmity of their persecutors, and both ways they are a testimony against them, and will be produced in evidence in the great day, when the saints shall judge the world; and the reason of the sentence will be, Inasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me. Now if their sufferings be a testimony, how cheerfully should they be borne; for the testimony is not finished till those come, Rev. 11. 7. If they be Christ's witnesses, they shall be sure to have their charges borne. [2.] That these consistorys are justly displeased, and that the hernings by this day, the work and warfare will in a little time be accomplished. [3.] That these consistorys are justly displeased, and that the hernings by this day, the work and warfare will in a little time be accomplished.
especially when they were called before great men. When Moses was sent to Pharaoh he complained, I am not eloquent, Exod. 4. 10. When Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, he objected, I am but a child, Jer. 1. 6, 10. Now, in answer to this suggestion, First, they are here supported by Moses' words, ver. 12, 14, twice before, but in that same hour, what they should speak. They shall speak ex tempore, and yet shall speak as much to the purpose, as if it had been never so well studied. Note, When God calls us out to speak for him, we may depend upon him to teach us what to say; even then, when we labour under the greatest disadvantages and discouragements. Secondly, They are here assured, that the blindest are to be able to speak in the power of the Spirit. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaketh in you, v. 20. They were not left to themselves upon such an occasion, but God undertook for them; his Spirit of wisdom spoke in them, as sometimes his providence wonderfully spoke for them, and by both together they were manifested in the consciences even of their persecutors. God gave them an ability, not only to speak to the purpose, but to speak as they should. The same Spirit that assisted them in the pulpit, assisted them at the bar. They cannot but come off well, who have such an advocate; to whom God says, as he did to Moses, (Exod. 4. 12.) Go, and I will be with thy mouth, and with thine heart. [3.] That he that endureth to the end shall be saved, v. 22. Here it is very comfortable to consider, First, that there will be an end of these troubles; they may last long, but will not last always. Christ comforted himself with this, and so may his followers; The things concerning me have an end, Luke 22. 37. Dabit Deus his quoque finem—These also will God bring to a termination. Note, A believing prospect of the period of our troubles, will be of great use to support us under them. The weary will be at rest, when the wicked cease from troubling, Job 3. 17. God will give an expected end, Jer. 29. 11. The troubles may seem tedious, like the days of a hibernating, but blessed be God, they are not everlasting. Secondly, that while they continue; they may be endur'd; as they are not eternal, so they are not intolerable; they may be borne, and borne to the end, because the sufferers shall be borne up under them, in everlasting arms: The strength shall be according to the day, 1 Cor. 10. 13. Thirdly, Salvation will be the eternal recompense of all these that endure to the end. The weather shall change, and the wind fail, but the pleasure of home will make amends for all. A believing regard to the crown of glory has been in all ages the cordial and support of suffering saints, 2 Cor. 4. 16, 17, 18. Heb. 10. 34. This is not only an encouragement to us to endure, but an engagement to endure to the end. They who endure but a while, and in time of temptation fall away, have run in vain, and lose all that they have attained; but they who persevere, are sure of the prize, and they only. Be faithful unto death, and then shall you have the crown of life. [4.] That whatever hard usage the disciples of Christ meet with, it is no more than what their Master met with before, v. 24, 25. The disciple is not above his master. We find this given them as a reason, why they should not hesitate to perform the meanest duties, no, not washing one another's feet, John 13. 10. Here it is given as a reason why they should not be surprised at the smallness of the office, John 15. 20. It is a proverbial expression, The servant is not better than his master, and, therefore, let him not expect to fare better. Note, First, Jesus Christ is our Master, our teaching Master, and we are his disciples, to learn of him; our ruling Master, and we are his servants to obey him: He is Master of the house, (Exod 12. 6.) and has a despotic power in the church, which is his family. Secondly, Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, not with very hard usage from the world; they called him Beelzebub, the god of flies, the name of the chief of the devils, with whom they said he was possessed; it was hard to say, which is here more to be wondered at, the wickedness of men who thus abused Christ, or the patience of Christ, who suffered himself to be thus abused; that he who was the God of glory should be stigmatized as the god of flies; the King of Israel, as the god of Ekom; the Prince of light and life, as the prince of the powers of death and darkness; that Satan's greatest Enemy and Destroyer, should be run down as his confederate, and partaker with it of the same sinners. Thirdly, The consideration of this ill treatment which Christ met with in the world, should engage us to expect and prepare for the like, and to bear it patiently. Let us not think it strange, if they who hated him, hate his followers, for his sake; nor think it hard if they who are shortly to be made like him in glory, he now made like him in sufferings. Christ began in the bitter cup, let us be willing to pledge him his blood, his sweat, and his tears, in ours. [5.] That there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, v. 26. We understand this, First, Of the revealing of the gospel to all the world. ‘Do you publish it, (v. 27.) for it shall be published. The truths which are now, as mysteries, hid from the children of men, shall all be made known, to all nations, in their own language,’ Acts 2. 11. The ends of the earth must see his salvation. Note, It is a great thing to engross, to those who are doing Christ's work, that it is a work which shall certainly be done. It is a work which God will speed. Or, Secondly, Of the clearing up of the innocence of Christ's suffering servants, that are called Beelzebub; their true character is now invidiously disguised with false colours, but however their innocence and excellency are now covered, they shall be revealed; sometimes it is in a great measure done in this world, when the righteousness of the saints is made, by subsequent events, to shine forth as the light; however, it will be done at the great day, when their glory shall be manifested to all the world, angels and men, to whom they are now made spectacles, 1 Cor. 4. 9. All their reproach shall be rolled away, and their graces and services, that are now covered, shall be revealed, 1 Cor. 4. 5. Note, It is a matter of comfort to the people of God, under all the calamities and censures of men, that there will be a resurrection of the just, as well as of bodies, at the last day, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun. Let Christ's ministers faithfully reveal his truths, and then leave it to him, in due time, to reveal their integrity. [6.] That the providence of God is in a special manner conversant about the saints, in their sufferings, v. 29—31. It is good to have recourse to our first principles, and particularly to the doctrine of God's universal providence, extending itself to all the creatures, even to all his works, ev'n the smallest and most minute. The light of nature teaches us this, and it is comfortable to all men, but especially to all good men, who can in faith call this God their Father, and for whom he has a tender concern. See here, First, the general extent of providence to all the creatures, even the least, and least considerable, to the least and smallest of them, 1 Cor. 14. 36. There is a small account, that one of them is not valued; there must go two to be worth a farthing, (nay, you shall have five for a halfpenny, Luke 12. 6.) and yet they are not shut out of the divine care; One of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father; That is, 1. They do not light on the ground for food, to pick up a grain of corn, but your heavenly Father, by his providence, laid it ready for them. In the
parallel place, Luke 12. 6. it is thus expressed, 'For
one of them is forgotten before God, forgotten to be provided for; lie feedeth them, ch. 6. 26. Now he
that feeds the sparrows, will not starve the saints.
2. They do not fall to the ground by death, either a
natural or a violent death, without the notice of God;
through he they are so small a part of the creation, yet
even their death comes within the notice of the di-
vine providence, much more does the death of his
disciples. Observe, The birds that soar above,
when they die, fall to the ground; death brings the
highest to the earth. Some think that Christ here
alludes to the two sparrows that were used in clean-
slng the Leper; (Lev. 14. 4, 5, 6.) the two birds, in
this instance, were taken after death, as the sparrows
are killed, and so fall to the ground, the other was let
go. Now it seemed a casual thing, which of the
two was killed; the persons employed, took which
they pleased, but God's providence designed, and
determined which. Now this God, who has such an
eye to the sparrows, because they are his creatures,
much more will have an eye to you who are his
children; if you do not die without your Father,
surely a man does not give a donkey, minister,—my
friend,—my child. A bird falls not into the
fowler's net, nor by the fowler's shot, and so
comes not to be sold in the market, but according to
the direction of providence; your enemies, like sub-
tle fowlers, lay snares for you, and privately shoot at
you, but they cannot take you, they cannot hit you,
until ye will give them leave. Therefore be not afraid
of death; your enemies have no power against you,
but what is given them from above.
God can break their bows and snares, (Ps. 37. 14,
15.—64. 4, 7.) and make our souls to escape as a
bird; (Ps. 124. 7.) Fear ye not, therefore, v. 31.
Note, There is enough in the doctrine of God's
providence, to silence all the fears of God's people;
Ye are of more value than many sparrows. All men
are so, for the other creatures were made for man,
and put under his feet; (Ps. 8. 4, 5, 6.) much
more, the disciples of Jesus Christ, who are the excellent
ones of the earth, however contemned, as if not
worth one sparrow.
Secondly, the particular cognizance which provid-
ence takes of the disciples of Christ, especially in
their sufferings, (v. 30.) But the very hairs of your
head are numbered. This is a proverbial expression,
denoting theattentive care of the Creator, which he
keeps, of all the concerns of his people, even of
those that are most minute, and least regarded.
This is not to be made a matter of curious enquiry,
but of encouragement to live in a continual depend-
eance upon God's providential care, which extends
itself to all occurrences, yet without disparagement
to the infinite glory, or disturbance to the infinite
rest, of the Eternal Mind. If God numbers their
hairs, much more does he number their heads, and
take care of their lives, their comforts, their souls.
It intimates, that God takes more care of them, than
they do of themselves. They who are solicitous to
number their money, and goods, and cattle, yet were
never careful to number their hairs, which fall and
are lost, and they never miss them: but God num-
bers not his, nor all the hairs of his hand, and not a hair of
their head shall perish; (Luke 21. 18.) not the least hair
shall be done them, but upon a valuable considera-
tion: so precious to God are his saints, and their
lives and deaths!
[8.] That he will shortly, in the day of triumph,
own those who now own him, in the day of trial,
when those who deny him shall be for ever disowned and
never heard by him, Luke 22. 32, 33. Note, First, It is
our duty, and if we do it, it will hereafter be our
unspakable honour and happiness, to confess Christ
before men. 1. It is our duty, not only to believe
in Christ, but to profess that faith, in suffering for him,
when we are called to it, as well as in serving him.
We must never be ashamed of our relation to Christ,
our attendance on him, and our expectations from
him; hereby the sincerity of our faith is evidenced,
his name glorified, and others edified. 2. However
this may expose us to reproach and trouble now, we
shall be abundantly recompensed for that, in the
resurrection of the just, when it will be our unspak-
able honour and happiness to hear Christ say; (what
would we more?) '"Him will I confess, though a poor
worthless worm of the earth; this is one of
mine, one of my friends and favourites, who loved
me, and was beloved by me; the purchase of my
blood, the workmanship of my Spirit; I will confess
him before my Father, and all his servants, both
there and here; I will speak a good word for him, when
he appears before my Father to receive his doom; I
will present him, and will represent him to my Father.'
Those who honour Christ he will thus honour. They
honour him before men; that is a good thing; he will
honour them before his Father, that is a great thing.
Secondly, It is a dangerous thing for any to deny and
dishonour Christ before men, and then be dis-
owned and despised by him in the great day, when
they have most need of him: he will not own them
for his servants, who would not own him for their
Master: I tell you, I know you not, ch. 7. 23. In
the first ages of Christianity, when for a man to confess
Christ, was to venture all that was dear to him in
this world, it was more a trial of sincerity, than it
was afterwards, when it had secular advantages at-
taining.
Note, [8.] That the foundation of their discipleship was
laid in such a temper and disposition, as would make
sufferings very light and easy to them; and it was
upon the condition of a preparedness for suffering,
that Christ took them to be his followers, v. 37—39.
He told them at first, that they were not worthy of
him, if they were not willing to part with all for him.
Men hesitate not at these difficulties which
necessarily attend their profession, and which they
count upon, when they undertook that profession;
and they will either cheerfully submit to those fa-
tigues and troubles, or disclaim the privileges and
advantages of their profession. Now, in the
christian profession, they are reckoned unworthy the
dignity and felicity of it, that put not such a value
upon their interest in Christ, as to prefer that above
everything. Note, We must either accept the gains of
a bargain, who will not come up to the terms of it.
Now thus the terms are settled; if religion be worth
any thing, it is worth every thing; and, therefore,
all who believe the truth of it, will soon come up to
the price of it; and they who make it their business
and bliss, will make every thing else to yield to it.
They who like not Christ on these terms, may leave
him at their peril. Note, It is very encouraging to
think, that whatever we leave, or lose, or suffer, for
Christ, we do not make a hard bargain for ourselves.
Whatever we part with for this pearl of price, we
may comfort ourselves with this persuasion, that it
is well worth what we give for it. The terms are,
that we must prefer Christ.
First, Before our nearest and dearest relations;
father or mother, son or daughter. Between these
relations there is little room left for envy, there is
commonly more room for love, and therefore,
these are instanced in, as relations which are most
likely to affect. Children must love their par-
ents, and parents must love their children; but if
they love them better than Christ, they are unwor-
thy of him. As we must not be deterred from Christ
by the hatred of our relations; which is so strong,
(v. 21, 33, 35,) so we must not be drawn from
him by their love. Christians must be as Levi, who said
to his father, I have not seen him, Deut. 33. 9.
Secondly, Before our ease and safety. We must
» take up our cross and follow him, else we are not worthy of him. Here observe, 1. They who would follow Christ, must expect their cross and take it up. 2. In taking up the cross we must follow Christ’s example, and bear it as he did. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, and will draw us to follow him. But during them we follow Christ, who has showed us the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like his, to glory with him.

Thirdly, Before life itself, v. 39. He that findeth his life shall lose it; he that thinks he has found it, when he has savaged it, and kept it, by denying Christ, shall lose it in an eternal death; but he that loseth his life for Christ, shall partake of that rest which he alone can bestow, yea, shall find it. Thus shall we follow Christ, who has showed us the way; and that if we follow him faithfully, he will lead us through sufferings like his, to glory with him.

SECONDLY, Jesus Christ takes what is done to his faithful ministers, whether in kindness or in unkindness, as done to himself, and reckons himself treated as they are treated. He that receives you, receive me. Both honours and contempt put upon an ambassador, reflect honour or contempt upon the prince that sends him, and ministers are ambassadors for Christ. See how Christ may be still be entertained by those who would testify their respect to his; his people and ministers we have always with us; and he is with them always, even to the end of the world. Nay, the honour rises higher, He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. Not only Christ takes it as done to himself, but through Christ God does too. By entertaining Christ’s ministers, they entertain not angels unwares, but Christ, nay, and God himself, and unwares too, as appears, v. 35. When saw thee an hungered? Thirdly, That though the kindness done to Christ’s disciples be never so small, yet that if there be occasion for it, and ability to do no more, it shall be accepted, though it be but a cup of cold water given to one of these little ones, v. 42. They are little ones, poor and weak, and often stand in need of refreshment, and glad of the least. The extremity may be such, that a cup of cold water may be a great favour. Note, Kindness shown to Christ’s disciples shows kindness shown to Christ himself, and will break upon the cost of the gift, according to the affection of the giver. On that score the widow’s mite not only passed current, but was stamped high, Luke 21. 3, 4. Thus they who are truly rich in graces may be rich in good works, though poor in the world.

Fourthly, That kindness done to Christ’s disciples which he will accept, must be done with an eye to Christ, not for his own sake; that is, a prophet must be received in the name of a prophet, a man in the name of a righteous man, and one of those little ones in the name of a disciple; not because they are learned, or witty, nor because they are our relations or neighbours, but because they are righteous, and so bear Christ’s image; because they are prophets and disciples, and so are sent on Christ’s errand. It is a believing regard to Christ that puts an acceptable value upon the kindnesses done to his ministers. Christ does not interest himself in the matter, unless we first interest him in it. Thus he dehers and for good purposes, dehers non tantum mihi praestare, sed tanquam mihi—if you wish me to feel an obligation to you for any service you render, you must only perform the service, but you must convince me that you do it for my sake.

Fifthly, That kindness shown to Christ’s people and ministers, shall not only be accepted, but richly and suitably rewarded. There is a great deal to be gained, by the bringing outward offices to Christ’s disciples. If it be done to the Lord, he will repay them again with interest; for he is not unrighteous to forget any labour of love, Heb. 6. 10. 1. They shall receive a reward, and in no wise lose it. He does not say, that they deserve a reward; we cannot merit anything as wages, from the hand of God; but they shall receive a reward from the free gift of God: and they shall in no wise lose it, as good services often do answer men, because they who should reward them are either false or forgetful. The reward may be deferred, the full reward will be deferred, till the resurrection of the just; but it shall in no wise be lost, nor shall they be any losers by the delay. 2. This is a prophet’s reward, and a righteous man’s. That is, either, (1.) The reward that God gives to prophets and righteous men; the blessings conferred upon them shall distil upon their friends. Or, (2.) The reward he gives by prophets and righteous men; in answer to their prayers; (Gen. 20. 7.) He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, that is a prophet’s reward: and by their ministry; when he gives the instructions and comforts of the word, to those who are kind to the preachers of the word, then he sends a prophet’s reward. Prophets’ rewards are spiritual blessings in heavenly things, and if we know how to value them, we shall reckon them good payment.

CHAPTER XI.

In this chapter we have, 1. The constant and unwearied diligence of our Lord Jesus in his great work of preaching the gospel, v. 1. II. His discourse with the disciples of John concerning the Baptist’s ministry; a most convincing and important testimony that Christ bore to John Baptist, v. 7. 15. IV. The sad account he gives of that generation in general, and of some particular places, with reference to the success, both of John’s ministry, and of his gospel; and of the rejection of Christ at his first coming; v. 16, 18, 24. V. His thanksgiving to his Father for the wise and gracious method he had taken in revealing the great mysteries of the gospel, v. 25, 26. VI. His gracious call and invitation to poor sinners to come to him, and to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, v. 27. 30. Nowhere have we more of the terror of gospel-voices for warning to us, or of the sweetness of gospel-grace, for encouragement to us, than in this chapter, which sets before us life and death, the blessing and the curse. 1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence, to teach and to preach in their cities. 2. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, 3. And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? 4. Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6. And
blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

The first verse of this chapter some join to the foregoing chapter, and make it (not unfitly) the close of that.

1. The ordination sermon which Christ preached to his disciples in the foregoing chapter, is here called his commissioning them. Now Christ's commission consisted in two parts. Their preaching of the gospel was not only permitted them, but it was enjoined them. It was not a thing respecting which they were left at their liberty, but necessity was laid upon them, 1 Cor. 9. 16. The promises he made them are included in these commands, for the covenant of grace is a word which he hath commanded, Ps. 105. 8. He saith, in the end of commanding, risen & departed.

Note, The instructions Christ gives are full instructions. He goes through with his work. 2. When Christ had said what he had to say to his disciples, he departed thence. It should seem they were very loth to leave their master, till he departed and separated himself from them; as the nurse withdraws the hand, that the child may learn to go by itself. Christ would now teach them how to live and act without him, and to speak with him. It was expedient for them, that Christ should thus go away for a while, that they might be prepared for his long departure, and that by the help of the Spirit, their own hands might be sufficient for them, (Deut. 33. 7.) and they might not be always children. We have little account of what they did now pursuant to their commission. They went abroad, notcmath, probably into Judea, (for in Galilee the gospel had been mostly preached hitherto,) publishing the doctrine of Christ, and working miracles in his name; but still in a more immediate dependence upon him, and not being long from him; and thus they were trained up, by degrees, for their great work.

3. Christ departed to teach and preach in the cities whether he sent his disciples before him to work miracles, (ch. 10. 1, 8.) and so to raise people's expectations, and to make way for his entertainment. Thus was the way of the Lord prepared; John prepared it by bringing people to repentance, but he did no miracles. The disciples go further, they work miracles for the confirmation. Note, Repentance and faith prepare people for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ gives. Observe, Where Christ is, Christ's miracles are. If Christ employed himself in teaching and preaching, as if that were the more honourable of the two. That was but in order to do this. Healing the sick was the saving of bodies, but preaching the gospel was to the saving of souls. Christ had directed his disciples to preach, (ch. 10. 7.) yet he did not leave off preaching himself. He set them to work, not for his own glory, but for the sake of the country, and was not the less busy for employing them. How unlike are they to Christ, who yoke others only that they may themselves be idle. Note, The increase and multitude of labourers in the Lord's work should be made not an excuse for our negligence, but an encouragement to our diligence. The more busy others are, the more busy we should be, and all for the Lord. Now, observe, Christ sent his disciples, a time for it, and he sent them with power. Observe, He went to preach in their cities, which were populous places; he cast the net of the gospel where there were most fish to be inclosed. Wisdom cries in the cities, (Prov. 1. 21.) at the entry of the city, (Prov. 8. 3.) in the cities of the Jews, even of them who made light of him, who notwithstanding had the first offer.

What he preached we are not told, but it was probably to the same purpose with his sermon on the mount. But here is next recorded a message which John Baptist sent to Christ, and his return to it, v. 2—6. We heard before that Jesus heard of John's sufferings, ch. 4. 12. Now we are told that John, in prison, hears of Christ's doings. He heard in the prison the works of Christ; and no doubt he was glad to hear of them, for he was a true friend of the Bridegroom, John 3. 29. Note, When one useful instrument is laid aside, God knows how to raise up another. Christ was more than a man: though John was in prison, and it added no affliction, but a great deal of consolation to his bonds. Nothing more comfortable to God's people in distress, than to hear of the works of Christ; especially to experience them in their own souls. This turns a prison into a palace. Some way or other Christ will convey the notices of his love to those that are in trouble for conscience sake. John could not see the works of Christ, but he heard of them with pleasure. And blessed are they who have not seen, but only heard, and yet have believed.

Now John Baptist, hearing of Christ's works, sent two of his disciples to him; and what passed between them and him we have here an account of.

Here is, 1. The question they had to propose to him: Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? This was a serious and important question; Art thou the Messiah promised, or not? Art thou the Christ? Tell us. 1. It is taken for granted that the Messiah should come. It was one of the names by which he was known to the Old-Testament saints, he that cometh or shall come, Ps. 118. 26. He is now come, but there is another coming of him which is still future. 2. They intimate, that if this is not he, they would look for another. Note, We must not be weary of looking for him that is coming, nor ever say, we will no more expect him till we come to enjoy him. Though he tarry, wait for him, for he that shall come will come, though not in our time.

3. They intimate likewise, that if they be convinced that this is he, they will not be sceptics, they will be satisfied, and will look for no other. 4. They therefore ask, art thou he? John had said for his part, I am not the Christ, John 1. 20. Now, (1.) Some think that John sent this question for his own satisfaction. It is true he had borne a noble testimony to Christ; he had declared him to be the Son of God, (John 1. 34.) the Lamb of God, (v. 29.) and he that should baptize you with the Holy Ghost, (v. 33.) and satisfied Christ of his own person. Was Christ not that which he claimed for himself? But had desired to be further and more fully assured, that he was the Messiah that had been so long promised and expected. Note, In matters relating to Christ and our salvation by him, it is good to be sure. Christ appeared not in that external pomp and power in which it was expected he should appear; his own disciples stumbled at this, and perhaps John did so; Christ saw something of this error, he knew it was in the mind of the people, he knew they would be ready to offer to it; and said, blessed is he, who shall not be offended in me. Note, It is hard, even for good men, to bear up against vulgar errors, (2.) John's doubt might arise from his own present circumstances. He was a prisoner, and might be tempted to think, if Jesus be indeed the Messiah, whence is it that I, his friend and fore-runner, am brought into this trouble, and am left to be an object of contempt to others? Observe, He went to preach in their cities, which were populous places; he cast the net of the gospel where there were most fish to be inclosed. Wisdom cries in the cities, (Prov. 1. 21.) at the entry of the city, (Prov. 8. 3.) in the cities of the Jews, even of them who made light of him, who notwithstanding had the first offer.

What he preached we are not told, but it was probably to the same purpose with his sermon on the mount. But here is next recorded a message which
especially when they continue long unrelieved, are such trials of faith as sometimes prove too hard to be borne up against. [3] The remaining unbelief of good men may sometimes, in an hour of temptation, strike at the root, and call in question the most fundamental truths which were thought to be well grounded. We will hope that John's faith did not fail in this matter, only he desired to have it strengthened and confirmed. Note, The best saints have need of the best helps they can get for the strengthening of their faith, and the arming of themselves against temptations to infidelity. Abraham believed, and yet desired a sign, (Gen. 15. 6, 8,) so did Gideon, Judges 6. 36. Will He now hear and see? Note, That John sent disciples to Christ with this question, not so much for his own satisfaction as for theirs. Observe, Though he was a prisoner they adhered to him, attended on him, and were ready to receive instructions from him; they loved him, and would not leave him. Now, [1] They were weak in knowledge, and wavering in their faith; and needed instruction and confirmation; and in this matter they were not behaving as their master, they were jealous of our Master: they were loth to acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah, because he eclipsed John, and are leth to believe their own master when they think he speaks against himself and them. Good men are apt to have their judgments blasted by their interest. Now John would have them consider that to be as well satisfied as he himself was. Note, Ministers' business is to direct every body to Christ. And those who would know the certainty of the doctrine of Christ, must apply themselves to him, who is come to give an understanding. They who would grow in grace must be inquisitive.

II. Here is Christ's answer to this question, v. 4—6. It was not so direct and express as when he said, I that speak unto thee am he; but it was a real answer, an answer in fact. Christ will have us to spell out the convincing evidences of gospel-truths, and to take pains in digging for knowledge.

1. He points them to what they heard and saw, which they must tell John, that he might from thence take occasion, the more fully to instruct and convince them out of their own mouths. Go and tell him. Note, Our sex, sense, and reason must be appealed to in these things that are their proper objects. Therefore the popish doctrine of the real presence agrees not with the truth as it is in Jesus; for Christ refers us to the things we hear and see. Go and tell John,

(1) What you see of the power of Christ's miracles; you see how, by the word of Jesus, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, &c. Christ's miracles are so strong and so great that men perish in them. They feared not the strongest and most impartial scrutiny. Veritas non quaerit angulos—Truth seeks not concealment. They are to be considered, [1] As the acts of a divine power. None but the God of nature could thus overrule and outdo the power of nature. It is particularly spoken of as God's prerogative to open the eyes of the blind, Psal. 146. 8. Miracles are therefore the broad seal of heaven, and the doctrine they are affixed to must be of God, for his power will never contradict his truth; nor can it be imagined that he should set his seal to a lie; however lying wonders may be vouched for, in proof of false doctrines, true miracles evince a divine commission; such Christ's were, and they leave no room to doubt that they were sent from God. Note, It was his that sent him. [2] As the accomplishment of a divine prediction. It was foretold, (Isa. 55. 5, 6,) that our God should come, and that then the eyes of the blind should be opened. Now if the works of Christ agree with the words of the prophet, as it is plain they do, then no doubt but this is our God whom we have waited for, who shall come and rescue his confused people, who has such a mind, [2] Tell him what you hear of the preaching of his gospel, which accompanies his miracles. Faith, though confirmed by seeing, comes by hearing. Tell him, [1] That the poor preach the gospel; so some read it. It proves Christ's divine mission, that those whom he employed in founding his kingdom were poor men, destitute of all secular advantages, who, therefore, could never have carried their point, if they had not been carried on by a divine power. [2] That the poor have the gospel preached to them. Christ's auditory is made up of such as the Scribes and Pharisees despised, and looked upon with contempt, and the rabble would not instruct, because they were not able to pay them. The Old-Testament prophets were sent mostly to kings and princes, but Christ preached to the congregations of the poor. It was foretold that the floor of the flock should wait upon him, Ezek. 11. 11. Note, Christ's glorious condescensions and compassions to the poor, are an evidence of it that he should bring to the world the tender mercies of our God. It was foretold that the Son of David should be the floor man's King, Ps. 72. 2, 4, 12, 13. Or we may understand it, not so much of the power of the world, as the floor in spirit, and so that scripture is fulfilled, Isa. 61. 1. He hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek. Note, It is a proof of Christ's divine mission, that his doctrine is gospel indeed: good news to those who are truly humbled in sorrow for their sins, and truly humble in the denial of self; to them it is accommodated, for whom God always declared he had mercy in store. [3] That the poor receive the gospel, and are wrought upon by it, they are evangelized, they receive and entertain the gospel, are leavened by it, and delivered into it as into a mould. Note, The power of the gospel is the more effectual because it is the gospel original. The poor are wrought upon by it. The prophets complained of the poor, that they knew not the way of the Lord, Jer. 5. 4. They could do no good upon them; but the gospel of Christ made its way into their untutored minds.

2. He pronounces a blessing on these that were not offended in him, v. 6. So clear are these evidences of Christ's mission, that they who are not willfully blind and deaf are not to be accused. (So the word is,) cannot but receive his doctrine, and so be blessed in him. Note, (1) There are many things in Christ which they who are ignorant and unthinking are apt to be offended at some circumstances, for the sake of which they reject the substance of his gospel. The meanness of his appearance, his education at Nazareth, the poverty of his life, the despicableness of his followers, the slight which the Pharisees and Scribes cast upon him, his OWN doctrine, the contradiction it gives to flesh and blood, and the sufferings that attend the profession of his name; these are things that keep many from him, who otherwise cannot but see much of God in him. Thus he is set for the fall of many, even in Israel, (Luke 2. 34,) a Rock of offence, 1 Pet. 2. 8. (2) They are happy who get over these offences. Blessed are they. The expression intimates, that it is a difficult thing to conquer these prejudices, and a dan-
genuine thing not to conquer them; but as to those, who, notwithstanding this opposition, do believe in Christ, their faith will be found so much the more to praise, and honour, and glory.

7. And, as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 8. But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. 10. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 11. Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. 13. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. 15. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

We have here the high encomium which our Lord Jesus gave of John the Baptist; not only to revive his honour, but to revive his work. Some of Christ's disciples might perhaps take occasion from the question John sent to reflect upon him, as weak and wavering, and inconsistent with himself, to prevent which Christ gives him this character. Note, It is our duty to consult the reputation of our brethren, and not only to remove, but to exalt and prevent, jealousies and ill thoughts of them; and we must take all occasions especially to discover any thing of infirmity, to speak well of those who are praise-worthy, and to give them that fruit of their hands. John the Baptist, when he was upon the stage, and Christ in privacy and retirement, bore testimony to Christ; and now that Christ appeared publicly, and John was under a cloud, he bore testimony to John. Note, They who have a confirmed interest themselves should improve it for the helping of the credit and reputation of others, whose character claims it, but whose temper or present circumstances put them out of the way of it. This is giving honour to whom honour is due. John had abased himself to honour Christ, (John 3. 29, 30. ch. 3. 11.) had made himself nothing, that Christ might be All, and now Christ dignifies him with this character. Note, They who humble themselves shall be exalted, and those that honour Christ he will honour; those that confess him before men, he will confess, and sometimes before men too, even in this world. John had now finished his testimony, and now Christ commends him. Note, Christ reserves honour for his servants when they have done their work, John 12. 26.

Now concerning this commendation of John, observe,

I. That Christ spoke thus honourably of John, not in the hearing of John's disciples, but as they departed, just after they were gone, Luke 7. 24. He would not so much as seem to flatter John, nor have these praises of him reported to him. Note, Though we must be forward to give to all their due praise for their encouragement, yet we must avoid every thing that looks like flattery, or may be in danger of puffing them up. They who in other things are mortal, to flatter, yet are their own praise. Pride is a corrupt humour, which we must not feed either in others or in ourselves.

II. That what Christ said concerning John, was intended not only for his praise, but for the people's profit, to revive the remembrance of John's ministry which had been well attended, but which was now (as other such things used to be) strangely forgotten; therefore he did now for a season, rejoice in his light, John 5. 35. "Now, consider, what went ye out into the wilderness to see? Put this question to yourselves." 1. John preached in the wilderness, and thither people flocked in crowds to him, though in a remote place, and an inconvenient one. If teachers be removed into corners, it is better to go after them than to be without them. Now if his preaching was worth taking so much pains to hear it, surely we must give serious attention to some, the greater the difficulties we have broken through to hear the word, the more we are concerned to profit by it. 2. They went out to him to see him; rather to feed their eyes with the unusual appearance of his person, than to feed their souls with his wholesome instructions; rather for curiosity than for conscience. Note, Many that attend on the word come only to see what business had you such a time at such an hour, and to have something to talk of, than to be made wise to salvation. Christ puts it to them, what went ye out to see? Note, They who attend on the word will be called to an account, what their intentions and what their improvements were. We think when the sermon is done, the care is over; no, then the greatest of the care begins. It will shortly be asked, What business had you such a time at such an ordination? What brought you thither? Was it custom or company, or was it a desire to honour God and get good? What have you brought thence? What knowledge, and grace, and comfort? What went you to see? Note, When we go to read and hear the word, we should see that we aim right in what we do.

III. They saw what the commendation of John was. They knew not what answer to make to Christ's question; well, says Christ, "I will tell you what a man John the Baptist was;"

1. "He was a firm, resolute man, and not a reed shaken with the wind; you have been so in your thoughts of him, but he was not so. He was not wavering in his principles, nor uneven in his conversation; but was remarkable for his steadiness and constant consistency with himself." They who are weak as reeds will be shaken as reeds; but John was strong in spirit, Eph. 4. 14. When the wind of popular applause on the one hand blew fresh and fair, when the storm of Herod's rage on the other hand grew fierce and threatening, John was still the same, the same in all weathers. The testimony he had borne to Christ was not the testimony of a reed, of a man who would fold up his boat and run away to morrow; it was not a weather-cock testimony; no, his constancy in it is intimated; (John 1. 20.) he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, and stood to it afterwards, John 3. 28. And therefore this question sent by his disciples was not to be construed into any suspicion of the truth of what he had formerly said: therefore the people flocked to him, because he was true. Note, They who are loose in the long run by an unshaken resolution to go on with our work, neither courting the smiles, nor fearing the frowns of men. 2. He was a self-denying man, and mortified to this world. "Was he a man clothed in soft raiment?"
If so, you would not have gone into the wilderness to see him, but to the court. You went to see one that had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; his mien and habit shewed the legions of the world and the pleasures of sense; his clothing agreed with the wilderness he lived in, and the doctrine he preached there, that of repentance. Now you cannot think that he who was such a stranger to the pleasures of a court, should be brought to change his mind by the terrors of a prison, and now to question whether Jesus be the Messiah or not!" Note, they who have lived in the van of mortification, are least likely to be driven off from their religion by persecution. He was not a man clothed in soft raiment; such there are, but they are in kings' houses. Note, It becomes people in all their appearances to be consistent with their character, and their situation. They who are preachers must not affect to look like courtiers; nor must they whose lot is cast in common dwellings, be ambitious of the soft clothing which they wear who are in kings' houses. Prudence teaches us to be of a piece. John appeared rough and unpleasant, yet they flocked after him. Note, The remembrance of our former zeal in attending on the word of God, should quicken us to, and in our present work: let it not be said that we have done and suffered so many things in vain, have run in vain, and laboured in vain.

His greatest commendation of all was his office and ministry, which was more his honour than any personal endowments or qualifications could be; and therefore this is most enlarged upon in a full encomium.

(1.) He was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet; (v. 9.) so he said of him who was the great Prophet, to whom all the prophets bare witness. John said of himself, he was not that prophet, that great prophet, the Messiah himself; and now Christ appears, he is not more than a prophet. He owned himself inferior to Christ, and Christ owned him superior to all other prophets. Observe, The forerunner of Christ was not a king, but a prophet, lest it should seem that the kingdom of the Messiah had been laid in earthly power, but his immediate forerunner was as such, a transcendent prophet, more than an Old-Testament prophet; they all did virtually, but John exhibited Christ's soul's desire, and their vision was yet for a great while to come: but John saw the day dawn, he saw the sun rise, and told the people of the Messiah, as one that stood among them. They spake of Christ, but he pointed to him: they said, A virgin shall conceive, he said, Behold, the Lamb of God!

(2.) He was the same that was predicted to be Christ's forerunner, (v. 10.) This is he of whom it is written, He shall be called the Spirit of the Father; He was the forerunner of Christ, and therefore was greater than they. Malachi prophesied concerning John, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Herein some of Christ's honour was put upon him, that the Old-Testament prophets spake and wrote of him; and this honour have all the saints, that their names are written in the Lamb's book of life. It was great forerunners to John above all the prophets, that he was Christ's servant, and not mere prophet; that he was a forerunner, a messenger, one among a thousand, deriving his honour from him whose messenger he was; he is my messenger, sent of God, and sent before the Son of God. His business was to prepare Christ's way, to dispose people to receive the Saviour, by discovering to them their sin and misery, and their need of a Saviour. This he had said of himself, (John 1. 23.) and now Christ said it of him; intending hereby not only to put an honour upon John's ministry, but to revive people's regard to it, as making way for the Messiah. Note, Much of the beauty of God's dispensations lies in their mutual connection and coherence, and the reference they have one to another. That which advanced John above the Old-Testament prophets was, that he went immediately before Christ. Note, The nearer any arc to Christ, the more truly honourable they are.

(3.) There was not a greater born of women than John the Baptist, v. 11. Christ knew how to use persons according to the degrees of the truth, and he prefers John before the prophets before him, for all that were born of women by ordinary generation. Of all that God had raised up and called to any service in his church, John is the most eminent, even beyond Moses himself; for he began to preach the gospel-doctrine of remission of sin to those who are truly penitent; and he had more signal revelations from heaven than any of them had, for he saw the new heaven opened, and the dead saints come.] He also had greater authority in his ministry; almost the whole nation flocked to him: none rose on so great a design, or came on so noble an errand, as John did, or had such claims to a welcome reception. Many had been born of women that made a great figure in the world, but Christ prefers John before them. Note, Greatness is not to be measured by appearances and outward splendour, but they are the greatest men in the kingdom of heaven, those greatest saints, and those greatest blessings, who are, as John was great in the sight of the Lord, Luke 1. 15.

Yet this high encomium of John has a surprising limitation, notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [1.] In the kingdom of glory. John was a great and good man, but he was yet in a state of infirmity and imperfection, and therefore came short of glorified saints, and the spirits of just men made perfect. First, There are degrees of glory in heaven, some that are less than others there; though every vessel is alike full, all are not alike large and capacious. Secondly, The least saint in heaven is greater, and knows more, and loves more, and does more in praising God, and receives more from him, than the greatest in this world. The saints on earth are excellent ones, (Ps. 16. 3.) but those in heaven are much more excellent; the best in heaven are none other than those whose names are written in heaven, (v. 3.) there are no less there equal with the angels, (v. 8.) and the least there are equal to the Lord himself. Secondpart, this is to be observed, that blessed state, where the saur shall be as David, Zech. 12. 8. [2.] By the kingdom of heaven here, is rather to be understood the kingdom of grace, the gospel-dispensation in the perfection of its power and purity; and μισθοεῖν— he that is less in that is greater than John. Some understand it of Christ himself, who was younger than John, and, in the opinion of some, less than John, who always spoke diminishingly of himself; I am a worm, and no man, yet greater than John; so it agrees with what John the Baptist said, (John 1. 15.) He that cometh after me is preferred before me. But it is rather to be understood of the apostles and ministers of the New Testament, the evangelical prophets; and the comparison between them and John, is not with respect to their personal sanctity, but to their office: John preached Christ coming, but they preached Christ not only coming, but crucified and risen, and glorified; and, as an herald to the dawning of the gospel-day, and therein excelled the foregoing prophets, but he was taken off before the noon of that day, before the rending of the veil, before Christ's death and resurrection, and the pouring out of the Spirit; so that the least of the apostles and evangelists, having greater discoveries made to them, and being employed in a greater embassy, is greater than John. John did no miracles, that the apostles wrought many. The ground of this preference is laid in the preference of the New-Testament dispensations of grace, and those who ministered in that dispensation, were great and mighty: and, though the dispensations of the Old Testament were great, and the dispensations of the New Testament are great, yet the dispensations of the New Testament are greater.
angry contentment, thrusting others out of the kingdom of heaven, but with a holy contentment, thrusting themselves into it!

(5.) The ministry of John was the beginning of the gospel, as it is reckoned, Mark 1. 1. Acts 1. 22. The third John 1:2, 'by the way of things, that their glory

[1.] In John the Old Testament dispensation began to die, v. 13. So long that ministration continued in full force and virtue, but then it began to decline. Though the obligation of the law of Moses was not removed till Christ's death, yet the discoveries of the Old Testament began to be superseded by the more clear manifestation of the kingdom of heaven as at hand. Because the light of the gospel had already been let in to precede and make way for its laws, therefore the prophecies of the Old Testament came to an end (finis perficiens, not interieurs—an end of completion, not of duration,) before the precepts of it; so that when Christ says, all the prophecies and the law prophaned until John, he shows us, First, How the light of the Old Testament was set up; it was set up in the law and the prophets, Deut. 18. 15, 'They shall come in my name, and shall do no thing.' But he, secondly, as we have both the New-Testament doctrine to explain the Old-Testament prophecies, and the Old-Testament prophecies to confirm and illustrate the New-Testament doctrine: (Heb. 1. 1.) like the two cherubim, they look at each other. The law was given by Moses long ago, and there had been no prophets for three hundred years before them, and yet they are both said to prophesy until John, because the law was set up, and Moses and the prophets still read. Note, The scripture is teaching to this day, though the penmen of it are gone. Moses and the prophets are dead; the apostles and evangelists are dead, (Zech. 1. 5.) but the word of the Lord endures forever; (1 Pet. 1. 25.) the scripture is speaking expressly, though the writers are silent in the dust. Secondly, How this light was laid aside; when he says, they prophesied in the Spirit, they had been but men; and the Spirit of prophecy was eclipsed by the glory which excelled: their predictions superseded by John's testimony, Behold the Lamb of God! Even before the sun rises, the morning light makes candles to shine dim. Their prophecies of a Christ to come became out of date, when John said, He is come.

[2.] In him the New-Testament day began to dawn; for, (v. 14.) This is Elias, that was for to come. John was as the lamp which coupled the two Testaments; as Noah was Fibula utrinque mundi—the link connecting both worlds, so he utrinque Testamenti—the link connecting both Testaments. The concluding prophecy of the Old Testament was, Behold, I will send you Elias, Mal. 4. 5, 6. Those words prophesied until John, and then being turned into a history, they ceased to prophesy. First, Chris speaks of it as a great truth, that John the Baptist is the Elias of the New Testament: not Elias in proprid person—in his own person, as the carnal Jews expected; he denied that; (John 1. 21.) but one that should come in the spirit and power of Elias, (Luke 1. 17.) like him in temper and conversation, that should press repentance with tears, and especially as it is in the prophecy, that should gather his hearers in the same storm, in the same tempest, and under the same violence; and take possession of the same debtors. Secondly, He speaks of it as a truth, which would not be easily apprehended by those whose expectations fastened upon the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, and introductions to it acceptable. Christ suspect...
the welcome of it, if ye will receive it. Not but that it was true, whether they would receive it or not, but he upbraids them with their prejudices, that they were backward to receive the greatest truths that were opposed to their sentiments, though never so favourable to their interests. Or, "If you will receive him, or if you will receive the ministry of John as that of the promised Elias, he will be an Elias to you, to turn you and prepare you for the Lord." Note, Gospel-truths are, as they are received, a savour of life or death. Christ is a Saviour, and John an Elias, to those who will receive the truth contained in the one and the other.

Lastly, Our Lord Jesus closes this discourse with a solemn demand of attention, (v. 15.) He that hath ears to hear, let him hear: which intimates, that those things were dark and hard to be understood, and therefore needed attention, but of great concern and consequence, and therefore well deserved his notice. "Let all people take notice of this, if John be the Elias prophesied of, then certainly here is a great revolution on foot, the Messiah's kingdom is at the door, and the world will shortly be surprised into a happy change. These are things which require your serious consideration, and therefore you are all concerned to hearken to what I say." Note, The things of God are of great and common concern, every one that has ears to hear any thing, is concerned to hear this. It intimates, that God requires no more from us but the right use and improvement of the faculties he has already given us. He requires those to hear that have ears, those to use their reason that have reason. Therefore people are ignorant, not because they want power, but because they want will; therefore they do not hear, because, like the deaf adder, they stop their ears.

16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, 17. And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. 18. For John came neither eating nor drinking; and they say, He hath a devil. 19. The Son of man came eating and drinking; and they say, Behold a man glutinous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But Wisdom is justified of her children. 20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. 21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. 23. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee. 27

Christ was going on in the praise of John the Baptist and his ministry, but here stops on a sudden, and turns that to the reproach of those who enjoyed both that, and the ministry of Christ, and his apostles too, in vain. There is to that observation, we may observe to whom he compares them, (v. 16—19.) and as to the particular places he instances in, we may observe with whom he compares them, v. 20—24.

I. As to that generation, the body of the Jewish people at that time. There were many indeed that pressed into the kingdom of heaven; but the general continued and prevailing men was a great and good man, but the generation into which his lot was cast was as barren and unprofitable as could be, and unworthy of him. Note, The badness of the places where good ministers live serves for a foil to their beauty. It was Noah's praise that he was righteous in his generation. Having commended John, he condemns those who had him among them, and did not profit by his ministry. Note, The more praise-worthy the minister is, the more blame-worthy the people are, if they slight him, and so it will be found in the day of account.

This our Lord Jesus here sets forth in a parable, yet speaks as if he were at a loss to find out a similitude proper to represent this, Whereunto shall I liken this generation? Note, There is not a greater absurdity than that they are guilty of who have good preaching among them, and are never the better for it. It is hard to say what they are like. The similitude is taken from some common custom among the Jewish children at their play, who, as is usual with children, imitated the fashions of grown people at their marriages and funerals, rejoicing and lamenting; but being all a jest, it made no impression; no more did the ministry either of John the Baptist or of Christ upon that generation. He especially commends the Scribes and Pharisees, who had a proud conceit of themselves, therefore to humble them he compares them to children, and their behaviour to children's play.

The parable will be best explained by opening it and the illustration of it together in these five observations.

Note, 1. The God of heaven uses a variety of proper means and methods for the conversion and salvation of poor souls. He would not have it done, and therefore leaves no stone unturned in order to it. The great thing he aims at, is the melting of our wills into a compliance with the will of God, and in order to this, the affecting of us with the discoveries he has made of himself. Having various affections to be wrought upon, he uses various ways of working upon them, which, though differing one from another, all tend to the same end; and God is in them all carrying on the same design. In the parable, this is called his piping to us, and his mourning to us; he hath piped to us in the precious promises of the gospel, proper to work upon hope, and mourned to us in the dreadful threatenings of the law, proper to work upon fear, that he might frighten us out of our sins and allure us to himself. He has piped to us in gracious and merciful providences, mourned to us in calamitous, afflicting providences, and has set them one over against the other. He has taught his ministers to change their voice: (Gal. 4. 20.) sometimes to speak in thunder from mount Sinai, sometimes in a still small voice from mount Sion.

In the explanation of the parable is set forth the different temper of John's ministry and of Christ's, who were the two great lights of that generation.

(1.) On the one hand, John came mourning to them, neither eating nor drinking; not conversing familiarly with people, nor ordinarily eating in company, but alone, in his cell in the wilderness, where his meat was locusts and wild honey. Now this, one
would think, should work upon them; for such an
austere, mortified life as this, was very agreeable to
the doctrine he preached; and that minister is most
likely to do good, whose conversation is according to
his doctrine; and yet the preaching even of such a
man was not always effectual.
(2.) On the other hand, the Son of man came eat-
ing and drinking, and so he fished unto them. Christ
conversed familiarly with all sorts of people, not
affecting any peculiar strictness or austerity; he was
affable and easy of access, not sly of any company,
was often at feasts, both with Pharisees and Publi-
cans, to try if this would win upon those who were
not his friends; nor was John's religion, which were
not aved by John's browes, would be allured by
Christ's smiles; from whom St. Paul learned to
become all things to all men, 1 Cor. 9. 22. Now
our Lord Jesus, by this freedom, did not at all con-
demn John, any more than John did condemn him,
though their deportment was so very different.
Note, Though we are never so clear in the goodness
of our own practice, yet we must not judge of others
by it. There may be a great diversity of operations,
where it is the same God that worketh all in all, (1
Cor. 12. 6.) and this various manifestation of the
Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, v. 7.
Observe especially, that God's ministers are vari-
ously gifted: the ability and genius of some lies one
way, of others, another way: some are Bomberges—
sweetest things; others, Barnabases—sons of con-
solation; yet all are given to work this same Spirit,
(1 Cor. 12. 11.) and therefore we ought not to condemn either, but to praise both, and praise
God for both, who thus tris various ways of dealing
with persons of various tempers, that sinners may
be either made pliable or left inexcusable, so that
whatever the issue is, God will be glorified.
Note. 2. The various methods which God takes
for the conversion of sinners, are as on them: the sweet-
ests and the bitterest, the most liberal and the most
vindictive: Ye have not danced, ye have not lamented;
you have not been suitably affected either with the one
or with the other. Particular means have, as in medicine, their particular intentions, which must be answered, particular impressions, which must be submitted to, in order to the success
of the great and general design; now if people will
be conversant by laws, nor invited by promises, nor frightened by threatening, nor by the greatest things,
nor allured by the sweetest things, nor startled by the most terrible things, nor made sensible by the plainest things; if they will hearken to the voice neither of scripture,
nor reason, nor experience, nor providence, nor con-
science, nor interest, what more can be done? The
believers are burned, the lead is consumed, the founder
melts in vain; rephraze silver shall men call them, Jer.
6. 29. Ministers' labour is bestowed in vain, (Isa. 49. 4.)
and, which is a much greater loss, the grace of God received in vain, 2 Cor. 6. 1. Note,
It is some comfort to faithful ministers, when they
see little success of their labours, that it is no new
thing for the best preachers and best preaching in the
world to come short of the desired end. Why not therefore be our report? If He that called us be faith-
ful, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of those
great commanders, Christ and John, returned so
often empty, (2 Sam. 1. 22.) no marv if ours do so,
and we prophesy to so little purpose upon dry bones.
Note. 3. That commonly those persons who do
not profit by the means of grace, are perverse, and
reflect upon the ministers or whom they enjoy those
means, and thereby may get good themselves; they
do all the hurt they can to others, by raising and
propagating prejudices against the word, and the faith-
ful preachers of it. Those who will not comply with
God, and walk after him, confront him, and
walk contrary to him. So this generation did;
because they were resolved not to believe Christ
and John, and to own them as they ought to have
done for the best of men, they set themselves to
abuse them, and to represent them as the worst.
(1.) As for John the Baptist, they say, He has a
devil. That he was afflicted with melancholy, and
some kind or degree of a possession of Satan. "Why should we heed him? he is a poor hypochondriacal man, full of fancies, and under
the power of a crazed imagination." (2.) As for
Jesus Christ, they imputed his free and obliging con-
versation to the more vicious habit of luxury and
flesh-pleasing; Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-
Drunkard, how can his deportment be con-
trary; it is the charge against the rebellious son,
(Deut. 21. 20.) He is a glutton and a drunkard;
and yet none could be more false and unjust; for Christ
pleased not himself, (Rom. 15. 3.) nor did ever any
man live such a life of self-denial, mortification, and
contempt of the world, as Christ lived; he that was
unfiled, and separate from sinners, is here repre-
sented as in league with them, and polluted by them.
Note. They are dispossessed of some of their own
riches, and the unparallelled excellency, will not always be a fence against the reproach of tongues: nay, a man's best
gifts and best actions, which are both well intended
and well calculated for edification, may be made the
matter of his reproach. The best of our actions may
become the worst of our accusations, as David's
fasting, Ps. 69. 10. It was true in some sense, that
Christ was a Friend to publicans and sinners; the best
Friend they ever had, for he came into the world
to save sinners, great sinners, even the chief; so
he said very feelingly, who had been himself not a pub-
ican and sinner, but a Pharisee and sinner; but this
is, and will be to eternity, Christ's praise, and they
forfeited the benefit of it who thus turned it to his
reproach.
Note. 3. That the cause of this great unfruitful-
ness and perverseness of people under the means of
grace, is because they are like children sitting in the
markets; they are foolish as children, froward as
children, mindless and playful as children; would
they but show themselves men in understanding, there
would be some hopes of them. The market-place
they sit in, is to some a place of idleness; (eb. 20. 3.)
to others a place of worldly business; (James 4. 13.)
to others it is to some a place of sin; and we ask the reason why people get so little good by the
means of grace, you will find it is, because they are
slothful and trifling, and do not love to take pains;
or because their heads, and hands, and hearts
are full of the world, the cares of which choke the
word, and choke their souls at last, (Ezek. 33. 31. Amos
8. 5.) and they study to divert their own thoughts
from every thing that is serious. Thus in the mar-
kets they are, and there they sit; in these things
their hearts rest, and by them they resolve to abide.
Note. 5. Though the means of grace be thus slighted and abused by many, by the most, yet there
is a remnant that, through grace, do improve them,
and answer the designs of them, to the glory of God,
and the good of their own souls. But wisdom is jus-
tified by all her children. Christ is Wisdom; in him
he hid treasures of wisdom; the saints are the children
God has given him, Heb. 2. 13. The gospel is wis-
dom, it is the wisdom from above: true believers
are begotten again by it, and born from above too:
you are wise children, wise for themselves, and their
true interests; not like the foolish children that sat
at the markets. These children of wisdom justify wisdom, they enjoy the benefits of wisdom, and
without the intentions of it, and are suitably affected
with, and impressed by, the various methods it
takes, and so evidence the wisdom of Christ in taking
these methods. This is explained, Luke 7. 29. The
publicans justified God, being baptized with the bap-

tion of John, and afterwards embracing the gospel of Christ. Note, The success of the means of grace justifies the wisdom of God, in the choice of these means, against those who charge him with folly therein. The care of every patient, that observes the physician's orders, justifies the wisdom of the physician: and therefore Paul is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because whatever it is to others, that Nazianzen says, has been to him "a perfection renovation, Rom. 1. 16. When the cross of Christ, which to others is foolishness and a stumbling-block, is to them that are called the wisdom of God, and the power of God, (1 Cor. 1. 23, 24,) so that they make the knowledge of that, the summit of their ambition, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) and the efficacy of that, the crown of their glorying, (Gal. 6. 14.) here is wisdom justified. Her children are taught by this wisdom to reflect upon the children of the world, (Isa. 44, 20,) and shall be produced as witnesses in that day, when wisdom, that is now justified by the saints, shall be glorified in the saints, and admired in all them that believe, 2 Thess. 1. 10. If the unbelief of some reproach Christ, by giving him the lie; the faith of others shall honour him, by setting to its seal that he is true, and that he also is wise, 1 Cor. 1. 23. Whether we applaud it, it will be done; not only God's equity, but his wisdom, will be justified when he speaks, when he judges. Well, this is the account Christ gives of that generation, and that generation is not passed away, but remains in a succession of the like; for as it was then, it has been since and is still; some believe the things which are spoken, and some believe not, Acts 28. 24. II. As to the particular places in which Christ was most conversant. What he said in general of that generation, he applied in particular to those places, to affect them. Then began he to upbraid them, v. 20. He began to preach to them long before, (ch. 4. 17,) but he did not begin to upbraid till now. Note, Rough and unpleasing methods must not be taken, till gentler means have first been used. Christ is not apt to upbraid; he gives liberally, and upbraideth not, till sinners by their obstinacy extort it from him. Wisdom first invites, but when her invitations are slighted, then she upbraids, Prov. 1. 20, 24. Those do not go in Christ's method, who begin with upbraidings. Now observe, 1. The sin charged upon them; not any against the moral law, then an appeal would have lain to the gospel, which would have relieved, but a sin against the gospel, the remedial law, and that is impiety among the Christians, and this way of dealing with them was brought upon them, for the most shameful, ungrateful thing that could be, that they repented not. Note, Willful impiety is the great damning sin of multitudes that enjoy the gospel, and which (more than any other) sinners will be upbraided with to eternity. The great doctrine that both John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles preached, was repentance; and Christ so designed, both in the John and in the Parable, as to prevail with people to change their minds and ways to leave their sins and turn to God; and this they would not be brought to. He does not say, because they believed not; for some kind of faith many of them had, that Christ was a Teacher come from God; but, because they repented not; their faith did not prevail to the transforming of their hearts, and the reforming of their lives. Our faith will never do any thing for our other sins, that might lead them to repentance; but when they repented not, He upbraided them with that, as their refusal to be healed: He upbraided them with it, that they might upbraid themselves, and might at length see the folly of it, as that which alone makes the sad case a desperate one, and the wound incurable.

2. The aggravation of the sin; they were the cities in which most of his mighty works were done; for thence he his principal residence had been for some time. Note, Some places enjoy the means of grace in greater plenty, power, and purity, than other places. God is a free Agent, and acts so in all his dispositions, both as the God of grace, and the God of grace, and distinguishing grace. When Christ's mighty works, they should have been prevailed with, not only to receive his doctrine, but to obey his law; the curing of bodily diseases should have been the healing of their souls, but it had not that effect. Note, The stronger inducements we have to repent, the more heinous is the impiety, and the severer will the recompensing be; for Christ keeps account of the mighty works done for us too, by which also we should be led to repentance, Rom. 2. 4.

(1.) Chorazin and Bethsaida are here instanced, (v. 21, 22,) they have each of them their woe: We unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida. Christ came into the world to bless us, but if that blessing be slighted, he has woes in reserve, and his woes are of all other the most terrible. These two cities were situated upon the sea of Galilee, the former on the east side, and the latter on the west, rich and populous places; Bethsaida was lately advanced to a city by Philip the tetrarch; out of it Christ took at least three of his apostles; thus highly were these places favoured! Yet because they knew not the day of their visitation, they fell under these woes, which stuck so close to them, that soon after this, they decayed, and dwindled into mean, obscure villages, so fatally as in ruin cities, and so certainly does the work of Christ take place!

Now Chorazin and Bethsaida are here compared with Tyre and Sidon, two maritime cities we read much of in the Old Testament, that had been brought to ruin, but began to flourish again; these cities bordered upon Galilee, but were in a very ill name among the Jews for idolatry and other wickedness. Christ sometimes went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, (ch. 15. 21,) but never tolerated; the Jews would have taken it very heinous if he had; therefore Christ, to convince and humble them, here shows,

[1.] That Tyre and Sidon would not have been so bad as Chorazin and Bethsaida. If they had had the same word preached, and the same miracles wrought among them, they would have repented, and that long ago, as Nineveh did when God showed them the hearts of all, knew that if he had gone and lived among them, and preached among them, he should have done more good there, than where he was; yet he continued where he was for some time, to encourage his ministers to do so, though they see not the success they desire. Note, among the children of disobedience, some are more easily won than others; and it is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any that the whole world of them, by the means of grace, not only see that there are many who sit under the same means that are wrought upon, but that there are many more that have been wrought upon, if they had enjoyed the same means. See Ezek. 3. 6, 7. Our repentance is slow and delayed, but theirs would have been speedy, they would have repented long ago. Ours has been slight and superficial, theirs would have been deep and solid, and thorough. You must observe, with an awful adoration of the divine sovereignty, that the Tyrians and Sidonians will justly perish in their sin, though, if they had had the means of grace, they would have repented; for God is a debtor to no man.

[2.] That therefore Tyre and Sidon shall not be so miserable as Chorazin and Bethsaida, but it shall be more tolerable for them in the day of judgment,
v. 25. Note, First, At the day of judgment the everlasting state of the children of men will, by an unerring and unalterable doom, be determined; happiness or misery, and the several degrees of each. Therefore it is called the eternal judgment, (Heb. 6. 2.) because decisive of the everlasting condition of the soul. Secondly, In that judgment, all the means of grace that were enjoyed in the state of probation will certainly come into the account, and it will be inquired, not only how bad we were, but how much better we might have been, had it not been our own fault, Isa. 3. 3, 4. Thirdly, Though the damnation of all that perish will be intolerable, yet the damnation of those who had the fullest and clearest discoveries made them of the power and grace of Christ, and yet repented not, will be of all other the most intolerable. The gospel-light and sound open the faculties, and enlarge the capacities of all that see and hear it, either to receive the riches of divine grace, or (as that grace be slighted) to take in the most plentiful effusions of divine wrath. If self-reproach be the torture of hell, it must needs be hell indeed to those who had such a fair opportunity of getting to heaven. Son, remember that.

(2.) Capernaum is here condemned with an emphasis, (v. 25.) “And thou, Capernaum, hold up thy hand, and hear thy doom.” Capernaum, above all the cities of Israel, was dignified with Christ’s most honourable residence; it was like Shiloh of old, the place where his chosen people were, and it shed with it as with Shiloh. Jer. 7. 12, 14. Christ’s miracles here were daily bread, and therefore, as the manna of old, were despised, and called light bread. Many a sweet and comfortable lecture of grace Christ had read them to little purpose, and therefore here he renders it a dreadful lecture of wrath: these who will not hear the former, shall be made to feel the latter.

We have here Capernaum’s doom,

[1.] Put absolutely: Thon which are exalted to heaven, shall be brought down to hell. Note, First, Those who enjoy the gospel in power and purity, are thereby exalted to heaven; they have therein a great honour for the present, and a great advantage for eternity; they are lifted up toward heaven; but it is with a curse, for these, though they cleave to the earth, they may thank themselves that they are not lifted up into heaven. Secondly, Gospel-advantages and advancements abused, will sink sinners so much the lower into hell. Our external privileges will be far from saving us, that if our hearts and lives be not agreeable to them, they will but inflame the reckonings: the higher the precipice is, the more fatal is the fall from it: Let us not therefore be high-minded, but fear; not slothful, but diligent. See Job 20. 6, 7.

[2.] We have it here put in comparison with the doom of Sodom—a place more remarkable, both for sin and ruin, than perhaps any other; and yet Christ here tells us, First, That Capernaum’s means would have saved Sodom. If these miracles had been done among the Sodomites, as they were among the Capernaumites, and they were not repented, and their city would have remained unto this day a monument of sparing mercy, as now it is of destroying justice, Jude 7. Note, Upon true repentance through Christ, even the greatest sin shall be pardoned and the greatest ruin prevented, that of Sodom not excepted. Angels were sent to Sodom, and it was not repented; but if Christ had been sent thither, and had formed the people, how well is it for us, then that the world to come is put in subjection to Christ, and not to angels! Heb. 2. 5. Lot would not have seemed as one that mocked if he had wrought miracles.

Secondly, That Sodom’s ruin will therefore be less at the great day than Capernaum’s. Sodom will have many sins to answer for, but not the sin of neglecting Christ, as Capernaum will. If the gospel prove a savour of death, a killing savour, it is doubtless so; it is of death unto death, so a great death; (2 Cor. 2. 16.) Christ had said the same of all other places; that receive not his ministers nor bid his gospel wel come; (2 Thess. 3. 14.) It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom than for that city. We that have now the written word in our hands, the gospel preached, and the gospel-ordinances administered to us, and live under the dispensation of the Spirit, have advantages not inferior to those of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and the account in the great day will be accordingly. It has therefore been justly said, that the professors of this age, whether they go to heaven or hell, will be the greatest debtors in either of these places; if to heaven, the greatest debtors to divine mercy, for those rich means that brought them thither; if to hell, the greatest debtors to divine justice, for those rich means that would have kept them from thence.

25. At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: 26. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. 27. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. 28. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls: 30. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

In these verses we have Christ looking up to heaven, with thanksgiving to his Father for the sovereignty and security of the covenant of redemption; and looking around him upon this earth, with an offer to all the children of men, to whom these presents shall come, of the privileges and benefits of the covenant of grace.

I. Christ here returns thanks to God for his favour to these babes, who had the mysteries of the gospel revealed to them, (v. 25, 26.) Jesus answered and said. It is called an answer, though no other words are before recorded but his own, because it is so comfortable a reply to the melancholy considerations preceding, and is aptly set in the balance against them. The sin and ruin of those woful cities, no doubt, was a grief to the Lord Jesus; he could not but weep over them, as he did over Jerusalem; (Luke 19. 41.) with this thought therefore he refreshes himself. He could not but weep over Sodom, but he puts it into a thanksgiving; that for all this, though a remnant, though but babes, to whom the things of the gospel are revealed: though Israel be not gathered, yet shall he be glorious. Note, We may take great encouragement in looking upward to God, when round about us we see nothing but what is discouraging. It is sad to see how regardless most men are of their own happiness, but it is comfortable to think that the wise and faithful God will, however, effectually secure the interests of his own glory. Jesus answered and said, I thank thee. Note, Thanksgiving is a proper answer to dark and disquieting thoughts, and may be an effectual means to silence them. Songs of praise are sovereign cords to dropping souls, and will help to cure melancholy.
When we have no other answer ready to the suggestions of grief and fear, we may have recourse to this, I thank thee, O Father; let us bless God that it is not worse with us than it is.

Now in this thanksgiving of Christ, we may observe,

1. The titles he gives to God; O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. Note, (1.) In all our approaches to God, by praise as well as by prayer, it is good for us to eye him as a Father, and to fasten on that relation, not only when we ask for the mercies we want, but when we give thanks for the mercies we have received. Mercies are then doubly sweet, and powerful to enlarge the heart in praise, when the are backsliding and deviating from the order of our Father's hand: Giving thanks to the Father; Col. 1. 12. It becomes children to be grateful, and to say, Thank you, father, as readily as, Pray, father. (2.) When we come to God as a Father, we must withal remember, that he is Lord of heaven and earth; which obliges us to come to him with reverence, as to the sovereign Lord of all, and yet with confidence, as one able to do us whatever we need or can desire; to defend us from all evil and to supply us with all good. Christ, in Melchizedec, had long since blessed God as the Possessor, or Lord of heaven and earth; and in all our thanksgivings for mercies in the stream, we must give him the glory of the all-sufficiency that is in the fountain.

2. The thing he gives thanks for: Because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. These things he does not say what things, but means the great things of the gospel, the things that belong to our peace, Luke 18. 42. He speaks thus emphatically of them, these things, because they were things that filled him and should fill us; all other things are as nothing to these things.

Note, (1.) The great things of the everlasting gospel have been and are hid from many that were wise and prudent, and yet revealed them to babes. These things he does not say what things, but means the great things of the gospel, the things that belong to our peace, Luke 18. 42. He speaks thus emphatically of them, these things, because they were things that filled him and should fill us; all other things are as nothing to these things.

(2.) While the wise and prudent men of the world are in the dark about gospel mysteries, even the babes in Christ have the sanctifying, saving knowledge of them: Thou hast revealed them unto babes. That is, the disciples of Christ were: men of mean birth and education; no scholars, no artists, no politicians, unlearned and ignorant men, Acts 4. 13. Thus are the secrets of wisdom which are double to that which is, (John 11. 6.) made known to babes and sucklings, that out of their mouth strength might be ordained, (Ps. 8. 2.) and God's praise thereby perfected. The learned men of the world were not made choice of to be the preachers of the gospel, but he hath chosen the foolish things of the world, 1 Cor. 2. 6, 10.

(3.) This difference between the wise and the foolish is of God's own making. (1.) It is he that has hid these things from the wise and prudent; he gave them parts, and learning, and much of human understanding above others, and they were proud of that, and rested in it, and looked no further; and therefore God justly denies them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and then, though they hear the sound of the gospel-tidings, they are to them as a strange thing. God is not the Author of their ignorance and error, but he leaves them to themselves, and their sin becomes their punishment, and the Lord is righteous in it. See John 12. 39, 40. Rom. 11. 7, 8. Acts 28. 26, 27. Had they honoured God with the wisdom and prudence they had, he would have given them the knowledge of these things; but because they served their lusts with them, he has hid their hearts from this understanding. (2.) It is he that has revealed them unto babes. Things revealed belong to our children, (Deut. 29. 29.) and to them he gives an understanding to receive these things, and the impressions of them. Thus he resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble, Jam. 4. 6. (3.) This is that which nothing but a revelation from the divine sovereignty, Christ himself reveals to them, that; Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Christ here subscribes to the will of his Father in this matter; Even so. Let God take what way he pleases to glorify himself, and make use of what instruments he pleases for the carrying on of his own work; his grace is his own, and he may give or withhold it as he pleases. We can give no reason why Peter, a fisherman, should be made an apostle, and not Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, though he also believed in Christ; but so it seemed good in God's sight. Christ said this in the hearing of his disciples, to show them that it was not for any merit of their own, that they were thus dignified and distinguished, but purely from God's good pleasure he made them to differ.

(5.) This way of dispensing divine grace is to be acknowledged by us, as it was by our Lord Jesus, with all thankfulness. We must thank God, [1.] That these things are revealed; the mystery hid from ages and generations is manifested; that they are revealed, not to a few, but to be published to all the world. [2.] That they are revealed to babes, that the meek and humble are beautified with this salvation; and this honour put upon them whom the world pours contempt upon. [3.] It magnifies the mercy to them, that these things are hid from the wise and prudent; distinguishing favours are most obliging. As Job adored the name of the Lord in taking away as well as in giving, so may we in hiding these things from the wise and prudent, as well as in revealing them unto babes; not as it is their misery, but as it is a method by which self is abased, proud thoughts brought down, all flesh silenced, and divine power and wisdom made to shine the more, 1 Cor. 2. 6, 7.

II. Christ here makes a gracious offer of the benefits of the gospel to all, and these are the things which are revealed to babes, v. 27, &c. Observe here,

1. The solemn preface which ushered in this call or invitation, both to command our attention to it, and to encourage our compliance with it. That we might have strong consolation, in flying for refuge to him, who before us, Christ prefixed his authority, produces his credentials; shall we see he is empowered to make this offer.

Two things he here lays before us, v. 27.

(1.) His commission from the Father: All things are delivered unto me of my Father. Christ, as God, is equal in power and glory with the Father; but as Mediator, he receives his power and glory from the Father; has all judgment committed to him. He is in a sense the judge between God and man, and to offer peace and happiness to the apostate world, upon such terms as he should think fit: he was sanctified and sealed to be the sole Mediator, to concert and establish this great affair. In order to this, he has all power both in heaven and earth; (ch. 28. 18.) power over all flesh; (John 17. 2.) authority to execute judgment, John 5. 22, 27. This encourages us to come to Christ, that he is commissioned to receive
us, and to give us what we come for, and has all things delivered to him for that purpose, by him who is Lord of all.

All powers, all treasures are in his hand. Observe, The Father has delivered his all into the hands of the Lord Jesus; let us but deliver our all into his hand, and the work is done. God has given wise judges and zealous Referees, blessed Daysmen, to lay his hand upon us both: that which we have to do is to agree to the reference, to submit to the arbitration of the Lord Jesus, for the taking up of this unhappy controversy, and to enter into bonds to stand to his award.

(2.) His intimacy with the Father: Ab man knoweth the Son but the Father. As God knew his Son, so the Father knew man the Father saves the Son. This gives us a further satisfaction, and an abundant one. Ambassadors use to have not only their commissions, which they produce, but their instructions, which they reserve to themselves, to be made use of as there is occasion in their negotiations: our Lord Jesus had both, not only authority, but ability, for his undertaking. In transacting the great business of our deliverance, the Father and the Son were parties principally concerned: the counsel of peace is between them, Zech. 6. 13. It must therefore be a great encouragement to us to be assured, that they understood one another very well in this affair; that, he Father knew the Son, and the Son knew the Father, and both perfectly, (a mutual consciousness we may call it, between the Father and the Son,) so that there could be no mistake in the settling of this affair, after their foreknowledge, the overthow of contracts, and the breaking of the measures taken, through their misunderstanding one another. The Son had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, he was a secretarius— of the cabinet-council, John 1. 18. He was by him, as one brought up with him, (Prov. 25. 30.) so that none knows the Father save the Son, he adds, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Note, (1.) The happiness of men lies in an acquaintance with God: it is life eternal, it is the perfection of rational beings. (2.) Those who would have an acquaintance with God, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ: for the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. 4. 6. We are obliged to Christ for all the revelation we have of God the Father’s will and love, ever since Adam sinned; there is no comfortable introduction to God and sinful man, but in and by a Mediator, John 14. 6.

2. Here is the offer itself that is made to us, and an invitation to accept of it. After so solemn a preface, we may well expect something very great: and it is so, a faithful saying, and well worthy of all acceptation; words whereby we may be saved. We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, in order to that, to be rul’d and taught, by him.

(1.) We must come to Jesus Christ as our Rest, and repose ourselves in him, (v. 28.) Come unto me, all ye that labour. Observe, [1.] The character of the persons invited; all that labour, and are heavy laden. This is a word in season to him that is wea
tired. Isa. 53. 5. The Christian’s maxim is, The yoke of the ceremonial law, which weakens, burdens, and debases the soul, is not to be endured, but to be laid off. (2.) The burden of sin, both the guilt and the power of it. Note, All those, and those only are invited to rest in Christ, that are sensible of sin as a burden, and groan under it, that are not only convinced of the evil of sin, of their own sin, but are contrite in soul for it; that are really sick of their sins, weary of the service of the world and of the flesh; that see their state sad and dangerous by reason of sin, and are in pain and fear about it, as Ephraim, (Jer. 31. 18—20.) the prodigal, (Luke 15. 17.) the publican, (Luke 18. 13.) Peter’s heart, (Acts 2. 36.) Paul, (Acts 9. 4.) the publican, (Acts 15. 9.) the jailor, Acts 16, 29, 30. This is a necessary preparative for pardon and peace. The Comforter must first convunce; (John 16. 8.) I have torn, and then will heal.

[2.] The invitation itself: Come unto me. That glorious display of Christ’s greatness which we had, (v. 27.) as Lord of all, might frighten us from him, but this invitation will quiet our fears, and humble us, that we may touch the top of it and may live. Note, It is the duty and interest of weary and heavy laden sinners to come to Jesus Christ. Renouncing all those things which stand in opposition to him, or in competition with him, we must accept of him, as our Physician and Advocate, and give up ourselves to his conduct and government; freely willing to be led by him, to tell the end from the beginning, to do their business according to God’s terms. Come and cast that burden upon him, under which thou art heavy laden. This is the gospel call, The Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; Let him that is athirst come: Whoever will, let him come. 

[3.] The blessing promised to those that do come: I will give you rest. Christ is our Noah, whose name signifies rest, for this shall give us rest. Gen. 8. 20—21. Truly rest is good, (Gen. 49. 15.) especially to those that labour, and are heavy laden, Excl. 5. 12. Note, Jesus Christ will give assured rest to those weary souls, that by a lively faith come to him for it; rest from the terror of sin, in a well-grounded peace of conscience; rest from the power of sin, in a regular order of the soul, and its due government of itself: a rest in God, and a completeness of soul in his love, Ps. 118. 28—29. (This is that rest which remains for the people of God, (Heb. 4. 9.) begun in grace, and perfected in glory.

(2.) We must come to Jesus Christ as our ruler, and submit ourselves to him, (v. 29.) Take my yoke upon you. This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and Saviour, a Priest upon his throne. The rest he promises isa rest from the laborious yoke of sin, from the yoke of the service of God, and an obligation to the duty we owe to him. Note, Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke he expects we should take upon us and draw in. To call those who are weary and heavy laden, to take a yoke upon them, looks like adding affliction to the afflicted; but the pertinency of it lies in the word my: You are under a yoke which makes you weary, take that off and try mine, which will make you easy. Servants are said to be under the yoke, (1 Tim. 6. 1.) and subjects, 1 Kings 12. 10. To take Christ’s yoke upon us, is to put ourselves into the relation of servants and subjects to him, and then to conduct ourselves accordingly, in a conscientious obedience to all his commands, and a cheerful submission to all his disposals: it is to obey the gospel of his son, by taking upon you the yoke of the Lord: it is Christ’s yoke; the yoke he has approved, the yoke he offered himself drawn in before us, for he learned obedience, and which he does by his Spirit draw in with us, for he helpeth our infirmities, Rom. 8. 26. A yoke speaks some hardship, but if the beast must draw, the yoke helps him. Christ’s commands are all in our favour: we must take this yoke upon us to draw in it. We are yoked to work, and therefore must be diligent; we are yoked to submit, and therefore must be humble and patient; we are yoked together with our fellow-servants, and therefore must keep up the communion of saints: and the words
of the vine are as grapes, to those who are thus yoked.

Now this is the hardest part of our lesson, and therefore it is qualified, (v. 30.) My yoke is easy and my burden is light; you need not be afraid of it.

1. The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke; it is peaceful, not only easy, but gracious, so the word signifies; it is sweet and pleasant; there is nothing in it to gall the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but on the contrary, much to refresh us. It is a yoke that is lined with love. Such is the nature of all Christ's commands, so reasonable in them- selves, and all summed up in one word, and that a sweet word, love. So powerful are the assistance he gives us, so suitable the encouragements, and so strong the consolations that are to be found in the way of duty, that we may truly say, it is a yoke of pleasantness. It is easy to the new nature, very easy to him that understandeth, Prov. 14. 6. It may be a little hard at first, but it is easy afterwards; the love of God and the hope of heaven will make it easy.

2. The burden of Christ's cross is a light burden, very light: afflictions from Christ, which befall us as men; afflictions for Christ, which befall us as Christians; the latter are especially meant. This burden in itself is not justus, but grievous; yet as it is Christ's, it is light. Paul knew as much of it as any man, and he calls it light affliction, (2 Cor. 12. 7.) Christ's sympathy, (Isa. 63. 9. Dan. 3. 28.) and especially the Spirit's aids and comforts, (2 Cor. 1. 5.) make suffering for Christ, light and easy. As afflictions abound, and are prolonged, consolations abound, and are prolonged too. Let this therefore reconcile us to the difficulties, and help us over the discouragements, we may meet with, both in doing work and suffering work; though we may lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him.

3. We must come to Jesus Christ as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of him, ver. 29. Christ has erected a great school, and has invited us to be his scholars. We must enter ourselves, associate with his scholars, and daily attend the instructions he gives by his word and Spirit. We must converse much with what he said, and have it ready to use upon all occasions; the most convenient to what he did, and follow his steps, 1 Pet. 2. 21. Some make the following words, for I am meek and lowly in heart, to be the particular lesson we are required to learn from the example of Christ. We must learn of him to be meek and lowly, and must mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to him. We must so learn of Christ as to learn Christ, (Eph. 4. 20.) for he is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way, and All to All.

Two reasons are given why we must learn of Christ.

1. I am meek and lowly in heart, and therefore fit to teach you. First, He is meek, and can have compassion on the ignorant, whom others would be in a passion with. Many able teachers are hot and hasty, which is a great discouragement to those who are dull and slow; but Christ knows how to bear with such, and to open their understandings. His carriage toward his twelve disciples was a specimen of this; he was mild and gentle with them, and made the best of them; though they were heedless and forgetful, he was not extreme to mark their follies. Secondly, He is lowly in heart. He condescends to teach poor scholars, to teach novices; he chose disciples, not for merit, but for humility, and to open their understandings. He teaches the first principles, such things as are milk for babes; he stoops to the meanest capacities; he taught Ephraim to go, Hos. 11. 3. Who teaches like him? It is an encouragement to us to put ourselves to school to such a Teacher. This humility and meekness, is it qualifies him to be a Teacher, so it will be the best qualification of those who are to be taught by him; for the meek will guide in judgment, Ps. 25. 9.

2. You shall find rest to your souls. This promise is borrowed from Jer. 6. 16., for Christ delighted to express himself in the language of the prophets, to show the harmony between the two Testaments. Note, First, Rest for the soul is the most desirable rest; to have the soul to dwell at ease. Secondly, The only way, and a sure way to find rest for our souls, is, to sit at Christ's feet and hear his word. The way of duty is the way of rest. The understanding finds rest in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and is there abundantly satisfied, finding that wisdom in the gospel which has been sought for in vain throughout the whole creation, Job 28. 12. The truths Christ teaches are such as may vent our souls upon. The affections find rest in the love of God and Jesus Christ, and meet with that in them which gives them an abundant satisfaction; quietness and assurance for ever. And those satisfactions will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven, where we shall see and enjoy God immediately, shall see him as he is, and enjoy him as he is ours. This rest is to be had with Christ for all those who learn of him. Well, this is the substance and substance of the gospel-call and offer: we are here told, in a few words, what the Lord Jesus requires of us, and it agrees with what God said of him once and again. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. Christ's clearing of the law of the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath-day, and vindicating it from some supposititious notions advanced by the Jewish teachers; showing that works of necessity and mercy are to be done on that day, v. 1. 13. 11. The prudence, humility, and self-denial of our Lord Jesus in working his miracles, v. 14. . . . 21. 11. Christ's answer to the blasphemous cards and calumnies of the Scribes and Pharisees, who imputed his casting out devils to a compact with the Devil, v. 22. . . . 37. IV. Christ's reply to a tempting demand of the Scribes and Pharisees, challenging him to show them a sign from heaven, v. 38. . . . 45. 1. Christ's judgment about his kindred and relations, v. 46. . . . 50.

1. At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath-day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath-day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5. Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath-days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? 6. But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. 7. But if ye have known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned
the guiltless. 8. For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day. 9. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: 10. And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-days? that they might accuse him. 11. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay it hold on, and lift it out? 12. How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-days! 13. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

The Jewish teachers had corrupted many of the commandments, by interpreting them more loosely than they were intended; a mistake which Christ discovered and rectified, (ch. 5.) in his sermon on the mount. In the fourth commandment, they had erred in the other extreme, and interpreted it too strictly. Note, It is common for men of corrupt minds, by their zeal in rituals, and the external services of religion, to think to atone for the looseness of their morals. But they are cursed who add to, as well as who take from, the words of this book, Rev. 22. 16, 19. Prov. 30. 6.

Note, that which our Lord Jesus here lays down is, that the works of necessity and mercy are lawful on the Sabbath-day, which the Jews in many instances were taught to make a scruple of. Christ's indubious explanation of the fourth commandment, intimates its perpetual obligation to the religious observance of one day in seven, as a holy sabbath. He would not expound a law that was immediately to expire, but doubtless intended hereby to settle a point which would be of use to his church in all ages; and so it is to teach us, that our christian sabbath, though under the direction of the fourth commandment, is not under the injunctions of the Jewish elders.

It is usual to settle the meaning of a law by judgments given upon cases that happen in fact, and in like manner is the meaning of this law settled. Here are two passages of story put together for this purpose, happening at some distance of time from each other, and of a different nature, but both answering this intention.

1. Christ, by justifying his disciples in plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, shows that works of necessity are lawful on that day. Now he saith,

1. What it was that the disciples did. They were following their Master one sabbath-day through a corn-field; it is likely they were going to the synagogue, (v. 9.) for it becomes not Christ's disciples to take idle walks on that day,) and they were hungry; let it be no disparagement to our Master's housekeeping. But we will suppose they were so intent upon the sabbath-work, that they forgot to eat bread; and spent so much time in their morning worship, that they had no time for their morning meal, but came out fasting, because they would not come late to the synagogue. Providence ordered it that they went through the corn, and there they were supplied. Note, God has many ways of bringing suitable provision to his people when they need it, and will take particular care of them when they are going to the synagogue, as of old for them that went up to Jerusalem to worship, (Ps. 84. 6, 7.) for whose use the rain filled the pools: while we are in our way of duty, Jehovah-Jireh, let God provide for us. Being in the corn-fields, they began to pluck the ears of corn; the law of God allowed this, (Deut. 23. 25.) to teach people to be neighbourly, and not to insist upon property in a small matter, whereby another may be benefited. This was but slender provision for Christ and his disciples, but it was the best they had; and they were content with it. The famous Mr. Ball, of Ayr, used to say he had two dishes of meat to his sabbath-dinner, a dish of hot milk, and a dish of cold, and he had enough and enough.

2. What was the offence that the Pharisees took at this. It was but a dry breakfast, yet the Pharisees would not let them eat that in quietness. They did not quarrel with them for taking another man's corn, (they were no great zealots for justice,) but for doing it on the sabbath-day; for plucking and rubbing the ears of corn on that day, was expressly forbidden by the tradition of the elders, for this reason, because it was a kind of reaping. Note, It is no new thing for the most harmless and innocent actions of Christ's disciples to be evil spoken of and reflected upon as unlawful, especially by those who are zealous for their own inventions and impositions. The Pharisees and Scribes had the strictness of the sabbath-day, for doing that which it was not lawful to do. Note, These are no friends to Christ and his disciples, who make that to be unlawful which God has not made to be so.

3. What was Christ's answer to this cavil of the Pharisees. The disciples could say little for themselves, especially because those who quarrelled with them were no strangers to the strictness of the sabbath-sanctification on their side; and it is safest to err on that hand: but Christ came to free his followers, not only from the corruptions of the Pharisees, but from their unscriptural impositions, and therefore has something to say for them, and justifies what they did, though it was a transgression of the canon.

(1.) He justifies them by precedents, which were allowed to be good by the Pharisees themselves.

1. [The] 12. Man must eat, even David, who in a case of necessity did that which otherwise he ought not to have done; (v. 3, 4.) "Have ye not read the story (1 Sam. 21. &c.) of David's eating the shew-bread, which by the law was appropriated to the priest? (Lev. 24. 5—9.) It is most holy to Aaron and his sons; and (Exod. 29. 33.) a stranger shall not eat of it; yet the priest gave it to David and his men." For though the exception of a case of necessity was not expressed, yet it was implied in that and all other ritual institutions. That which bere out David in eating the shew-bread was not his dignity, (Uzziah, that invaded the priest's office in the pride of his heart, though a king, was struck with a leprosy for it, 2 Chron. 26. 16,) but his hunger. The greatest shall not have their lusts indulged, (2 Chron. 16. 17,) but shall hunger. "But hunger is a natural desire which cannot be mortified, but must be gratified, and cannot be put off with any thing but meat; therefore we say, It will break through stone walls. Now the Lord is for the body, and allowed his own appointment to be dispensed with in a case of distress; much more might the tradition of the elders be dispensed with. Note, That may be done in a case of necessity which may be done in time; there are laws which necessity has not, but it is a law to itself. Men do not desist, but pity, a thief that steals to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, Prov. 6. 30.

2. He urges a daily instance of the priests, which they likewise read in the law, and according to which was the constant usage, v. 5. The priests
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in the temple did a great deal of servile work on the sabbath-day; killing, flattering, burning, the sacrificed beasts, which in a command too would have been profaning the sabbath; and yet it was never reckoned any transgression of the fourth commandment, because the temple-service required and justified it. This intimates, that those labours are lawful on the sabbath-day which are necessary, not only to the support of life, but to the service of the day; as tolling a bell to call the congregation together, transfer to church, and the like that rests is to promote, not to hinder, sabbath-worship.

(2.) He justifies them by arguments, three cogent ones.

[1.] In this place is one greater than the temple, v. 6. If the temple-service would justify what the priests did in their ministration, the service of Christ would much more justify the disciples in what they did in their attendance upon him. The Jews had an innumerable by them the temple, it sanctified the gold; Stephen was accused for blasphemying that holy place; (Acts 6. 13.) but Christ, in a corn-field, was greater than the temple, for in him dwelt not the presence of God symbolically, but all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Note, If, whatever we do, we do it in the name of Christ, and as unto him, it shall be graciously accepted of God, however it may be remarkable and censured by men.

[2.] God will have mercy, and not sacrifice, v. 7. Ceremonial duties must give way to moral, and the natural, royal law of love and self-preservation must take place of ritual observances. This is quoted from Hos. 6. 6. It was used before, ch. 9. 13. in vindication of mercy to the souls of men; here, of mercy to their bodies. The rest of the sabbath was ordained for man's good, in favour of the body, Dent. 5. 14. Now no law was constructed so as to contradist its own end. If you had known what this means, you would have been sorry that they were forced to do this to satisfy their hunger, and would not have condemned the guiltless. Note, First, Ignorance is the cause of our rash and uncharitable censures of our brethren. Secondly, It is not enough for us to know the scriptures, but we must labour to know them in such a manner as to understand them. Thirdly, Ignorance of the meaning of the scripture is especially shameful in those who take upon them to teach others.

[3.] The Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath-day, v. 8. That law, as all the rest, is put into the hand of Christ, to be altered, enforced, or dispensed with, as he sees good. It was by the Son that God made the world, and by him he instituted the sabbath, and in his name he gave the fourth commandment at Mount Sinai, and as Mediator he is intrusted with the institution of ordinances, and to make what changes he thought fit; and particularly, as being Lord of the sabbath, he was authorized to make such an alteration of that day, as that it should become the Lord's day, the Lord Christ's day. And if Christ be the Lord of the sabbath, it is fit the day and all the work of it should be dedicated to him. By virtue of this power, Christ here enacts, that works of necessity, if they be really such, and not a pretended and self-created necessity, are lawful on the sabbath-day; and this explanation of the law plainly shows that it was to be perpetual. Exege
tio fihmat regulam.—The execution confirms the rule.

Christ having thus silenced the Pharisees, and got clear of them, (v. 9.) departed, and went into their synagogue, the synagogue of these Pharisees, in order to dispute with them as he went along; they asked him, when they picked this quarrel with him. Note, First, We must take heed lest any thing that occurs in our way to holy ordinances unfit us for, or divert us from, our due attendances on them. Let us proceed in the way of our duty, notwithstanding the artifices of Satan, who endeavours by false men of corrupt minds, and many other ways, to ruffle and discompose us. Secondly, We must not, for the sake of private feuds and personal piques, draw back from public worship. Though the Pharisees had thus maliciously cavilled at Christ, yet he went into their synagogue. Satan gains his point, if, by sowing discord among brethren, he prevail to drive them, or any of them, from the synagogue, and so to discommode the faithful.

II. Christ, by healing the man that had the wither-

ed hand on the sabbath-day, shows that works of mercy are lawful and proper to be done on that day. The work of necessity was done by the disciples, and justified by him; the work of mercy was done by himself; the works of mercy were his works of necessity; it was his meat and drink to do good. I must preach, says he, Luke 4. 18. This cure is recorded for the sake of the time when it was wrought, on the sabbath.

Here is, 1. The affliction that this poor man was in; his hand was withered so that he was utterly disabled to get his living by working with his hands. St. Jerome says, that the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, used by the Nazarenes and Ebiennites, adds this circumstance to this story of the man with the withered hand, that he was a cobbler, and applied himself to Christ thus: Lord, I am a cobbler, and have got my living by my labour; (manibus victam guaritas;) I beseech thee, O Jesus, restore me the use of my hand, that I may not be obliged to beg my bread, (ne turgifer mendicem cives.) Hieron, in loc. This poor man was in the synagogue. Note, Those who can do but little, or have but little to do for the world, must take no more of their souls as the rich, the aged, and the infirm.

2. A profitable question which the Pharisees put to Christ upon the sight of this man. They asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal? We read not here of any address this poor man made to Christ for a cure, but they observed Christ begin to take notice of him, and knew it was usual for him to be found of those that sought him not, and therefore with their eyes watched him, and made this question, if in this case as a stumbling-block in the way of doing good; Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? Whether it was lawful for physicians to heal on that day or not, which was the thing disputed in their books, one would think it past dispute, that it is lawful for prophets to heal, for him to heal who discovered a divine power and goodness in all he did of this kind, and manifested himself to be sent of God. Christ answered, was ever any man, whether it be lawful to heal, to send his word and heal? It is true, Christ was now made under the law, by a voluntary submission to it, but he was never made under the precepts of the elders. Is it lawful to heal? To inquire into the lawfulness and unlawfulness of actions is very good, and we cannot apply ourselves to any with such inquiries more fitly than to Christ; but they asked here, not that they might be instructed by him, but that they might accuse him. If he should say that it was lawful to heal on the sabbath-day, they would accuse him of a contradiction to the fourth commandment; so to great a degree of superstition had the Pharisees brought the sabbath-rest, that, unless in private of life, they allowed not any medicinal operations on the sabbath-day. If he should say that it was not lawful, they would accuse him of partiality, having lately justified his disciples in violation of the laws of corn. If he the ears of corn.

3. Christ's answer to this question, by way of appeal to themselves, and their own opinion and practice, v. 11, 12. In case a thief (though but one, of which the less would not be very great) should fall
14. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. 15. But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew from them: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; 16. And charged them that they should not make him known: 17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 18. Behold, my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment unto the Gentiles. 19. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

As in the midst of Christ's greatest humiliations, there were proofs of his dignity, so in the midst of his greatest honours, he gave proofs of his humility; and when there was no sick man, yet did he give him an opportunity of making a figure, yet he made it appear that he emptied himself, and made himself of no reputation. Here we have,

I. The cursed malice of the Pharisees against Christ; (v. 14.) being enraged at the convincing evidence of his miracles, they went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. That which vexed them was, not only that his miracles had honored God and theirs, but that the doctrine he preached was directly opposite to their pride, and hypocrisy, and worldly interest; but they pretended to be displeased at his breaking the sabbath-day, which was by the law a capital crime, Exod. 33. 2. Note, It is no new thing to see the vilest practices cloaked with the most specious pretences. Observe their policy; they took counsel about it, considered with themselves which way to do it effectually; they took counsel together in a close cabal about it, that they might both animate and assist one another. Observe their cruelty; they took counsel, not to imprison or banish him, but to destroy him, to be the death of him who canae that we might have life. What an indignity was hereby put upon our Lord Jesus, to run him down as an outlaw, (qui caput certum lexipatinum—carries a wolf's head,) and the plague of his country, who was the greatest Blessing of it, the Glory of his people Israel!

II. Christ's absconding upon this occasion, and the privacy he chose, to decline, not his work, but his danger; because his hour was not yet come, (v. 15.) he withdrew himself from them. He could have secured himself by miracle, but chose to do it in the common way of flight and retirement by grace in this, as in other things, he would submit to the sinless infirmities of our nature. Herein he humbled himself, that he was driven to the common shift of those who are most helpless; thus also he would give an example to his own rule, When they persecute you in one city, flee to another. Christ had said and done enough to convince those Pharisees, if reduced to extremity, or yielding to the conviction, they were hardened and enraged, and therefore he left them as incurable, Jer. 51. 9.

Christ did not retire for his own ease, nor seek an excuse to leave off his work; no, his retirements were filled up with business, and he was even then doing good, when he was forced to flee for the same. Thus he gave an example to his ministers, to do what
they can, when they cannot do what they would, and to continue teaching, even when they are removed into corners. When the Pharisees, the great dons and doctors of that nation, followed Christ in them, and forced him to withdraw himself, yet the common people crowded after him, great multitudes followed him and found him out. This would turn to his reproach, and call him the King-leader of the mob; but it was really his honour, that all who were unbiased and unprejudiced, and not blinded by the pomp of the world, were so hearty, so zealous for him, that they would follow him wherever he went, and whatever hazards they run with him; as it was also the honour of his grace, that the poor were evangelized; that when they received him, he received them and healed them all. Christ came into the world to be a Physician-general, as the sun to the lower world, with healing under his wings. Though the Pharisees persecuted Christ for doing good, yet he went on in it, and did not let the people forsake the work for the wickedness of their rulers.

Note, Though some are unkind to us, we must not on that account be unkind to others.

Christ studied to reconcile usefulness and privacy; he healed them all, and yet (v. 16.) charged them that they should not make him known, which may be looked upon, 1. As an act of prudence; it was not so much the miracles themselves, as the public discourse concerning them, that enraged the Pharisees. v. 23, 24. The folly of Christ. Though he would not omit doing good, yet would do it with as little noise as possible, to avoid offence to them and peril to himself. Note, Wise and good men, though they covet to do good, yet are far from coveting to have it talked of when it is done; because it is God's acceptance, not men's applause, that they aim at. And in suffering under them, we must boldly go on to do what it is good to do; and not shrink from the circumstances of it so as not to exasperate, nor to render it necessary, those who seek occasion against us.

Be ye wise as serpents, ch. 10. 16. 2. It may be looked upon as an act of righteous judgment upon the Pharisees, who were unworthy to hear of any more of his miracles, having made so light of those they had seen. By shutting their eyes against the light, they had forfeited the benefit of it. 3. As an act of love and pity. Though Christ's intention in his miracles was to prove Messiah, and so to bring men to believe on him, in order to which it was requisite that they should be known, yet sometimes he charged the people to conceal them, to set us an example of humbleness, and to teach us not to proclaim our own goodness or usefulness, or to desire to have it proclaimed. Christ would have his disciples to be the reverse of those who did all their works to be seen of men.

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in all this. v. 17. Christ retired into privacy and obscurity, that, though he was eclipsed, the word of God might be fulfilled, and so illustrated and glorified, which was the thing his heart was upon. The scripture here said to be fulfilled is Isa. 42. 1-4, which is quoted at large, v. 18-21. The scope of it is to show how mild and quiet, and yet how successful, our Lord Jesus should be in his undertaking; instances of both when we have in the foregoing passages. Observe here,

1. The pleasure of the Father in Christ; (v. 18.) Behold, my Servant whom I have chosen, my Beloved in whom my soul is well pleased. Hence we may learn,

(1.) That our Saviour was God's Servant in the great work of our redemption. He therein submitted himself to the Father's will, (Heb. 10. 7.) and set himself to serve the designs of his grace and the interests of his glory, in repairing the breaches that had been made by man's apostasy. As a Servant, he had a great work appointed him and a great trust reposed in him. This was a part of his humiliation, that though he was equal with God, yet that in the work of our salvation he took upon him the form of a servant, received a law, and came into bands. Though he were a son, yet learned he this obedience, Heb. 5. 8. The motto of this Prince, is let them do— I serve.

(2.) That Jesus Christ was chosen of God, as the only fit and proper Person for the management of the great work of our redemption. He came not to be courts of justice, but to be courted by God, yet that in the work of our salvation he took upon him the form of a servant, received a law, and came into bands. Though he were a son, yet learned he this obedience, Heb. 5. 8. The motto of this Prince, is let them do—I serve.

(3.) That Jesus Christ is God's Beloved, his beloved Son; as God, he lay from eternity in his bosom; (John 1. 18.) he was daily his Delight, Prov. 8. 30. Between the Father and the Son there was before all time an eternal and infinite conjunction of love. God declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son, and that in him he was well pleased, and thus the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, Prov. 8. 22. As Mediator, the Father loved him; then when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he submitted to it, therefore did the Father love him, John 10. 17.

(4.) That Jesus Christ is one in whom the Father is well pleased, in whom his soul is pleased; which denotes the highest complacency imaginable. God declared, by a voice from heaven, that he was his beloved Son, and that he was well pleased in him, because he was the ready and cheerful Undertaker of that work of wonder which God's heart was so much upon, and he is well pleased with us in him; for he has made us accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6. All the interest which fallen man has or can have in God, is grounded upon and owing to God's well-pleasedness in Jesus Christ; for there is no coming to the Father but by this Jesus, John 14. 6. The presence of the Father is the great happiness of the Father to him in two things.

(1.) That he should be every way well qualified for his undertaking; I will put my Spirit upon him, as a Spirit of wisdom and counsel, Isa. 11. 2, 3. Those whom God calls to any service, he will be sure to fit and qualify for it; and by that it will appear that he called them to it, as Moses, Exod. 4. 12. Christ, as God, was equal in power and glory with the Father; as Mediator, he received from the Father power and glory, and received that he might give: and all that the Father gave him, to qualify him for his undertaking, was summed up in this, he put his Spirit upon him; this was that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows, Heb. 1. 9. He received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, John 3. 34. Note, Whoever they be that God has chosen, and in whom he is well pleased, he will be sure to put his Spirit upon them. Wherever he confers his love, he confers somewhat of his likeness.

(2.) That he should be abundantly successful in his undertaking. Those whom God sends he will certainly own. It was long since secured by promise to our Lord Jesus, that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand, Isa. 53. 10. And here we have an account of that prospering good pleasure.

[1.] He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. Christ in his own person preached to those who bordered upon the heathen nations, (see Mark 3. 6-8.) and by his apostles showed his gospel, called here,
his judgment, to the Gentile world. The way and method of salvation, the judgment which is committed to the Son, is not only wrought out by him as our great High-Priest, but showed and published by him as a gospel, as it is a rule of practice and conversation, which has a direct tendency to the reforming and bettering of men's hearts and lives, shall be shown to the Gentiles. God's judgments had been the Jews' peculiar, (Psalm 147:19;) but it was often foretold, by the Old-Testament prophets, that they should be showed to the Gentiles, which therefore ought to have been a surprise, and it was a clever deceiving Jews, much less a vexation.

[2.] In his name shall the Gentiles trust, v. 21. He shall so show judgment to them, that they shall heed and observe what he shows them, and be influenced by it to depend upon him, to devote themselves to him, and conform to that judgment. Note, The great design of the gospel is to bring people to trust in the name of Jesus Christ; his name Jesus, a Saviour, that precious name whereby he is called, and which is as ointment poured forth; The Lord our Righteousness. The evangelist here follows the Septuagint; (or perhaps the latter editions of the Septuagint follow the evangelist;) the Hebrew (Isa. 42:4.) is, The isles shall wait for his law. The isles of the Gentiles are spoken of (Gen. 10.5.) as peopled by the sons of Japheth, (Gen. 10;) and Japheth shall spread abroad Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem; which was now to be fulfilled, when the isles, (says the prophet,) the Gentiles, (says the evangelist,) shall wait for his law, and trust in his name; compare these together, and observe, that they, and they only, can with confidence trust in Christ's name, that wait for his law with a resolution to be ruled by it. Observe also, that the law we without issue are cast aside, that if we trust in his name. This is now his great commandment, that we believe in Christ, 1 John 3.23.

3. The prediction concerning him, and his mild and quiet management of his undertaking, v. 19, 20. It is chiefly for the sake of this, that it is here quoted, upon occasion of Christ's affected privacy and concealment.

(1.) That he should carry on his undertaking without severity and rigour, (v. 20.) A bruised reed shall he not break. Some understand this of his patience in bearing with the wicked; he could as easily have broken these Pharisees as a bruised reed, and have quenched them as soon as smoking flax; but he will not do it till the judgment-day, when all his enemies shall be broken down and trodden under foot. Others understand it of his power and grace in bearing up the weak. In general, the design of his gospel is to establish such a method of salvation as encourages sincerity, though there be much infirmity; it does not insist upon a sinless obedience, but accepts an upright, willing mind. As to particular persons, that follow Christ in meekness, and in much trembling, observe, [1.] How their case is here described—they are like a bruised reed, and smoking flax. Young beginners in religion are weak, as a bruised reed, and their weakness offensive like smoking flax; some little life they have, but it is like that of a bruised reed; some little heat, but like that of smoking flax. Christ's disciples were as yet but weak, and many are so that have a place in his family. The grace and goodness in them are as a bruised reed, the corruption and baseness in them are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle when it is put out and is yet smoking. [2.] What is this compassion of our Lord Jesus toward them. He will not discourage them, much less reject them or cast them off; the reed that is bruised shall not be broken and trodden down, but shall be supported, and made as a strong cedar or flourishing palm-tree. The candle newly lighted, though it only smokes and does not flame, shall not be blown out, but blown up. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and therefore he will not despise it, but make it the day of great things, Zech. 4.10. Note, Our Lord Jesus deals very tenderly with those who have true grace, though they be weak in it, Isa. 40.11. Heb. 5.2. He remembers not only that we are dust, but that we are flesh. [3.] The good issue and success of this, intimadated in this, till he send forth his word, the Son of Man from heaven, and the word, which he showed to the Gentiles shall be victorions, he will go on conquering and to conquer, Rev. 6.2. Both the preaching of the gospel in the world, and the power of the gospel in the heart, shall prevail. Grace shall get the upper hand of corruption, and shall at length be perfected in glory. Christ's judgment will be brought forth to victory, for when he judges he will overcome. He shall bring forth judgment unto truth; so it is, Isa. 42.3. Truth and victory are much the same, for great is the truth, and will prevail.

22. Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb; and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. 23. And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? 24. But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 25. And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: 26. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? 27. And if I cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. 29. Or else, how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then will he spoil his house. 30. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad. 31. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the
blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. 32. And whatsoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. 33. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. 34. O generation of vipers! how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

In these verses, we have,

1. Christ's glorious conquest of Satan, in the gracious cure of one who, by the divine permission, was under his power, and in his possession, v. 22. Here observe,

1. The man's case was very sad; he was possessed with a devil. More cases of this kind occurred in Christ's time than usual, that Christ's power might be displayed. See the note on Matt. 8:27. A man's power is manifested, in opposing and dispossessing Satan; and that it might the more evidently appear, that he came to destroy the works of the devil. This poor man that was possessed was blind and dumb; a miserable case! he could neither see to help himself, nor speak to others to help him. A soul under Satan's power, and led captive by him, is blind in the things of God, and dumb at the throne of grace; sees nothing, and says nothing, to the purpose. Satan blinds the eye of faith, and seals up the lips of prayer.

2. His cure was very strange, and the more so, because sudden; he healed him. Note, The conquering and dispossessing of Satan is the healing of souls. And the cause being removed, immediately the effect ceased: the blind and dumb both spake and saw. Note, Christ's mercy is directly opposite to Satan's malice; his favours, to the devil's mischiefs. When Satan's power is broken in the soul, the eyes are opened to see God's glory, and the lips opened to speak his praise.

11. The conviction which this gave to the people, to all the people; they were amazed. Christ had wrought divers miracles of this kind before; but his works are not the less wonderful, nor the less to be wondered at, for that they were often repeated; as these they inferred from it, "Is not this the Son of David? Is not this the Son of the Messias promised, to was to spring from the loins of David? Is not this he that should come?" We may take this, 1. As an inquiring question; they asked, Is not this the Son of David? But they did not stay for an answer; the impressions were cogent, but they were transient. It was a good question that they started; but, it should seem, it was soon lost, and was not properly pressed and prosecuted as these should be brought to a head, and then they are likely to be brought to the heart. Or, 2. As an affirming question; Is not this the Son of David? * * * Yes, certainly it is, it can be no other: such miracles as these plainly evince that the kingdom of the Messias is now in the setting up." And they were the people, theologians, and the spectres, that drew this inference from Christ's miracles. Atheists will say, "That was because they were less prying than the Pharisees;" no, the matter of fact was obvious, and required not much search; but it was because they were less prejudiced and biased by worldly interest. So plain and easy was the way made to this great truth of Christ's being the Messias and Saviour of the world, that the common people did not miss it. The way-faring men, though fools, could not err therein. See Isa. 35. 8. It was found of them that sought it. It is an instance of the condescensions of the divine grace, that the things that were hid from the wise and prudent were revealed unto babes. The world by wisdom knew not God, and by the foolish things the wise were confounded.

11. The blasphemous calumny of the Pharisees, v. 24. The Pharisees were a sort of men that pretended to more knowledge in, and zeal for, the divine law, than other people; yet they were the most inveterate enemies to Christ and his doctrine. They were proud of the reputation they had among the people; that fed their pride, supported their power, and filled their purses: and when they heard the people say, Is not this the Son of David? they were extremely irritated, more at that than at the natural and simple inference itself; this was a piece of our Lord Jesus, and apprehensive, that as his interest in the people's esteem increased, theirs must of course be eclipsed and diminished; therefore they envied him, as Saul did his father David, because of what the women sung of him, 1 Sam. 18. 7, 8. Note, Those who bind up their happiness in the praise and applause of men, expose themselves to a perpetual unseasonableness upon every favourable word that men speak of them, or a pour-favour. Let the friends of honour follow Christ, who fled from it, and fled from the Pharisees, who were eager in the pursuit of it. They said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, and therefore is not the Son of David." Observe,

1. How scornfully they speak of Christ, this fellow; as if that precious name of his, which is a ornament poured forth, were not in itself a powerful recovery of the honour, and the glory, and the favours, of his people. They were the worst examples of their pride and superciliousness, and their diabolical envy, that the more people magnified Christ, the more industrious they were to vitify him. It is a bad thing to speak of good men with disdain because they are poor. 2. How blasphemously they speak of his miracles; they could not deny the matter of fact; it was as plain as the sun, that devils were cast out by the word of Christ; nor could they deny that it was an extraordinary thing, and supernatural. Being thus forced to grant the premises, they had no other way to avoid the conclusion, that this is the Son of David, than by suggesting that Christ cast out devils by Beelzebub; that there was a compact between Christ and the devil; pursuant to that, the devil was not cast out, but did voluntarily retire, and give back by consent and with design; or as if, by an agreement with the ruling devil, he had power to cast out the inferior devils. No surmise could be more palpably false and vile than this; that he, who is Truth itself, should be in combination with the father of lies, to cheat the world. This was the last refuge, or subterfuge rather, of an obstinate infidelity, that was resolved to stand it out against the clearest conviction. Observe, Among the devils there is a prince, the ringleader of the apostasy from God and rebellion against him, but this prince is Beelzebub, the god of a fly, or a dung-hill-god. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! from an angel of light, to be a lord of flies! Yet this is the prince of the devils, the chief of the gang of infernal spirits.
IV. Christ's reply to this base insinuation, v. 23
30. Jesus knew their thoughts. Note, Jesus Christ knows what we are thinking at any time, knows what is in man; he understands our thoughts of the best and worst that come to mind, the Pharisees could not for shame speak it out, but keep it in their minds; they could not expect to satisfy the people with it, they therefore reserved it for the silencing of the convictions of their own consciences. Note, Many are kept off from their duty by that which they are ashamed to own, but which they cannot hide from Jesus Christ: yet it is probable that the Pharisees had high thoughts of themselves, to help to harden another; but Christ's reply is said to be to their thoughts, because he knew what they said; that they did not say it in their haste, but that it was the product of a rooted malignity.

Christ's reply to this imputation is copious and cogent, that every mouth may be stopped with sense and reason, before it be stopped with fire and brimstone. Here are three arguments by which he demonstrates the unreasonableness of this suggestion.

1. It would be very strange, and highly improbable, that Satan should be cast out by such a compact, because then Satan's kingdom would be divided against itself; which, considering his subtlety, is not a thing to be imagined, v. 25, 26.

2. It is a known rule laid down, that in all societies a common ruin is the consequence of mutual quarrels: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every family too: Qae enim domus tam stabilis est, qua tam firma civitas, quae non odit angue dissidius funditus eterni fossis—For what family is so strong, what community so firm, as not to be overthrown by enmity and dissension? Grec. Lect. Divisions commonly end in desolations; if the churches, we break; if we divide one from another, we become an easy prey to a common enemy; much more if we fight and devour one another, shall we be consumed one of another, Gal. 5. 13.

Churches and nations have known this by sad experience.

3. The casting out of devils was a certain token and indication of the approach and appearance of the kingdom of God; (v. 28.) "But if it be indeed that I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, as certainly I speak the words of God, I am not willing to receive it, yet the kingdom of the Messiah is now about to be set up among you." Other miracles that Christ wrought proved him sent of God, but this proved him sent of God to destroy the Devil's kingdom and his works. Now that great promise was evidently fulfilled, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, Gen. 3. 15.

There has been a revelation of the kingdom of God, which has been long expected, is now commenced; slight it at your peril." Note, [1.] The destruction of the Devil's power is wrought by the Spirit of God; that Spirit who works to the obedience of faith, overthrows the interest of that spirit who works in the children of unbelief and disobedience. [2.] The casting out of devils is a certain introduction to the kingdom of God. If the Devil's interest in a soul be not only checked by custom or external restraints, but sunk and broken by the Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, no doubt but the kingdom of God is come to that soul, the kingdom of grace, a blessed earnest of the kingdom of glory.

3. The comparing of Christ's miracles, particularly this of casting out devils, with his doctrine, is to lay stress upon the matchless of his power, that he is not confined to the work of a strong man; so is every unregenerate soul; where Satan resides, there he rules. Now, (1.) The design of Christ's gospel was to spoil the Devil's house, which, as a strong man, he kept in the world, to turn the people from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, from this world to a better, from the power
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of Satan unto God; (Acts 26. 18.) to alter the property of souls. (2.) Pursuant to this design, he bound the strong man, when he cast out unclean spirits by his word: thus he wrested the sword out of the Devil's hand, that he might wrest the scripture out of it. The doctrine of Christ teaches us how to construe his miracles, and when he showed how easily and effectually he could cast the Devil out of people's bodies, he encouraged all believers to hope that the weaker Satan might usurp and exercise in the souls of men, Christ by his grace would break it; he will spoil him, for it appears that he can bind him. When nations were turned from the service of idols to serve the living God, when some of the worst sinners were sanctified and justified, and became the best of saints, then Christ spoiled the Devil's house, and will spoil it more and more.

4. It is here intimated, that the way in which Christ was carrying on with vigour against the Devil and his kingdom, was such as would not admit of a neutrality, (v. 30.) He that is not with me, is against me. In the little differences that may arise between the disciples of Christ among themselves, we are taught to lessen the matters in variance, and to seek peace, by accounting those who are not against us, to be with us; (Luke 9. 46.) but in the great matter of his war against the Devil, there is no peace to be sought, nor any such favourable construction to be made of any difference in the matter; he that is not hearty for Christ, will be reckoned with as really against him: he that is cold in the cause, is looked upon as an enemy. When the dispute is between God and Balaam, there is no halting between two, (1 Kings 18. 21.) there is no trimming between Christ and Belial; for the kingdom of Christ, as it is eternally opposite to, so it will be eternally victorious over, the Devil's kingdom; and therefore in this cause there is no sitting still with Gilead beyond Jordan, or Asher on the sea-shore; (Judg. 5. 16, 17.) we must be entirely, faithfully, and immovably, on Christ's side: it is the right side, and will at last be the rising side; see Exod. 32. 36.

The latter clause is to the same purport; He that gathereth not with me, scattereth. Note, (1.) Christ's errand into the world was to gather, to gather in his harvest, to gather in those whom the Father had given him, John 11. 52. Eph. 1. 10. 2. Christ expects and requires from those who are with him, that they gather with him; that they not only gather to him themselves, but do all they can in their places, to gather others to him, and so to strengthen his interest. (3.) The holy war, which Christ is waging, will not appear, and act, as furtherers of Christ's kingdom, will be looked upon, and dealt with, as hinderers of it; if we gather not with Christ, we scatter; it is not enough, not to do hurt, but we must do good. Thus is the breach widened between Christ and Satan, to show that there was no such compact between them as the Pharisees whispered.

V. Here is a discourse of Christ's upon this occasion concerning tongue-sins; Christ foretells unto you. He urges them to turn from the people, from disputing to instructing; and from the sin of the Pharisees he warns the people concerning three sorts of tongue-sins; for others' harms are admonitions to us.

1. Blasphemous words against the Holy Ghost are the worst kind of tongue-sins, and unpardonable, v. 31, 32.

Here is a gracious assurance of the pardon of all sin upon gospel-terms: this Christ says to us, and it is a comfortable saying, that the greatness of sin shall be no bar to our acceptance with God, if we truly repent and believe the gospel: All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. Though the sin has been as scarlet and crimson, (Isa. 1. 18.) though ever so heinous in its nature, ever so much aggravated by its circumstances, and ever so often repeated, though it reach up to the heavens yet with the Lord there is mercy, that reacheth beyond the heavens; mercy will be extended even to blasphemy, a sin immediately teaching God's name and honour: Paul obtained mercy, who had been a blasphemer, 1 Tim. 1. 13. Well may we say, Whom shall I praise? and whom shall I glorify? Micah 7. 18. Even words spoken against the Son of man shall be forgiven; as theirs were who reviled him at his death, many of whom repented and found mercy. Christ herein has set an example to all the sons of men, to be ready to forgive words spoken against them: I, as a deaf man, heard not. Observe, They shall be forgiven unto men, not to devils; this is love to the whole world of mankind, and to the whole world of fallen angels, that all sin is pardonable to them.

(2.) Here is an exception of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which is here declared to be the only unpardonable sin. See here,

(1.) What this sin is; it is speaking against the Holy Ghost. See what malignity there is in tongue-sins, when the only unpardonable sin is so. But Jesus knew their thoughts, v. 34. Observe, the presence and integrity of the Holy Ghost, or some of his more private operations, or merely the resisting of his internal working in the sinner himself, that is here meant; for whom then should be saved? It is adjudged in our law, that an act of indemnity shall always be construed in favour of that grace and clemency which is the intention of the act; and therefore the exceptions in the act are not to be extended further than needs must. The act of indemnity; none are excepted by name, nor any by description, but these only that blaspheme the Holy Ghost; which therefore must be construed in the narrowest sense: all presuming sinners are effectually cut off by the conditions of the indemnity, faith and repentance; and therefore the other exceptions must not be stretched far; and this blasphemy is excepted, not for any defect of mercy in God or merit in Christ, but because it in itself leaves the sinner in infidelity and impiety.

We have reason to think that none are guilty of this sin, who believe that Christ is the Son of God, and sincerely desire to have part in his merit and mercy: and those who fear they have committed this sin, give a good sign that they have not. The learned Dr. Whitby very well observes, that Christ speaks not of what was now said or done, but of what should be, (Mark 3. 28. Luke 12. 10.) Here shall blaspheme. As for those who blasphemed Christ when he was here upon earth, and called him a Winebibber, a Deceiver, a Blasphemer, and the like, they had some colour of excuse, because of the meanness of his appearance, and the prejudices of the nation against him; and the proof of his divine mission was not perfected till after his ascension; and therefore, upon their repentance, they shall be pardoned. It is discerned, and it is hoped that the proof is in Christ; therefore, they shall be forgiven.

Secondly, This was the most powerful evidence, and more apt to convince than miracles themselves. Thirdly, These therefore who
blaspheme this dispensation of the Spirit, cannot possibly be brought to believe in Christ; those who should be his most close communion with Satan, as the Pharisees did the miracles, what can convince them? This is such a strong hold of infidelity as a man can never be beaten out of, and is therefore unpardonable, because hereby repentance is hid from the sinner's eyes.

[2.] What the sentence is that is passed upon it; It shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. This is the then prediction of the Jewish church, there was no sacrifice of expiation for the soul that sinned presumptuously; so neither under the dispensation of gospel-grace, which is often in scripture called the world to come, shall there be any pardon to such as tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and do despite to the Spirit of grace: there is no cure for a sin so directly against the remedy. It was a rule in our old law, No sanction for sacrifice. Or, It shall be forgiven, neither now, in the sinner's own conscience, nor in the great day, when the pardon shall be published. Or, This is a sin that exposes the sinner both to eternal and temporal punishment, both to present wrath and the wrath to come.

2. Christ speaks here concerning other wicked words, the products of corruption reigning in the heart, and breaking out thereof, (v. 32—35.) It was said (v. 25.) that Jesus knew their thoughts, and here he spoke with an eye to them, showing that it was not strange that they should speak so ill, when their hearts were so full of cunning and malice; which yet they often endeavoured to cloak and cover, by feigning themselves just men. Our Lord Jesus therefore points to the springs, and heals them; let the heart be sanctified, and it will appear in our words.

(1.) The heart is the root, the language is the fruit; (v. 33.) if the nature of the tree be good, it will bring forth fruit accordingly. Where grace is the reigning principle in the heart, the language will be the language of Canaan; and, on the contrary, whatever lust reigns in the heart it will break out; discussed lungs make an offensive breath: men's language discovers what country they are of, likewise what manner of spirit they are of: Either make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good; get pure hearts and then you will have pure lips and pure lives; or else the tree will be corrupt, and the fruit accordingly. You may make a crab-stock to become a good tree, by grafting into it a shoot from a good tree, and then the fruit will be good; but if the tree be still the same, plant it where you will, and water it how you will, the fruit will be still corrupt.” Note, Unless the heart be transformed, the life will never be thoroughly reformed. These Pharisees were shy of speaking out their wicked thoughts of Jesus Christ; but Christ here intimates, how vain it was for them to seek to hide that root of bitterness in them, that bore this gall and wormwood, which they could never sought to mortify it. Note, It should be more in our care to be good really, than to seem good outwardly.

(2.) The heart is the fountain, the words are the streams; (v. 34.) Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, as the streams are the overflowings of the spring. A wicked heart is said to send forth wickedness, as a fountain casts forth her waters, ler. 6. 7. An troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring, shall not yield up herbless water. (Prov. 11. 10.) It sends forth muddy and unpleasant streams. Evil words are the natural, genuine product of an evil heart. Nothing but the salt of grace, cast into the spring, will heal the waters, season the speech, and purify the corrupt communication. This they wanted, they were evil; and how can ye, being evil, speak good things? They were a generation of vipers; John Baptist had called them so, (ch. 3. 7.) and they were all still the same; for can the Ephesian change the leopard's spots, or the snake's skin? Pharisees are a generation of saints, but Christ calls them a generation of vipers, the seed of the serpent, that had an enmity to Christ and his gospel. Now what could be expected from a generation of vipers, but that which is poisonous and malignant? Can the viper be otherwise than venemous? Note, Bad things may be expected from bad people, as said the people looking upon him from the wicked, 1 Sam. 24. 13. The vile person shall speak vilfully, Isa. 32. 6. These who are themselves evil, have neither skill nor will to speak good things, as they should be spoken. Christ would have his disciples know what sort of men they were to live among, that they might know what to look for. They are as Exekiel among scorpions, (Ezek. 2. 6.) and must not think it strange if they be stung at any blow.

(3.) The heart is the treasure, the words are the things brought out of that treasure; (v. 35.) and from hence men's characters may be drawn, and may be judged of.

[1.] It is the character of a good man, that he has a good treasure in his heart, and from thence brings forth good things, as there is charity, (verse 49.) Graces, love and charity reigns in the heart, which are the knowledge, good resolutions, these are a good treasure in the heart; the word of God hidden there, the law of God written there, divine truths dwelling and ruling there, are a treasure there, valuable and suitable, kept safe and kept secret, as the stores of the good house-builder, but ready for use upon all occasions. A good man, thus furnished, will bring forth, as Joseph out of his stores; will be speaking and doing that which is good, for God's glory, and the edification of others. See Prov. 10. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32. This is bringing forth good things. Some pretend to good expenses that have not a good treasure—such will soon be bankrupts; some pretend to have a good treasure within, but give no proof of it; they hope they have it in them, and thank God, whatever their words and actions are, they have good hearts; but faith without works is dead: and some have a good treasure of wisdom and knowledge, but they are not communicative, they do not bring forth out of it: they have a talent, but know not how to trade with it. The complete christian in this bears the image of God, that he both is good, and does good.

[2.] It is the character of an evil man, that he has an evil treasure in his heart, and out of it brings forth evil things. Lusts and corruptions dwelling and reigning in the heart, are an evil treasure, out of which the sinner brings forth bad words and actions, to the dishonour of God, and the hurt of others. See Gen. 6. 5, 12. Mat. 15. 18—20. Jam. 1. 15. But treasures of wickedness (Prov. 10. 2.) will be treasures of wrath.

3. Christ speaks here concerning idle words, and such words as there is in them; (v. 36, 37.) much more is there in such wicked words as the Pharisees spoke. It concerns us to think much of the day of judgment, that that may be a check upon our tongues; and let us consider,

(1.) How particular the account will be of tongue-sins in that day: even for every idle word, or discourse, that men speak, they shall give account of.

This intimates, [1.] That God takes notice of every word we say, even that which we ourselves do not take notice of. See Ps. 139. 4. ‘Not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it:’ through spoken without regard or design, God takes cognizance of it. [2.] That vain, idle, importent talk is displeasing to God, which tends not to any good purpose, is not good to any use of edifying; it is the product of
a van and trifling heart. These idle words are the same with that foolish talking and jesting which is forbidden, Eph. 5. 4. This is that sin which is sordom wanting in the multitude of words, unprofitable talk, Job 13. 3. [3.] We must shortly account for these idle words; they will be produced in evidence against us, to prove us unprofitable servants, that have not improved the faculties of reason and speech, which are part of the talents we are intrusted with. If we repent not of our idle words, and our account far be not balanced by the blood of Christ, we are undone.

(2.) How strict the judgment will be upon that account; (v. 57.) By thy words thou shalt be justified or condemned; a common rule in men’s judgments, and have set tenor of our discourse, according as it is gracious or not gracious, will be an evidence for us, or against us, at the great day. Those who seemed to be religious, but bribled not their tongue, will then be found to have put a cheat upon themselves with a vain religion, Jam. 1. 26. Some think that Christ here refers to that of Elijah, (Job 15. 6.) Then even mouth condemn thee, and not I; or, rather to that of Solomon, (Prov. 18. 21.) Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

32. Then certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. 39. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 40. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. 43. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

It is probable that these Pharisees with whom Christ is here in discourse, were not the same that cavilled at him, (v. 24.) and would not credit the signs he gave; but another set of them, who saw that there was no reason to discredit them, but would not content themselves with the signs he gave, nor admit the evidence of them unless he would give them such further proof as they should demand. Here

I. Their address to him, v. 58. They compliment him with the title of Master, pretending respect for him, when they intended to abuse him; all are not indeed Christ’s servants, who call him Master. Their request is, We would see a sign from thee. It was highly reasonable that they should see a sign, that he should by miracles prove approved; and He was at heart, to take down a model of religion that was set up by miracles, and therefore it was requisite he should produce the same credentials; but it was highly unreasonable to demand a sign now, when he had given so many signs already, that did abundantly prove him sent of God. Note, It is natural to proud men to prescribe to God, and then to make that an excuse for not subscribing to his laws, but a man’s offence will not lessen his interest.

II. His answer to this address, this insolent demand.

1. He condemns the demand, as the language of an evil and adulterous generation, v. 59. He fastens the charge, not only on the Scribes and Pharisees, but the whole nation of the Jews; they were all like their leaders, a seed and succession of evil-doers: they were an evil generation indeed, not only for their wickedness, but in their abuse of Christ’s miracles, but set themselves to abuse him, and put contempt on his miracles. They were an adulterous generation, (1.) As an adulterous brood; so miserably degenerated from the faith and obedience of their ancestors, that Abraham and Israel acknowledged them not. See Is. 57. 3. Or, (2.) As an adulterous wife; they departed from that God, for whom they had chosen, in which they had been espoused, as they were not guilty of the chordom of idolatry, as they had been before the captivity, but they were guilty of infidelity, and all iniquity, and that is whoredom too: they did not look after gods of their own making, but they looked for signs of their own devising; and that was adultery.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign than he has already given them, but that of the prophet Jonas. Note, Though Christ is always ready to hear and answer holy desires and prayers, yet he will not gratify corrupt lusts and lusts. Those who ask amiss, ask, and have not. Signs were granted to those who desired them for the confirmation of their faith, as to Abraham and Gideon; but were denied to those who demanded them for the excuse of their unbelief. Justly might Christ have said, They shall never see another miracle: but see his wonderful goodness; (1.) They shall have the greatest signs, as well as all the rest, completed and fulfilled among them. “If they will not believe the former signs, they will believe this, (Exod. 4. 9.) and if this will not convince them, nothing will.” And yet the unbelief of the Jews found out an evasion to shift off that too, by saying, His disciples came and stole him away; for there are so incurably blind as those who are resured, they will not see.

3. How this sign of the prophet Jonas he further explains here: (v. 40.) As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, and then came out again safe and well, thus Christ shall be so long in the grave, and then shall rise again. (1.) The grave was to Christ as the belly of the fish was to Jonas; thither he was thrown, as a ransom for lives ready to be lost in a storm; there he lay, as in the belly of hell, (Jonah 2. 2.) and seemed to be cast out of God’s
st. She but the. but when he lay in the grave, it is expressly said to rest in hope, as one assured he should see corruption, Acts 2. 26, 27. [4.] As Jonah on the third day was discharged from his prison, and came to the land of the living again, from the congregation of the dead, (for dead things are said to be formed from under the water, Job 26. 5.) so Christ on the third day should return to life, and rise out of his grave, to send abroad his gospel to the Gentiles.

3. Christ takes this occasion to represent the sad condition and condition of that generation in which he lived, a generation which was not reformed, and therefore could not but be miserable; and he gives them their character, as it would stand in the day of judgment, under the full discoveries and final sentences of that day. Persons and things now appear under false colours; characters and conditions are here changeable: if therefore we would make a right estimate, we must take our measures from the last judgment; things are really, what they are eternally.

Now Christ represents the people of the Jews, (1.) As a generation that would be condemned by the men of Nineveh, whose repenting at the preaching of Jonas would rise up in judgment against them, v. 41. Christ’s resurrection will be the sign of the prophet Jonas to them: but it will not have so happy an effect upon them, as that of Jonas had upon the Ninevites, for they were by it brought to such a repentance as prevented their ruin: but the Jews will be hardened in an unbelief that shall hasten their ruin; and in the day of judgment, the repentance of the Ninevites will be mentioned as an aggravation of the sin, and consequently the condemnation, of those to whom Christ preached then, and of those to whom Christ is preached now; for this reason, because Christ is greater than Jonas. [1.] Jonah was a sinner, subject to the same passions, as we are; but Christ is the Son of God. [2.] Jonah was a stranger in Nineveh, he came among the strangers that were prejudiced against his country; but Christ came to his own, when he preached to the Jews, and much more when he is preached among professing Christians, that are called by his name. [3.] Jonah preached but once, and that without any extraordinary methods, but as he passed along the streets; Christ revives his calls, sat and taught, taught in the synagogues. [4.] Jonah preached nothing but wrath and ruin within forty days, gave no instructions, directions, or encouragements, to repent; but Christ, beside the warning given us of our danger, has showed wherein we must repent, and assured us of acceptance of repentance, that repentance of heaven is at hand. [5.] Jonah wrought no miracle to confirm his doctrine, showed no good will to the Ninevites; but Christ wrought abundance of miracles, and all miracles of mercy: yet the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but the Jews were not wrought upon by Christ’s preaching. Note, the goodness of some, who have less helps and advantages for their souls, will aggravate the badness of those who have much greater. These who by the twilight discover the things that belong to their peace, will shame those who grope at noon-day.

(2.) As a generation that would be condemned by the queen of the south, the queen of Sheba, v. 42. The Ninevites would shame them for not repenting, the queen of Sheba, for not believing in Christ. She came from a far country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet people will not be persuaded to come and hear the wisdom of Christ, though he is in every thing greater than Solomon. She had no invitation to come to Solomon, nor any promise of being welcome; but we are invited to Christ, to sit at his feet, and hear his word. [2.] Solomon was but a wise man, but Christ is Wisdom itself, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. [3.] The queen of Sheba had many difficulties to break through; she was a woman unfit for travel, the journey long and perilous; she had no guide, and what would become of her own country in her absence? We have no such cares to hinder us. [4.] She could not be sure that it would be worth her while to go so far on this errand; fame uses to flatter men, and perhaps she might have in her own country or court wise men sufficient to instruct her: yet, having heard of Solomon’s fame, she would see him. Neither was she in any danger of being at home. [5.] She came from the uttermost parts of the earth, but we have Christ among us, and his word nigh us: Behold, he stands at the door, and knocketh. [6.] It should seem, the wisdom the queen of Sheba came for, was only philosophy and politics; but the wisdom that is to be had with Christ, is wisdom to salvation. [7.] She could only hear Solomon’s wisdom; she could not give her wisdom: but Christ will give wisdom unto those who come to him: nay, he will himself be made of God to them Wisdom: so that upon all these accounts, if we do not hear the wisdom of Christ, the forwardness of the queen of Sheba to come and hear the wisdom of Solomon will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon.

(3.) As a generation that were resolved to continue in the possession, and to the power, of Satan, notwithstanding all the methods that were used to dispossess him and rescue them. They are compared to one out of whom the Devil is gone, but returns with double force, v. 43—45. The Devil is here called the uncircumcised spirit, for he has cast all his purity, and delights in and promotes all manner of impurity among men. Now,

[1.] The devil represents his possessing men’s houses. Christ having lately cast out a devil, and they having said, he had a devil, gave occasion to show how much they were under the power of Satan. This is a further proof that Christ did not cast out devils by compact with the Devil, for then he would soon have returned again; but Christ’s ejectment of him was final, and such as barred a re-entry: we find him charging the evil spirit to go out; and he must needs have gone, and did, and would not sometimes thus to sport with those who had possession of; he would go out, and then return again with more fury; hence the lucid intervals of those in that condition were commonly followed with the more violent fits. When the Devil is gone out, he is uneasy, for he sleeps not except he have done mischief; (Prov. 4. 16.) he walks in dark places, like one that is blind; but when he has driven a man out, he stays not till he returns again. When Christ cast the legion out of the man, they begged leave to enter into the swine, where they went not long in dry places, but into the lake presently.

[2.] The application of the parable makes it to represent the case of the body of the Jewish church and nation: So shall it be with this wicked generation, that now resist, and will finally reject, the gospel of Christ. The Devil, who by the labour of Christ
and his disciples, had been cast out of many of the Jews, sought for rest among the heathen, from whose temples the christians would every where expel him: so Dr. Whitby: or finding no where else in the heathen world such pleasant, desirable habitations, to his satisfaction, as here in the heart of the Jews; so Dr. Hammond, he shall therefore enter again into them, for Christ had not found admission among them, and they, by their prodigious wickedness and obstinate infidelity, were still more ready than ever to receive him. And thus shall they have a durable possession here, and the state of this people is likely to be more desperately damnable (so Dr. Hammond) than it was before Christ came among them, or would have been if Satan had never been cast out.

The body of that nation is here represented, First, As an apostate people. After the captivity in Babylon, they began to reform, left their idols, and appeared with some face of religion; but they soon corrupted themselves again: though they never relapsed into idolatry, they fell into all manner of impiety and profaneness, grew worse and worse, and added to all the rest of their wickedness a wilful contempt of, and opposition to, Christ and his gospel. Secondly, As a people marked for ruin. A new commission was passing the seals against that hypocritical nation, the people of God's wrath (like that, Isa. 6.) and Satan's wrath, had been for so many years likely to be greater than any other, as their sins had been more flagrant: then it was that wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Let this be a warning to all nations and churches, to take heed of hering their first love, of letting fall a good work of reformation begun among them, and returning to that wickedness which they seemed to have forsaken; for the last state of such will be worse than the first.

46. While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. 47. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. 48. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? 49. And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! 50. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Many excellent, useful sayings came from the mouth of our Lord Jesus upon particular occasions; even his digressions were instructive, as well as his set discourses: as here, Others, 1. How Christ was interrupted in his preaching by his mother and his brethren, that stood without, desiring to speak with him; (v. 46, 47.) which desire of theirs was conveyed to him through the crowd. It is needless to inquire which of his brethren they were that came along with his mother: perhaps they were those who did not believe in him; (John 7. 5.) or what their business was; perhaps it was only designed to oblige him to break off, for fear he should fatigue himself, or to caution him to take heed of giving occasion by his discourse to the Pharisees, and of involving himself in a difficulty, as if they could teach him wisdom. 1. He was as yet talking to the people. Note, Christ's preaching was talking: it was plain, easy, and familiar, and suited to their capacity and ease. What Christ had delivered had been cavilled at, and yet he went on. Note, The opposition we meet with in our work, must not drive us from it. He left off talking with the Pharisees, for he saw he could do no good with them; but continued to talk to the common people, who, not having such a conceit of their knowledge as the Pharisees had, were willing to learn. 2. His mother and brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, when they should have been standing within, desiring to hear him. They had the advantage of his daily converse in private, and therefore were less mindful to attend upon his public preaching. Note, Frequently those who are nearest to the means of knowledge and grace are most negligent. Familiarity and easiness of access breed some degree of contempt. We are apt to neglect that this day, which we think we may have any day, forgetting that it is only the present time we can be sure of; to-morrow is none of ours. There is too much truth in that common proverb, "The nearer the church, the further from God;" it is pity it should be so.

3. They not only would not hear him themselves, but they interrupted others that heard him gladly. The Devil was a sworn enemy to our Saviour's interest, that hated and sought to harm him by the unreasonable cavils of the Scribes and Pharisees, and when he could not gain his point that way, he endeavoured to break it off, by the unseemly visits of relations. Note, We often meet with hindrances and obstructions in our work, by our friends that are about us, and are taken off by civil respects from our spiritual concerns. These, who really wish well to us and to our work, may sometimes, by their indiscretion, prevent our hearing the voices of our friends, and impede us in our duty; as Peter was offensive to Christ, with his Master, spare thyself, when he thought himself very officious. The mother of our Lord desired to speak with him; it seems she had not then learned to command her Son, as the iniquity and idolatry of the church of Rome has since pretended to teach her; nor was she so free from fault and folly as they would make her. It was Christ's prerogative, and not his mother's, to do as he pleased wisely and well, in its season. Christ once said to his mother, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not, that I must be about my Father's business? And it was then said, she laid up that saying in her heart; (Luke 2. 49.) but if she had remembered it now, she would not have given him this interruption when he was about his Father's business. Note, There is many a good truth, that we thought was well laid up, when we heard it, which yet is out of the way, when we have occasion to use it. 4. How he resisted this interruption, v. 48—50. 1. He would not hearken to it; he was so intent upon his work, that no natural or civil respects should take him off from it. Who is my mother and who are my brethren? Not that natural affection is to be put off, or that, under pretence of religion, we may be disrespectful to parents or unkind to other relations; but every thing is beautiful in its season, and the lesser duty must stand by, while the greater is done. When our regard to our relations comes in competition with the service of God, and the improving of an opportunity to do good, in such a case, we must say to our Father, I have not seen him, as Levi did, Dent. 33. 9. The nearest relations must be comparatively hated, that is, we must love them less than Christ, (Luke 14. 26.) and our duty to God must have the preference. This Christ has here given us an example of; the zeal of God's house did so far eat him up, that it made him not only forget himself, but forget his dearest relations.
And we must not take it ill of our friends, nor put it upon the score of their wickedness, if they prefer the pleasing of God before the pleasing of us; but we must readily forgive those neglects, which may be easily imputed to a pious zeal for God’s glory and others’ good. Nay, We must deny ourselves and our own satisfaction, rather than do that which may any way divert our friends from, or distract them in, their duty to God.

To this occasion to prefer his disciples, who were his spiritual kindred, before his natural relations as such; which was a good reason why he would not leave preaching to speak with his brethren. He would rather be profiting his disciples, than pleasing his relations. Observe,

(1.) The description of Christ’s disciples. They are such as do the will of his Father; not only hear it, and believe it, but do it, and act upon it, because the will of God is the best preparative for discipleship, (John 7. 17.) and the best proof of it; (ch. 7. 21.) that denominates us his disciples indeed. Christ does not say, “Whosoever shall do my will,” for he came not to seek or do his own will distinct from his Father’s; his will and his Father’s are the same; but he refers us to his Father’s will, because now in his present state and work he referred himself to it, John 17. 33.

(2.) The dignity of Christ’s disciples: The same is my brother, and sister, and mother. His disciples, that had left all to follow him, and embraced his doctrine, were dearer to him than any that were akin to him according to the flesh. They had preferred Christ before relations; they left their Father, (ch. 4. 22.—10. 37.) and now to make them amends, and to show that there was no love lost, he preferred them to his relations. Daughters and others hereby receive, in point of honour, an hundred fold? ch. 19. 29. It was very endearing and very encouraging for Christ to say, Behold my mother and my brethren; yet it was not their privilege alone, this honour have all the saints. Note, All obedient believers are near akin to Jesus Christ. They wear his name, bear his image, have his nature, are of his family. He loves them more than they do their relations. He bids them welcome to his table, takes care of them, provides for them, sees that they want nothing that is fit for them; when he died, he left them rich legacies, now he is in heaven he keeps up a correspondence with them, and will have them all with him at last, and will in nothing fail to do the kineman’s part, (Ruth 3. 13.) nor will ever be ashamed of his poor relations, but will confess them before men, before the angels, and before his Father.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The favours which Christ did to his countrymen in preaching the kingdom of heaven to them, v. 1, 2. He preached to them in parables, and here gives the reason why he chose that way of instructing, v. 10. And the evangelist gives another reason, v. 32. 33. There is in this chapter the parables of the kingdom of heaven, which are designed to represent the kingdom of heaven, the method of planting the gospel-kingdom in the world, and of its growth and success. The great truths and laws of that kingdom are in other scriptures laid down plainly and without parables; but some circumstances of its beginning and progress are here laid open in parables. 2. Here is one parable to show what are the great hindrances of people’s coming to the word of the gospel, and in how many it comes short of its end, through their own folly, and that is the parable of the four sorts of ground, delivered, v. 8. 9. and expounded v. 18. 24. Here are two parables which shew that the kingdom of heaven would be a mixture of good and bad in the gospel-church, which would continue till the great separation between them in the judgment-day: the parable of the tares put forth, (v. 24. 30.) and expounded at the request of the disciples: (v. 36. 43.) and that of the net cast into the sea, v. 47. 50. 3. Here are two parables intended to show that the gospel-church should be very small at first, but that in process of time it should become a considerable body; that of the grain of mustard-seed, (v. 31. 32.) and that of the heaven, v. 33. Here are two parables, intended to show that those who expect salvation by the gospel must be willing to venture all, and not all, in the prospect of it, and that they shall be no losers by the bargain; that of the treasure hid in the field, (v. 44.) and that of the pearl of great price, v. 45. 46. 5. Here is one parable intended for direction to the disciple, to make use of the instructions he had given them for the benefit of others; and that is the parable of the good householder, v. 51. 52. II. The contempt which his countrymen put upon him on account of the meanness of his parables, v. 38. 39.
them. 18. Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. 19. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way-side. 20. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: 21. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

22. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. 23. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.

We have here Christ's preaching, and may observe,

1. When Christ preached this sermon; it was the same day that he preached the sermon in the foregoing chapter; so unwearied was he in doing good, and working the works of him that sent him. Note, Christ was for preaching both ends of the day, and has by his example recommended that practice to his church; we must in the morning sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand, Eccl. 11.

6. An afternoon sermon well heard, will be so far from driving out the morning sermon, that it will rather clenche it, and fasten the nail in a sure place. Though Christ had been in the morning opposed and provok'd at by his enemies, and disconcerted, and interrupted by his friends, yet he went on with his work; and in the latter part of the day, we do not find that he met with such discouragements. Those who with courage and zeal break through difficulties in God's service, will perhaps find them not so apt to recur as they fear. Resist them, and they will flee.

2. To whom he preached; there were great multitudes gathered together to him, and they were the auditors; we do not find that any of the Scribes or Pharisees were present. They were willing to hear him when he preached in the synagogue, (ch. 12. 9, 14,) but they thought it below them to hear a sermon by the sea-side, though Christ himself was the Preacher; and truly he had better have their room than their company, for now they were absent, he went on quietly and without contradiction. Note, Sometimes there is most of the power of religion where there is least of the flesh of it: The sea receive the gospel. When Christ went to the sea-side, multitudes were presently gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Christ is, there is the church, though it be by the sea-side. Note, Those who would get good by the word, must be willing to follow it in all its removings; when the ark shifts, shift after it. The Pharisees had no need of this sermon; and yet Christ had made great suggestions, to drive the people off from following Christ, but they still flocked after him as much as ever. Note, Christ will be glorified in spite of all opposition; he will be followed.

3. Where he preached this sermon. (1.) His meeting-place was the sea-side. He went out of the house (because there was no room for the auditory) into the open air. It was pity but such a Preacher should have had the most spacious, sumptuous, and convenient place to preach in, that could be devised, like one of the Roman theatres; but he was now in his state of humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he denied himself the honours due to him: as he had not a house of his own to live in, so he had not a chapel of his own to preach in. By this he taught us in the external circumstances of worship not to covet that which is stately, but to make the best of the conveniences which God in his providence allots to us. When Christ was born, he was crowned into the stable, and now to the seaside, upon the strand, where all persons might come to him with freedom. He that was Truth itself sought no corners, (no adyga,) as the pagan mystics did. Wisdom cries without, Prov. 1. 20. John 18. 20.

(2.) His pulpit was a ship; not like Ezra's pulpit, that was made for the purpose, (Neh. 8. 4,) but converted to this use for want of a better. No place amiss for such a Preacher, whose presence dignified and consecrated any place: let not those who preach Christ be ashamed, though they have mean and inconvenient places to preach in. Some observe, that when the people stood upon the seacoast, while the Preacher was upon the water in more hazard. Ministers are most exposed to trouble. Here was a true rostrum, a ship-pulpit. 4. What and how he preached. (1.) He spake many things unto them. Many more it is likely than are here recorded, but all excellent and necessary things, things that belong to our peace, things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven; they were not obscure, but things of everlasting consequence, that Christ spoke of. It concerns us to give a more earnest heed, when Christ has so many things to say to us, that we miss not any of them. (2.) What he spake was in parables: a parable sometimes signifies any wise, weighty saying that is instructive; but here in the gospels it generally signifies a continued similitude or comparison, by which spiritual and heavenly things were described in language comprehensible to the ear. It was a way of teaching used very much, not only by the Jewish Rabbins, but by the Pharisees, and the other wise men of the east; and it was found very profitable, and the more so for its being pleasant. Our Saviour used it much, and in it descended to the capacities of people, and dispensed to them in their own language. God had long used similitudes by his servants the prophets, (Hos. 12. 10,) and to little purpose; now he uses similitudes by his Son; surely they will reverence him who speaks from heaven, and of heavenly things, and yet clothes them with expressions borrowed from things earthly. See John 3. 12. So descending in a cloud. Now, I. We have here the general reason why Christ taught in parables. The disciples were a little surprised at it, for hitherto, in his preaching, he had not much used them; but therefore they ask, Why didest thou to them in parables? Because they were truly desirous that the people might hear with understanding. They do not say, Why speakest thou to us? (they knew how to get the parables explained,) but to them. Note, We ought to be concerned for the edification of others, as well as for our own, by the word preached; and if ourselves be strong, yet to hear the infirmities of the weak. He spake these parables largely, v. 11—17, where he tells them, that therefore he preached by parables, because thereby the things of God were made more plain and easy to them who were willing to be taught, and at the same time more difficult and obscure to those who were willingly ignorant; and thus the gospel would be a savour of life to some, and of death to others. A parable, like the pillar...
of cloud and fire, turns a dark side towards Egyptians, which confounds them, but a light side towards Israelites, which comforts them, and so answers a double intention. The same light directs the eyes of some, but dazzles the eyes of others. Now,

1. This reason is laid down, (v. 11.) Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. That is, (1.) The disciples had knowledge, but the people had not. Christ's church is a school of mysteries, and need not in this familiar way to be instructed; but the people are ignorant, are yet but babes, and must be taught as such by plain similitudes, being yet incapable of receiving instruction in any other way: for though they have eyes, they know not how to use them; so some. Or, (2.) The disciples were well inclined to the knowledge of gospel-mysteries, and would search into the parables, and by that would be led into a more intimate acquaintance with those mysteries; but the carnal hearers that rested in bare hearing, and would not be at the pains to look further, nor to ask the meaning of the parables, would be never the wiser, and so would justly suffer for their remissness. A parable is a shell that keeps good fruit for the diligent, but keeps it from the slothful. Now gospel-mysteries are mysteries in the kingdom of heaven, and without understanding the mystery of godliness: Christ's incarnation, satisfaction, intercession, our justification and sanctification by union with Christ, and indeed the whole work of redemption, from first to last, are mysteries, could never have been discovered but by divine revelation. (1 Cor. 15. 51.) were at this time discovered but in part to the disciples, and will never be fully discovered till the veil be rent; but the inscrutableness of gospel-truth should not discourage us from but quicken us in, our inquiries after it and searches into it. (1.) It is graciously given to the disciples of Christ to be acquainted with these mysteries. Knowledge is the first gift of God, and it is a distinguishing gift; (Prov. 2. 6.) It was given to the apostles, because they were Christ's constant followers and attendants. Note. The nearer we draw to Christ, and the more familiar we become with these, the better acquainted we shall be with gospel-mysteries. (2.) It is given to all true believers, who have an experimental knowledge of the gospel-mysteries, and that is without doubt the best knowledge: a principle of grace in the heart is that which makes men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and in the faith of Christ, and so in the meaning of parables; and for want of that, Nicodemus, a master in Israel, talked of the new birth as a blind man's colours. (3.) There are those to whom this knowledge is not given, and a man can receive nothing unless it be given him from above; (John 3. 37.) and be it remembered, that God is debtor to no man; his grace is his own; he gives or withholds it at pleasure. (Rom. 11. 33.) the difference must be resolved in God's grace alone, 1 Pet. 1. 21, 22. 2. This reason is further illustrated by the rule God observes in dispensing his gifts; he bestows them on those who improve them, but takes them away from those who bury them. It is a rule among men, that they will rather intrust their money with those who have increased their estates by their industry, than with those who have diminished them by their slothfulness.

1. Here is a promise to him that has, that has true grace, pursuant to the election of grace, that has, and uses what he has; he shall have more abundance: God's favours are earnest of further favours: where he lays the foundation, he will build upon it. Christ's disciples used the knowledge they now had, and they had more abundance at the pouring out of the Spirit, Acts 2. They who have the truth of grace, shall have the increase of grace, even to an abundance in glory, Prov. 4. 18. Joseph—He will add, Gen. 30. 24.

2. Here is a threatening to him that has not, that has no desire of grace, that makes no right use of the gifts and graces he has; has no root, no solid principle; that has, but uses not what he has; from him shall be taken away that which he has, or seems to have. His leaves shall wither, his gifts decay; the means of grace he has, and makes no use of; shall be taken away out of his hands, and taken out of his hands, that are likely to become bankrupts quickly.

3. This reason is particularly explained, with reference to the two sorts of people Christ had to do with.

(1.) Some were willingly ignorant; and such were amused by the parables, (v. 13.) because they seeing, see not. They had shut their eyes against the clear light of Christ's plainer preaching, and therefore were now left in the dark. Seeing Christ's person, they see not his glory, see no difference between him and another man; seeing his miracles, and hearing his preaching, they see not, they hear not with any concern or application, they understand neither. Note, (1.) There are many that see the gospel-light, that have the gospel-gifts, that have the gospel-earnest, but never reach their hearts, nor bring it any place in them. (2.) It is just with God to take away the light from those who shut their eyes against it; that such as will be ignorant, may be so; and God's dealing thus with them magnifies his distinguishing grace to his disciples.

Now in this the scripture would be fulfilled, v. 14, 15. It is quoted from Isa. 6. 9, 10. The evangelical prophet that spoke most plainly of gospel-grace, foretold the contents of it, and the consequences of that contempt. It is referred to no less than six times in the New Testament, which intimates, that in gospel-times spiritual judgments would be most common, which make least noise, but are most dreadful. That which was spoken of the sinners in Isaiah's time, was fulfilled in those in Christ's time, and it is still fulfilling every day; while for the wicked heart of man keeps up the same sin, the righteous hand of God inflicts the same punishment. Here is,

First. A description of sinners' wilful blindness and hardness, which is their sin. This people's heart is waxed gross; it is fatted, so the word is; which denotes both sensuality and senselessness; (Ps. 119. 70.) secure under the word and rod of God, and scornful as Jeshurun, that waxed fat and kicked, Deut. 32. 15. And when the heart is this heavy, no wonder that the ears are dull of hearing; the whispers of the Spirit they hear not at all; the loud calls of the word, though the word be nigh them, they regard not. nor are at all affected with it; They stop their ears, Ps. 58. 4, 5. And because they are resolved to be ignorant, they shut both the learning senses; for their eyes also they have closed, resolved that they would not see light come into the world, while they shut, shut, shut, the right eye of their vision, their windows, because they loved darkness rather than light, John 3. 19. 2 Pet. 3. 5.

Secondly. A description of that judicial blindness, which is the just punishment of this. "By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; what means of grace you have, shall be to no purpose to you; though, in mercy to others, they are continued, yet, in judgment on you, the blessing upon them is deni-
whom he has given thee hearing, and the seeing eye, in vain. Thus does God choose sinners’ delusions, (Isa. 66. 4.) and binds them over to the greatest ruin, by giving them up to their own heart’s hate; (Ps. 81. 11, 12.) Let them alone; (Hos. 4. 17.) My Spirit shall not always strive, Gen. 6. 3.

Thirdly, The woful effect and consequence of this; Let at any time they should see, They will not see, because they will not turn; and God says that they shall not see, because they shall not turn; Let they should be converted, and I should heal them.

Note, 1. That seeing, hearing, and understanding, are necessary to conversion; for God, in working grace, deals with men as men, as rational agents; he draws with the cords of a man, changes the heart by opening the eyes, and turns from the power of Satan with the eyes of them, that see, darkness to light, Acts 26. 18. 2. All those who are truly converted to God, shall certainly be healed by him. If they be converted I shall heal them, I shall save them; so that if sinners perish, it is not to be imputed to God, but to themselves; they foolishly expected to be healed, without being converted.

3. It is just with God to deny his grace to those who have long and diligently considered the proposals of it, and resisted the power of it. Pity not the reproacher, hardened his own heart, (Exod. 8. 15, 32) and afterwards God hardened it, ch. 9. 12. 10. 20. Let us therefore fear, lest by sinning against the divine grace, we sin it away.

(3.) Others were effectually called to be the disciples of Christ, and were truly desirous to be taught of him; and they were instructed, and made to improve greatly in knowledge, by these parables, especially when they were converted; and by them, the things of God were made more plain and easy, more intelligible and familiar, and more apt to be remembered, (v. 16, 17.) Your eyes see, your ears hear. They saw the glory of God in Christ’s person; they heard the mind of God in Christ’s doctrine; they saw much, and were desirous to see more, and thereby were prepared to receive further instruction; they had opportunity for it, by being constant attendants on Christ, and they should have it from day to day, and grace with it. Now this Christ speaks of,

[1.] As a blessing: "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; it is your happiness, and it is a happiness for which you are indebted to the peculiar favour and blessing of God." It is a promised blessing; that in the days of the Messiah they shall not be dim, Isa. 32. 3. The eyes of the meanest believer, who, experimentally the grace of Christ, are more blessed than those of the greatest scholars, the greatest masters in experimental philosophy, that are strangers to God; who, like the other gods they serve, have eyes, and see not. Blessed are your eyes. Note, True blessedness is entailed upon the right understanding and due improvement of the mysteries of the kingdom of God. The hearing ear and the seeing eye are God’s work in those who are sanctified; they are the work of his grace, (Prov. 20. 12.) and they are a blessed work, which shall be fulfilled with power, when those who now see through a glass darkly, shall see face to face. It was to illustrate this blessedness that Christ said so much of the misery of those who are left in ignorance; they have eyes and see not; but blessed are your eyes. Note, The knowledge of Christ, is a distinguishing favour to those who have it, and upon them it is bestowed, under the greater obligations; see John 14. 22. The apostles were to teach others, and therefore were themselves blessed with the clearest discoveries of divine truth: The watchmen shall see eye to eye, Isa. 52. 8.

[2.] As a transcendent blessing, desired by, but not granted to, many prophets and righteous men, v. 17. The Old-Testament saints, who had some glimpses, some glimmerings, of gospel-light, coveted earnestly further discoveries. They had the types, shadows, and prophecies, of those things, but longed to see the Substance, that glorious end of those things which they could not steadfastly look unto; that glorious inside of those things which they could not look upon.

The Consolation of Israel, but did not see it, because the fullness of time was not yet come. Note, First, Those who know something of Christ, cannot but covet to know more. Secondly, The discoveries of divine grace are made, even to prophets and righteous men, but according to the dispensation they are under. Though they were the favourites of Heaven, with whom God’s secret was, yet they have not seen the things which they desired, and could not see, because they were determined not to bring them to light yet; and his favours shall not anticipate his counsels. There was then, as there is still, a glory to be revealed; something in reserve, that they without us should not be made perfect, Heb. 11. 40. Thirdly, For the exciting of our thankfulness, and the quickening of our diligence, it is good for us to consider what means we enjoy, and what discoveries are daily made in the gospel, above what they had, and enjoyed, who lived under the Old-Testament dispensation, especially in the revelations of the atonement for sin; see what are the advantages of the New Testament above the Old; (2 Cor. 3. 7, &c. Heb. 12. 18.) and see that our improvements be proportionable to our advantages.

1. We have, in these verses, one of the parables which our Saviour put forth; it is that of the sower and the seeds; both the parable itself, and the explication of it. Christ’s parables are borrowed from common, ordinary things, not from any philosophical notions or speculations, or the unusual phenomena of nature, though applicable enough to the matter in hand, but from the most obvious things that are of every day’s observation, and come within the reach of the meanest capacity; many of them are fetched from the husbandman’s calling, as this of the sower, and the seed; that is, the ministration of the gospel.

That spiritual things might hereby be made more plain, and, by familiar similitudes, might be made the more easy to slide into our understandings. That common actions might hereby be spiritualized, and we might take occasion from those things which fall so often under our view, to meditate with delight on the things of God; and thus when our hands are busiest about the world, we may not only notwithstanding that, but desire with the help of God, to have our hearts in heaven. Thus the word of God shall talk with us, talk familiarly with us, Prov. 6. 22.

The parable of the sower is plain enough, v. 3—9. The exposition of it from Christ himself, who knew best what was his own meaning. The disciples, when they asked, Why speakest thou to them in parables? (v. 10.) intimated a desire to have the parable explained for the sake of their understandings, nor was it any disparagement to their own knowledge to desire it for themselves. Our Lord Jesus kindly took the hint, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the parable, directing his discourse to the disciples, but in the hearing of the multitude; for we have not the account of his dismissing them till v. 35. "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower;" (v. 18.) you have heard it, but let us go into it and understand it. It is easy to think we contribute much to our understanding of the word and profiting by it, to hear over again what we have heard; (Phil. 3. 1.) "You have heard it, but hear the interpretation of it." Note, Then only we hear the word aright, and to good purpose, when we un-
understand what we hear; it is no hearing at all, if it be not with understanding, Neh. 2, 2. It is God's grace indeed that gives the understanding, but it is our duty to give our minds to understand.

Let us therefore compare the parable and the exposition.

(1.) The seed sown is the word of God, here call ed the word of the kingdom, (v. 19.) the kingdom of heaven, that is the kingdom; the kingdoms of the world, compared with that, are not to be called kingdoms. The gospel comes from that kingdom, and duty tests it; the word of the gospel is the word of the kingdom; it is the word of the King, and where that is, there is power; it is a law, by which we must be ruled and governed. This word is the seed sown, which seems a dead, dry thing, but all the product is virtually in it. It is incorruptible seed; (1 Pet. 1, 23.) it is the gospel that brings forth fruit in souls, Col. 1, 5, 6.

(2.) The sower that scatters the seed is our Lord Jesus Christ, either by himself, or by his ministers; see v. 37. The people are God's household, his tillage, so the word is; and ministers are labourers together with God, 1 Cor. 3, 9. Preaching to a multitude is sowing the corn; we know not where it must light; only see that it be good, that it be clean, and be sure to give it seed enough. The sowing of this the sowing of a people for God's field, the corn of his floor, Isa. 21, 10.

(3.) The ground in which this seed is sown is the hearts of the children of men, which are differently qualified and disposed, and accordingly the success of the word is different. Note, Man's heart is like soil, capable of improvement, of bearing good fruit; it is pity it should lie fallow, or be like the field of the slothful, Prov. 24, 30. The soul is the proper place for the word of God to dwell, and work, and rule in; its operation is upon conscience, it is to light that candle of the Lord. Now accordingly as we are, so the word is to us: Recipiesit ad medium recipicientem —The reception depends upon the receiver. As it is with the earth; some sort of ground, take ever so much pains with it, and throw ever so good seed into it, yet it brings forth no fruit to any purpose; while the good soil brings forth peradii so forth, with the hearts of men, whose different characters are here represented by four sorts of ground, of which three are bad, and but one good. Note, The number of fruitless hearers is very great, even of those who heard Christ himself preach. Who has believed our report? It is a melancholy prospect which this parable gives us of the congregations of those who hear the gospel preached, that scarcely one in four brings forth fruit to perfection. Many are called with the common call, but in few is the eternal choice evidenced by the efficacy of that call, ch. 20, 16.

Now observe the characters of these four sorts of ground.

[1.] The highway ground, v. 4—19. They had pathways through their corn-fields, (ch. 12, 1.) and though they were not good, yet the fowls of the air and the birds picked it up. The place where Christ's hearers now stood, represented the characters of most of them, the sand on the sea-shore, which was to the seed like the highway ground.

Observe, First, What kind of hearers are compared to the highway ground; such as hear the word and understand it not; and it is their own fault. They take no heed to it, take no hold of it; they do not come with any design to get good, as the highway was never intended to be sown. They come before God as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit; but it is merely for fashion-sake, to see and be seen; they mind not what is said, it comes in at one ear and goes out at the other, and makes no impression.

Secondly, How they come to be unprofitable hearers. The wicked one, tares, the devil, cometh and catcheth away that which was sown.—Such mindless, careless, trifling hearers, are an easy prey to Satan; who as he is the great murderer of souls, so he is the great thief of sermons, and will be sure to rob us of the word, if we take not care to keep it: as the birds pick up the seed that falls on the ground that is neither ploughed before, nor harrowed after. If we break not up the fallow ground, by preparing our hearts for the word, and humbling them to it, and engaging our own attention; and if we cover not the word with much prayer and fasting; if we give not a more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, we are as the highway ground. Note, The devil is a sworn enemy to our profiting by the word of God; and none do more befriend his design than heedless hearers, who are thinking of something else, when they should be thinking of the things that belong to their peace.

[2.] The stony ground. Some fell upon stony places, (v. 6, 7,) which represents the case of hearers that go further than the former, who receive some good impressions of the word, but they are not lasting, v. 20, 21. Note, It is possible we may be a great deal better than some others, and yet not be so good as we should be; may go beyond our neighbours, and yet come short of heaven. Now observe two consequences of such hearers that are represented by the stony ground.

First, How far they went. 1. They hear the word; they turn neither their backs upon it, nor a deaf ear to it. Note, Hearing the word, though ever so frequently, ever so gravely, if we rest in that, will never bring us to heaven. 2. They are quick in hearing, swift to hear, he anon receiveth it, (v. 24,) he is ready to receive it, forthwith it springeth up, (v. 5.) It is not so with many that hear; they hear as they hear, and let it fall in stony ground. Note, Hypocrites often get the start of true christians in the shows of profession, and are often too hot to hold. He receiveth it straightway, without trying it; swallows it without chewing, and then there can never be a good digestion. Those are most likely to hold fast that which is good, that prove all things, 1 Thess. 5, 23. They receive it with joy, Note, There are many that are very glad to hear a good sermon, that yet do not profit by it; they may be pleased with the word, and yet not changed and ruled by it; the heart may melt under the word, and yet not be melted down by the word, much less into it, as into a mould. Many taste the good word of God, (Heb. 6, 5.) and say they find sweetness in it, but some beloved is rolled under the tongue, which it would not stick with, and so they spit it out again. 4. They endure for a while, like a violent motion which continues as long as the impression of the force remains, but ceases when that has spent itself. Note, Many endure for a while, that do not endure to the end, and so come short of the happiness which is promised to them only that persevere; (ch. 10, 22.) they did make a fair show, but their life was short.

Secondly, How they fell away, so that no fruit was brought to perfection; no more than the corn, that having no depth of earth from which to draw moisture, is scorched and withered by the heat of the sun. And the reason is,

1. They have gone root in themselves, no settled, fixed principles in their judgments; no firm resolution in their wills, nor any rooted habits in their affections, in which that which will be the either the sap of the strength of their profession. Note, (1.) It is possible there may be the green blade of a profession, where yet there is not the root of grace; hardness prevails in the heart, and what there is of soil and softness is only in the surface; inwardly they are no more affected than a stone; they have no root, they are not by faith united to Christ who is
Our Root: they derive not from him, they depend not on him. (2) Where there is not a principle, though there be a profession, we cannot expect perseverance. Those who have no root will endure but a while. And without root, the laden vessel, yet will certainly fall in stress of weather, and never make her port.

2. Times of trial come, and then they come to nothing. When tribulation and persecution arise because of the word, he is offended; it is a stumbling-block in his way which he cannot get over, and so he flies off, and this is all his profession comes to.

Note, (1) After a fair gale of opportunity usually followed by a tempest of trial, to try who have received the word in sincerity, and who have not. When the word of Christ’s kingdom comes to be the word of Christ’s patience, (Rev. 3. 10.) then is the trial, who keeps it, and who does not, Rev. 1. 9. It is wisdom to prepare for such a day. (2) When trying times come, those who have no root are soon offended; they first quarrel with their profession, and then quit it; first find fault with it, and then they are a fruitless work of the grace of God. Gal. 5. 11. Observe, Persecution is represented in the parable by the scorching sun; (v. 6.) the same sun which warms and cherishes that which was well rooted, withers and burns up that which wanted root. As the word of Christ, so the cross of Christ, is to some a favour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death; the same tribulation which dries some to apostasy and ruin, works for others far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Trials which shake some, confirm others, Phil. 1. 12. Observe how soon they fall away, by and by; as soon rotten as they were ripe; a profession taken up without consideration is commonly let fall without it: “Light come, light go.”

3. The thorny ground. Some fell among thorns, (which are a good guard to the corn when they are in the hedge, and the thorns are in the field,) and the thorns sprang up; which intimates that they did not appear, or but little, when the corn was sown, but afterwards they proved choking it, v. 7. This went farther than the former, for it had root; and it represents the condition of those who do not quite cast off their profession, and yet come short of any saving benefit by it; the good they gain by the word, being insensibly overcome and overwhelmed by the difficulties which arise, and destroys the word in the heart, as much as persecution does; and more dangerously, because more silently: the thorns spoiled the root, the thorns spoil the fruit.

Now what are these choking thorns? First, The cares of this world. Care for another world would quicken the springing of this seed, but care for this world chokes it. Worldly cares are filly compared to thorns, for they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the work of the age of the cross, to their place to stop a gap, but a man must be well armed that deals much in them; (2 Sam. 23. 6, 7.) they are entangling, vexing, scratching, and their end is to be burned, Heb. 6. 8. These thorns choke the good seed. Note, Worldly cares are great hindrances to our profiting by the word of God, and our proficiency in religion. They eat up that vigour of soul which should be spent in divine things; divert us from the work of duty; bring mischief of all afterwards; quenching the sparks of good affections, and bursting the cords of good resolutions: those who are careful and numbered among many things, commonly neglect the one thing needful.

Secondly, The deceitfulness of riches. Those who, by their care and industry, have raised estates, and so the danger that arises from care seems to be over, and they continue hearers of the word; yet are as in a snare: (Jer. 5. 4, 5;) it is hard for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven; they are apt to promise themselves that in riches which is not in them; to rely upon them, and to take an inordinate complacency in them; and this chokes the word as much as care did. Observe, It is not so much riches, as the deceitfulness of riches, that does the mischief: now they cannot be said to be deceitful to us unless we put our confidence in them, and raise our expectations from them, and then it is that they choke the good seed.

4. The good ground; (v. 18.) Others fell into good ground, and it is pity but that good seed should always meet with good soil, and then there is no loss; such are not good, but: such are unfruitful. Note, Though there are many that receive the grace of God, and the word of his grace, in vain, yet God has a remnant by whom it is received to good purpose; for God’s word shall not return empty, Isa. 55. 10, 11.

Now that which distinguished this good ground from the rest, was, in one word, fruitfulness. By this true Christians are distinguished from hypocrites, that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and to perfect things; so shall ye be my disciples, John 15. 8. He does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns; but there were none that prevailed to hinder its fruitfulness. Saints, in this world, are not perfectly free from the remains of sin; but happily freed from the reign of it.

The hearers represented by the good ground are,

First, Intelligent hearers; they hear the word and understand it; they understand not only the sense and meaning of the words, but their own concern in them; they understand it as a man of business understands his business. God in his word deals with men as men, in a rational way, and gains possession of the will and affections by opening the understanding; whereas Satan, who is a thief and a robber, comes not in by that door, but climbeth up another way.

Secondly, Fruitful hearers, which is an evidence of their good understanding, which also beareth fruit. Fruit is to every seed its own body, a substantial product in the heart and life, agreeable to the seed of the word received. We then bear fruit, when we practise according to the word; when the temper of our minds and the tenor of our lives are conformable to the gospel we have received, and we do as we are taught.

Thirdly, Spotless, or alike fruitful; some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Note, Among fruitful Christians, some are more fruitful than others: where there is true grace, yet there are degrees of it; some are of greater attainments in knowledge and holiness than others; all Christ’s scholars are not in the same form. We should aim at the highest degree, to bring forth an hundred-fold, as Isaac’s ground did, (Gen. 29. 13.) abounding in the work of the Lord, John 15. 8. But if the ground be good, and the fruit right, the heart honest, and the life of a piece with it, those who bring forth but thirty-fold shall be graciously accepted of God, and it will be fruit abounding to their account, for we are under grace, and not under the law.

Lastly, He closes the parable with a solemn call to attention, (v. 9.) Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Note, The sense of hearing cannot be better employed than in hearing the word of God. Some care for hearing sweet melody, their ears are only the daughters of music; (Ecc. 12. 4.) there is no melody like that of the word of God: others are for hearing new things; (Acts 10. 21.) no news like that.

24. Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: 25. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the
wheat, and went his way. 26. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares? 28. He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29. But he said, Nay: lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. 31. Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: 32. Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. 33. Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 34. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: 35. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables: I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. 36. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. 37. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man: 38. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one: 39. The enemy that sowed them is the devil: the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. In these verses, we have,

I. Another reason given why Christ preached by parables, v. 34, 35. All these things he spake in parables, because the time was not yet come, for the more clear and plain discoveries of the mysteries of the kingdom. Christ, to keep the people attending and expecting, preached in parables, and without parables such he would not have said. He did not look upon the time and in this sermon. Note, Christ tries all ways and methods to do good to the souls of men, and to make impressions upon them; if men will not be instructed and influenced by plain preaching, he will try them with parables; and the reason here given is, That the scripture might be fulfilled. The passage here quoted for it, is part of the preface to that historical Psalms, 78, 2. Now shall I speak in a parable. What the Psalmist David, or Asaph, says there of his narrative, is accommodated to Christ's sermons; and that great precedent would serve to vindicate this way of preaching from the offence which some took at it. Here is, 1. The matter of Christ's preaching; he preached things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world. The mystery of the gospel had been hid in God in his councils and decrees, from the beginning of the world, Eph. 3. 9. Compare Rom. 16. 25. 1 Cor. 2. 7. Col. 1. 26. If we delight in the records of ancient things, and in the revelation of secret things, how welcome should the gospel be to us, which has in it such antiquity and such mystery! It was from the foundation of the world, that such things were prepared; and it is now done away, and those secret things are now become such things revealed as belong to us and to our children, Deut. 29. 29. 2. The manner of Christ's preaching; he preached by parables; wise sayings, but figurative, and which help to engage attention and a diligent search. Solomon's sententious dictates, which are full of similitudes, are called Proverbs, or parables; it is the same word, what in this, as in other things, Behold, a greater than Solomon is here, in whom are hid treasures of wisdom.

II. The parable of the tares, and the exposition of it; they must be taken together, for the exposition explains the parable, and the parable illustrates the exposition.

Observe, 1. The disciples' request to their Master to have this parable explained to them; (v. 36.) The multitude which had gathered about him, and it being a great multitude, that so many of them went away no wiser than they came; they had heard a sound of words, and that was all. It is sad to think how many go away from sermons with the word of grace in their ears, but not the work of grace in their hearts. Christ went into the house, not so much for his own repose, as for particular converse with his disciples, whose instruction he chiefly intended in all his preaching. He was ready to do good in all places, the disciples laid hold on the opportunity, and they came to him. Note, Those who would be wise for every thing else, must be wise to discern and improve their opportunities, especially of converse with Christ, of converse with him alone, in secret meditation and prayer. It is very good, when we return from the solemn assembly, to sit by ourselves, and to inquire what we have heard there, and whether familiar discourse to help one another to understand and remember it, and to be affected with it; for we lose the benefit of many a sermon by vain and unprofitable discourse after it. See Luke 24. 32. Deut. 6, 6, 7. It is especially good, if it may be, to ask of the ministers of the word the meaning of the word, for their lips should keep knowledge, Mal. 2. 7. Private communion would contribute much to their benefit by public preaching. Nathan's Thou art the man, was that which touched David to the heart.

The disciples' request to their Master was, Declare unto us the parable of the tares. This implies an acknowledgment of their ignorance, which they
were not ashamed to make. It is probably they apprehended the general scope of the parable, but they desired to understand it more particularly, and to be assured that they took it right. Note, They are rightly divine for Christ's teaching, but are sensible of their ignorance, and sincerely desirous to be taught. He will reach the humble, (Ps. 25. 8, 9,) but will for this be inquired of. If any man lack instruction, let him ask it of God. Christ had expounded the foregoing parable unasked, but for the exposition of this they ask him. Note, The mercies we have received must be improved, both for direct profit and for our encouragement in prayer. The first light and the first grace are given in a preventing way, further degrees of both which must be daily prayed for.

2. The exposition Christ gave of the parable, in answer to their request; so ready is Christ to answer such desires of his disciples. Now the drift of the parable is, to represent to us the present and future state of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel-church; Christ's care of it, the devil's cunniy against it, the mixture that there is in it of good and bad in this world, and the separation between them in the other world. Note, The visible church is the kingdom of heaven; though there be many hypocrites in it, Christ rules in it as a King; and there is a remnant in it, that are the subjects and heirs of heaven, from whom, as the better part, it is denominated: The church is the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

Let us go over the particulars of the exposition of the parable.

1. That he sows the good seed is the Son of man. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the field, the Lord of the harvest, the Sower of good seed. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts to the world; not only good ministers, but other good men. Note, Whatever good seed there is in the world, it all comes from the hand of Christ, and is of his sowing: truths properly and really sown, are good seed, and all owing to Christ. Ministers are instruments in Christ's hand to sow good seed; are employed by him and under him, and the success of their labours depend purely upon his blessing; so that it may well be said, It is Christ, and no other, that sows the good seed; he is the Son of man, one of us, that his terror might not make us afraid; the Son of man Mediator, and that authority.

2. The field is the world, the world over, a large field, capable of bringing forth good fruit; the more is it to be lamented that it brings forth so much bad fruit: the world here is the visible church, scattered all the world over, not confined to one nation. Observe, In the parable it is called his field; the world is Christ's field, for all things are delivered unto him of the Father; whatever power and interest the devil has in the world, it is usurped and unjust; when Christ comes to take possession, he comes where his right is; it is his field, and because it is his he took care to sow it with good seed.

3. The good seed are the children of the kingdom, true saints. They are, [1.] The children of the kingdom; not in profession only, as the Jews were, (ch. 8. 12.) but in sincerity: Jews inwardly, Israelites indeed, incorporated in faith and obedience to Jesus Christ, the King of the church. 2. They are the good seed in distinction and separation, Ps. 128. 6. The seed is the substance of the field; so the holy seed, Isa. 6. 13. The seed is scattered, so are the saints; dispersed here and there another, though in some places thicker sown than in others. The seed is that from which fruit is expected; what fruit of honour and service God has from this world he has from the saints, whom he has sowed unto himself in the earth, Hos. 2. 23.

4. The tares are the children of the wicked one. Here is the character of sinners, hypocrites, and all

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profane and wicked people. [1.] They are the children of the devil, as a wicked one. Though they do not own his name, yet they bear his image, do his lusts, and after him they have their education; he rules over them, he works in them, Eph. 2. 2. John 8. 44. [2.] They are tares in the field of this world; they do no good, they do hurt; unprofitable in themselves, and hurtful to the good seed, both by temptation and persecution: they are seeds in the garden, have the same rain, and sunshine, and soil, with the good plants, but are good for nothing; the tares are among the wheat. Note, God has so ordered it, that good and bad should be mixed together in this world, that the good may be exercised, the bad left inexcusable, and a difference made between earth and heaven.

5. The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil; a sworn enemy to Christ and all that is good, to the glory of the good God, and the comfort and happiness of all good men. He is an enemy to the child of the world, which he endeavours to make his own, by sowing his tares in it. Ever since he became a wicked spirit himself, he has been industrious to promote wickedness, and has made it his business, and therein to counterwork Christ.

Now concerning the sowing of the tares, observe in the parable,

1. That they were sown while men slept. Magistrates sleep, who by their power, ministers sleep, who by their preaching, should have prevented this mischief. Note, Satan watches all opportunities, and lays hold on all advantages, to propagate vice and profaneness. The prejudice he does to particular persons is when reason and conscience sleep, when they are off their guard; we have therefore need to be sober, and vigilant. It was in the night for that is the sleeping time. Note, Satan rules in the darkness of this world; that is, an opportunity,

2. The enemy, when he had sown the tares, went his way, (v. 25.) that it might not be known who did it. He is a crafty, unscrupulous emissary, he studies most to conceal himself; for his design is in danger of being spoiled if he be seen in it; and therefore when he comes to sow tares, he transforms himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14. He went his way, as if he had done no harm; such is the way of the adulterous woman, Prov. 30. 20. Observe, Such is the pru!eness of fallen man to sin, that if the enemy sow the tares, he may even go his way, they will spring up of themselves, and do hurt; whereas, when good seed is sown, it must be tended, watered, and fenced, or it will come to nothing.

3. The tares appeared not till the blades sprung up, and brought forth fruit, v. 26. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the hearts of men, which is long hid under the cloak of a plausible profession, but breaks out at last, as it appears in the sudden and wide spread of the tares, lie a great while under the ceds, and at first seeming so, it is hard to distinguish them; but when a trying time comes, when fruit is to be brought forth, when good is to be done that has difficulty and hazard attending it, then you will return and discern between the sincere and the hypocrite; then you may say, This is wheat, and that is tares.

3. The servants, when they were aware of it, complained to their master; [v. 26.] Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in the field? No doubt he did; whatever is amiss in the church, we are sure it is not of Christ: considering the seed which Christ sows, we may well ask, with wonder, Where should
the tares come? Note, The rise of errors, the breaking out of scandals, and the growth of profanedness, are matters of great grief to all the servants of Christ; especially to his faithful ministers, who are directed to complain of it to him whose the field is. It is hard to see such tares growing so in the garden of the Lord; to see the good soil wasted, the good seed choked, and such a reflection cast on the name and honour of Christ, as if his field were no better than the field of the slothful, all grown over with thorns.

[3.] The master was soon aware whence it was; (v. 28.) An enemy had done this. He does not lay the blame upon the servants; they could not help it, but a good reason why God might sooner have chastised them. Note, The ministers of Christ, that are faithful and diligent, shall not be judged of Christ, and therefore should not be reproached by men, for the mixture of bad with good, hypocrites with the sincere, in the field of the church. It must needs be that such offences will come; and they shall not be laid to our charge, if we do our duty, though it have not the desired success. Though they shall sometimes be, if they do not love sleep; though tares be sown, if they do not sow them nor water them, nor allow of them, the blame shall not lie at their door.

[6.] The servants were very forward to have these tares rooted up. "Wilt thou that we go and do it presently?" Note, The over hasty and unconsiderate zeal of Christ's servants, before they have consulted with their Master, is sometimes ready, with some haste, to pluck up the tares, before any time is taken to view whether it be the best way to do it, or whether it be possible that they presume to be tares: Lord, wilt thou that we call for fire from heaven?

[7.] The Master very wisely prevented this; (v. 29.) Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Note, It is not possible for any man infallibly to distinguish between tares and wheat, but he may be mistaken; and therefore is it the wisdom and grace of Christ, that he will rather permit the tares, than any thing else, to grow with the wheat. It is certain, scandals offenders are to be censured, and we are to withdraw from them; those who are openly the children of the wicked ones, are not to be admitted to special ordinances; yet it is possible there may be a discipline, either so mistaken in its rules, or so over-nice in the application of them, as may prove vexatious to many that are truly distressed. But mark, it is most necessary, in the midst of families in such cases, moderation must be used in inflicting and continuing church-censures, lest the wheat be trodden down, if not plucked up. The wisdom from above, as it is pure, so it is peaceable, and those who oppose themselves must not be cut off, but instructed, and with meekness, 2 Tim. 2. 25. The tares, if continued under the means of grace, may become good corn; they therefore have patience with them.

[6.] The overseers of the world, v. 59. This world will have an end; though it continue long, it will not continue always; time will shortly be swallowed up in eternity. At the end of the world, there will be a great harvest-day, a day of judgment; at harvest all is ripe and ready to be cut down, both good and bad are ripe at the great day, Rev. 6. 11. It is the harvest of the earth, Rev. 14. 15. At harvest every man reapeth as he sowed; every man's ground, and seed, and skill, and industry, will be manifested: see Gal. 6. 7, 8. Then they who sowed precious seed, will come again with rejoicing, (Ps. 126. 5, 6.) with the joy of harvest; (Isa. 9. 3.) when the sluggard, who would not plough by reason of cold, shall beg, and have nothing; (Prov. 20. 4.) shall cry, Lord, Lord, but in vain; when the harvest of those who sowed to the flesh, shall be a day of grief, and desolate sorrow, Isa. 17. 11.

(7.) The reapers are the angels; they shall be employed, in the great day, in executing Christ's righteous sentences, both of approbation and condemnation, as name and general justice, ch. 25. 31. The angels are skilful, strong, and swift, to gather to Christ, holy enemies to the wicked, and faithful friends to all the saints, and therefore fit to be thus employed. He that receiveth receiveth wages, and the angels will not be unpaid for their attendance; for he that soweth, and he that reapeth, shall rejoice together; (John 4. 36.) that is joy in heaven for the absence of the angels of God.

He will then gather the wheat into the garner, into which the tares shall then be cast, and in which they shall be burned. At the great day a distinction will be made, and with it a vast difference; it will be a notable day indeed.

[1.] The tares will then be gathered out: The reapers (whose primary work it is to gather in the corn) shall be charged first to gather out the tares. Sinners as workers in the world of Satan, as evil doers, are the abode of the devil himself, who walks abroad in the world undistinguished, yet at the great day they shall be parted; no tares shall then be among the wheat; no sinners among the saints: then you shall plainly discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here sometimes it is hard to do, Mal. 3. 18. 24. 1. Christ will not bear always, Ps. 30. 1, &c. They shall gather out of his kingdom all wicked things that offend, and all wicked persons that do iniquity, Ps. 69. 27. Thus will they be expelled from heaven.

[2.] They will then be bound in bundles, v. 30. Sinners of the same sort will be bundled together in the great day: a bundle of atheists, a bundle of epicsures, a bundle of persecutors, and a great bundle of hypocrites. Those who have been associates in iniquity, will be expected to share in the punishment of it, as an aggravation of their misery, as the society of glorified saints will add to their bliss. Let us pray, as David, Lord, gather not my soul with sinners, (Ps. 26. 9.) but let it be bound in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God, 1 Sam. 28. 29.

[5.] They will be cast into a furnace of fire; such will be the end of wicked, miscellaneous people, that are in the church as tares in the field; they are fit for no other place. The田野, the flames of the furnace, and the dark yawning mouth of hell are fit for the wicked; they have a place to die; it shall be a day of slaughter, as in the days of Noah, Gen. 6. 13, and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 19. 24. Let us therefore, knowing these terrors of the Lord, be persuaded not to do iniquity.

(9.) Heaven is the barn into which all God's wheat shall be gathered in that harvest-day. But gather the wheat into my barn: so it is in the parable, v. 30. Note, [1.] In the field of this world good people are the wheat, the most precious grain, and valuable part of the field. [2.] This wheat shall shortly be gathered, gathered from among the tares and weeds; all gathered together in a general assembly,
all the Old-Testament saints, all the New-Testament saints, not one missing: *Gather my saints together to me, Ps. 50. 5.* [3] All God's wheat shall be lodged together in God's barn: particular souls are housed at death as a shock of corn, (Job 5. 26.) but the general in-gathering will be at the end of time: God's wheat will then be put together, and no longer scattered; there will be sheaves of corn, as well as kernels of wheat, and no longer exposed to wind and weather, sin and sorrow: no longer afar off, and at a distance, in the field, but near, in the barn. Nay, heaven is a garner, (ch. 3. 12.) in which the wheat will not only be separated from the tares of ill companions, but sifted from the chaff of their own corruptions.

In the explanation of the parable, this is gloriously represented; (v. 43.) *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*

1. First, it is their present honour, that God is their Father. *Now are we the sons of God;* (1 John 3. 2.) *our Father in heaven is King there.* This, when he went to heaven, went to his Father, and our Father, John 20. 17. It is our Father's house, nay, it is our Father's palace, his throne, Rev. 5. 21.

2. Secondly, The honour in reserve for them is, that they shall shine forth as the sun in that kingdom. Here beauty is eclipsed by their poverty, and the meanness of their outward condition; their own weaknesses and infirmities, and the reproach and disgrace cast upon them, cloud them; but then they shall shine forth as the sun from behind a dark cloud: at death they shall shine forth to themselves, at the great day they will shine forth publicly before all the world, their bodies will be made like Christ's glorified body, and shall shine by reflection, with a light borrowed from the Fountain of light: their sanctification will be perfected, and their justification published; God will own them for his children, and will produce the record of all their services and sufferings for his name: they shall shine as the sun, the most glorious of all visible beings. The glory of the saints is in the Old Testament compared to that of the firmament and the stars, but here to that of the sun; for life and immortality are given with a much closer light by the gospel, than under the law.

3. Those who shine as lights in this world, that God may be glorified, shall shine as the sun in the other world, that they may be glorified. Our Saviour concludes as before, with a demand of attention: *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.* These are things which it is our happiness to hear of, and our duty to hearken to.

3. Here is the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, v. 31, 32. The scope of this parable is to show that the beginnings of the gospel would be small, but that its latter end would greatly increase. In this way the gospel-church, the kingdom of God among us, would be set up in the world; in this way the work of grace in the heart, the kingdom of God within us, would be carried on in particular persons.

Now concerning the work of the gospel, observe,

1. That it is commonly very weak and small at first, like a grain of mustard-seed, which is one of the least of all seeds. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was now in the setting up, made but a small figure; Christ and the apostles, compared with the grandees of the world, appeared like a grain of mustard-seed, the weak things of the world. In particular places, the first breaking out of the gospel-light, and promulgation of the new doctrine, in particular souls, it is at first the day small things, like a bruised reed. Young converts are like lambs that must be carried in the arms, Isa. 40. 11. There is a little faith, but there is much lacking in it, (1 Thess. 2. 10.) and the groanings such as cannot be uttered, they are so small; a principle of spiritual life, and some motion, but scarcely discernible.

2. That yet it is growing and coming on. Christ's kingdom strangely got ground; great accessions were made to it: nations were born at once, in spite of all the oppositions it met with from hell and earth. In the soul where grace is true, it is growing gradually, though perhaps insensibly. A grain of mustard-seed is small, but, however, it is seed, and has in it a disposition to grow. Grace will be getting ground, shining more and more, Prov. 4. 18. Gracious habits confirmed, actions quickened, and knowledge more clear, faith more confirmed, love more inflamed; here is the seed growing.

3. That it will at last come to a great degree of strength and usefulness: *when it is grown to some maturity, it becometh a tree, much large in those countries than in ours. The church, like the vine brought out of Egypt, has taken root, and filled the earth, Ps. 80. 9—11. The church is like a great tree, in which the fowls of the air do lodge; God's people have recourse to it for food and rest, shade and shelter. In particular persons, the principle of grace, if true, will persevere and be perfected at last; growing grace will be growing much more and more.* Grown christians must covet to be useful to others, as the mustard-seed when grown is to the birds; that those who dwell near or under their shadow, may be the better for them, Hos. 14. 7.

IV. Here is the parable of the leaven, v. 33. The scope of this is much the same with that of the foregoing parable, to show that the gospel should prevail and be successful by degrees, but silently and insensibly; the spreading of the gospel is like leaven, and works like leaven in the hearts of those who receive it.

1. A woman took this leaven, it was her work. Ministers are employed in leavening places, in leavening souls, with the gospel. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we have this treasure in such vessels.

2. The leaven was hid in three measures of meal. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the vessel that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumbled and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is three measures of meal, a great quantity, for a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. The meal must be kneaded, before it receive the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it. This leaven must be hid in the heart, (Ps. 119. 11.) not so much for secrecy (for it will show itself) as for safety; our inward thought must be upon it, we must lay it up, as Mary laid up the savings of Christ, Luke 2. 39. When the woman hides the leaven in the meal, it is with an intention that it should communicate its taste and relish to it; so we must treasure up the word in our souls, that we may have it identified by it, John 17. 17.

3. The leaven thus hid in the dough, works there, it ferments; the word is quick and powerful, Heb. 4. 12. The leaven works speedily, so does the word, and yet gradually. What a sudden change did Eli- jah's mantle make upon Elisha! 1 Kings 19. 20. It works silently and insensibly, (Mark 4. 26.) yet strongly and irresistibly; it does its work without noise, for some are as the Sowing of the Sower, but does it with- out fail. Hide but the leaven in the dough, and all the world cannot hinder it from communicating its taste and relish to it, and yet none sees how it is done, but by degrees the whole is leavened.

(1.) Thus it was in the world. The apostles, by their preaching, hid a handful of leaven in the great
mass of mankind, and it had a strange effect; it put the world into a ferment, and in a sense turned it upside down, (Acts 17. 6.) and by degrees made a wonderful change in the taste and relish of it; the savour of the gospel was manifested in every place, 2 Cor. 2. 14. Rom. 15. 19. It was thus effectual, not by outward force, and therefore not by any such force resistible and conquerable, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, who works, and none can hinder.

(2.) Thus it is in the heart. When the gospel comes into the soul, [1.] It works a change, not in the substance, the dough is the same, but in the quality; it makes us to savour otherwise than we have done, and other things to savour with us otherwise than they used to do, Rom. 8. 5. [2.] It works a universal change; it diffuses itself into all the powers and faculties of the soul, and alters the property even of the members of the body, Rom. 6. 13. [3.] This change is such as makes the soul to partake of the nature of the word, as the dough does of the leaven. We are delivered into it as into a mould, (Rom. 6. 17.) changed into the same image, (2 Cor. 3. 18.) like the impression of the seal upon the wax. The gospel savours of God, and Christ, and free grace, and another world, and these things now relish with the soul. It is a word of faith and repentance, holiness and love, and these are wrought in the soul by it. This savour is communicated insensibly, for our life is hid; but inseparably, for grace is a good part that shall never be taken away from those who have it. When the dough is leavened, then to the oven with it; trials and afflictions commonly attend this change; but thus saints are fitted to be bread for our Master's table.

44. Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. 45. Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: 46. Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. 47. Again: The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: 48. Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. 49. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, 50. And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 51. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. 52. Then said he unto them, Therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

We have four short parables in these verses:

1. That of the treasure hid in the field. Hitherto he had compared the kingdom of heaven to small things, because its beginning was small; but, lest any should hence take occasion to think meanly of it, in this parable and the next he represents it as of great value in itself, and of great advantage to those who embrace it, and are willing to come up to its terms; it is here likened to a treasure hid in the field, which, if we will, we may make our own.

1. Jesus Christ is the true Treasure; in him there is an abundance of all that which is rich and useful, and will be a portion for us; all fulness: (Col. 1. 19. John 1. 16.) treasures of wisdom and knowledge, (Col. 2. 3.) of righteousness, grace, and peace; these are laid up for us in Christ; and, if we have an interest in him, it is all our own.

2. The gospel is the field in which this treasure is hid; it is the invisible seed of both the Old Testament and the New-Testament gospel. In gospel-ordinances he is hid as the milk in the breast, the marrow in the bone, as the water in the well; (Isa. 12. 3.) as the honey in the honeycomb. It is hid, not in a garden enclosed, or a spring shut up, but in a field, an open field; whoever will, let him come, and search the scriptures; let him dig in this field; (Prov. 2. 4.) and whatever royal mines we find, they are all our own, if we take the right course.

3. It is a great thing to discover the treasure hid in this field, and the unspeakable value of it. The reason why so many slight the gospel, and will not be at the expense, and run the hazard, of entertaining it, is because they look only upon the surface of the field, and judge by that, and see only the external, material, visible, and external ordinances of the philosophers; nay, the richest mines are often in grounds that appear most barren; and therefore they will not so much as bid for the field, much less come up to the price. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? What is the Bible more than other good books? The gospel of Christ more than Plato's philosophy, or Confucius's morals? But those who in the scripture the scriptures, so as in Daniel to find Christ and eternal life, (John 5. 39.) have discovered such a treasure in this field as makes it infinitely more valuable.

4. Those who discern this treasure in the field, and value it aright, will never be easy till they have made it their own upon any terms. He that has found this treasure, hides it, which denotes a holy jealousy, lest we come short. (Heb. 4. 1.) looking at the creature, (Heb. 13. 15.) lest Satan come between us and it. He rejoices in it, though as yet the bargain be not made; he is glad there is such a bargain to be had, and that he is in a fair way to have an interest in Christ; that the matter is in treaty: their hearts may rejoice, who are yet but seeking the Lord, Ps. 105. 3. He resolves to buy this field: they who embrace gospel-offers, upon gospel-terms, buy this field: they make it their own, for the sake of the unspeakable treasure in it. It is Christ in the gospel that we are to have an eye to; we need not go up to heaven, but Christ in the word is nigh us. And so intent he is upon it, that he sells all to buy this field: they who would have saving benefit by Christ, must be willing to part with all, that they may make it sure to themselves; must count every thing but loss, that they may win Christ, and be found in him.

11. That of the pearl of price, (v. 45, 46.) which is to the same purport with the former, of the treasure. The dream is thus doubled, for the thing is certain.

Note, 1. All the children of men are busy, seeking goodly pearls: one would be rich, another would be honourable, another would be learned; but the poor are hid and conceited, and take up with counterfeits for pearls.

2. Jesus Christ is a Pearl of great price, a Jewel of inestimable value, which will make those who have it rich, truly rich, rich toward God: in having
him, we have enough to make us happy here and for ever.

3. A true christian is a spiritual merchant, that seeks and finds this pearl of price; that does not take up with anything short of an interest in Christ, and, as one that is resolved to be spiritually rich, trades high: he eminent and bought that pearl, did not content for it, but purchased it. What will it avail us to know Christ, if we do not know him as ours, made to us Wisdom? 1 Cor. 1. 30.

4. Those who would have a saving interest in Christ, must be willing to part with all for him, leave all to follow him. Whatever stands in opposition to Christ, or in competition with him, for our love and service, we must cheerfully quit it, though every friend to it. A man may buy gold too dear, but not this pearl of price.

11. That of the net cast into the sea, v. 47—49.

1. Here is the parable itself. Where note, (1.) The world is a vast sea, and the children of men are things creeping innumerable, both small and great, in that sea, Ps. 104. 25. Men in their natural state are like the fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them, and the latter part refers to that which is in the casting of a net into this sea, to catch something out of it, for his glory who has the sovereignty of this sea. Ministers are fishers of men, employed in casting and drawing this net; and then they speed, when at Christ's word they let down the net; otherwise, they toil and catch nothing. (2.) This net gathers of every kind, as large drag-nets do. In the visible church there is a deal of trash and rubbish, drawn to the shore, there shall be a separation between the good and bad that were gathered in it. Hypocrites and true christians shall then be parted; the good shall be gathered into vessels, as valuable, and therefore to be carefully kept, but the bad shall be cast away, as vile and unprofitable; and miserable is the condition of those who are cast away in that day. While the net is in the sea, it is not known what is in it, but those who come can see that, did they carefully draw it, and all that is in it, to the shore, for the sake of the good that is in it. Such is God's care for the visible church, and such should ministers' concern be for those under their charge, though they are mixed.

2. Here is the explanation of the latter part of the parable, the former is obvious and plain enough: we see gathered in the visible church, some of every kind; but the latter part refers to that which is not to come, and is therefore more particularly explained, v. 49, 50. So shall it be at the end of the world: then, and not till then, will the dividing, discovering day be. We must not look for the net full of all good fish; the vessels will be so, but in the net they are mixed. See here, (1.) The distinguishing of the wicked from the righteous. The angels of heaven shall come forth to do that which the angels of hell were not debased from among the just; and we need not ask how they will distinguish them when they have both their commission and their instructions from him that knows all men, and particularly knows them that are his, and them that are not, and we may be sure there shall be no mistake or blunder either way. (2.) The doom of the wicked when they are thus severed. They shall be cast into the furnace. Note, Everlasting misery and sorrow will certainly be the portion of those who live among sanctified ones, but themselves die unsanctified. This is the same with what we had before, v. 42. Note, Christ himself preached often of hell-forms, as the everlasting punishment of hypocrites; and it is good for us to be often reminded of this unwaking, quickening truth.

IV. Here is the parable of the good-householder, which is intended to rivet all the rest.

1. The occasion of it was the good providence which the disciples had made in learning, and their profiting by this sermon in particular. (1.) He asked them, Have ye understood all these things? Intimating, that if they had not, he was ready to explain to them which they did not understand, as in the latter part of the parable. Note, It is the will of Christ, that all those who read and hear the word should understand it; for otherwise, how should they get good by it? It is therefore good for us, when we have read or heard the word, to examine ourselves, or to be examined, whether we have understood it or not. It is no disparagement to the disciples of Christ to be catechised. Christ invites us to seek to him for instruction, and ministers should proffer their service to those who have any good question to ask concerning what they have heard. (2.) They answered him, Yes, Lord: and we have reason to believe they said true, because, when they did not understand, they asked for an explication, v. 36. And the exposition of that parable was a key to the rest. Note, The right understanding of one good sermon, will very much help us to understand another; for good truths mutually explain and illustrate one another; and knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.

2. The scope of the parable itself was to give his approbation and commendation of their proficiency. Note, Christ is ready to encourage willing learners in his school, though they are but weak; and to say, Well done, well said.

(1.) He commends them as scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. They were now learning as they might teach, and the teachers among the Jews were the scribes. Ezra, who prepared his heart to teach in Israel, is called a ready scribe. Ezra 7. 6, 10. Now a skilful, faithful minister of the gospel is a scribe too; but for distinction, he is called a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, well versed in the things of the gospel, and well able to teach those things. Note, (1.) That these who are to instruct others must be well instructed themselves. If the priest's lips must keep knowledge, his head must first have knowledge. (2.) The instruction of a gospel-minister must be in the kingdom of heaven, that is about which his business lies. A man may be a great philosopher and politician, and yet, if not instructed to the kingdom of heaven, he will make but a bad minister.

(2.) He compares them to a good householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old; fruits of last year's growth and this year's gathering, abundance and variety, for the entertainment of his friends, Cant. 7. 13. See here, (1.) What should be a minister's furniture, a treasure of things new and old. Those who have so many and various occasions, need to stock themselves well in their gathering-days with truths new and old, out of the Old Testament, and out of the New; with ancient and modern improvements, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished. 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. Old experiences, and new observations, all have their use; and we must not content ourselves with old discoveries, but must be adding new. Live and learn. (2.) What use he should make of this furniture; he should bring forth: laying up is in order to laying out, for the benefit of others. So you are to lay up, but not for yourselves. Many are full, but they have no vent; (Job 52. 19.) they have a talent, but they bury it; such are unprofitable
servants; Christ himself received that he might give;
so must we, and we shall have more. In bringing forth
things, new and old do best together; old truths,
but new methods and expressions, especially new
affections.

53. And it came to pass, that when Jesus
had finished these parables, he departed thence. 54. And when he was come into
his own country, he taught them in their
synagogue, insomuch that they were aston-
ished, and said, Whence hath this man this
wisdom, and these mighty works? 55. Is
not this the carpenter's son? Is not his
mother called Mary? and his brethren,
James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
56. And his sisters, are they not all with
us? Whence then hath this man all these
things? 57. And they were offended in
him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet
is not without honour, save in his own
country, and in his own house. 58. And
he did not many mighty works there, be-
cause of their unbelief.

We have here Christ in his own country. He went about doing good, yet left not any place till he
had finished his testimony there at that time. His
own countrymen had rejected him once, yet he came
to them again. Note, Christ does not take refusers
at their first word, but repeats his offers to those
who have often repulsed them. Is this, as in other
things, Christ was like his brethren; he had a na-
tural affection to his own country; Patrum quaque
amat, non quia pulchrum et quia suum. Even
one loves his country, not because it is beautiful,
but because it is his own. Sence. His treatment
this time was much the same as before, scornful
and spiteful.

Observe,
1. How they expressed their contempt of him.
When he taught them in their synagogue, they
were astonished; not that they were taken with his preach-
ing, or admired his doctrine in itself, but only that it
should be his; looking upon him as unlikely to be
such a teacher. Two things they upbraided him
with:

1. His want of academical education. They owned
that he had wisdom, and did mighty works; but the question was, Whence he had them? For they knew
he was not brought up at the feet of their rabbins;
he had never been at the university, nor taken his
degree, nor was called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. Note,
Mean and prejudiced spirits are apt to judge of men
by their education, and to inquire more into their rise
than into their reasons. "Whence has this man
these mighty works? Did he come honestly by them?
Has he not been studying the black art?" Thus
they turned against him, which was really for
him; for if they had not been wilfully blind, they
must have concluded him to be divinely assisted and
commissioned, who without the help of education
gave such proofs of extraordinary wisdom and power.
2. The meanness and poverty of his relations, v.
55, 56.

(1.) They upbraided him with his father. Is not
this the carpenter's son? Yes, it is true he was re-
puted so; and what harm in that? No disparage-
ment to him to be the son of an honest tradesman.
They remember not (though they might have known it)
that this carpenter was of the house of David,
(Luke 1. 27.) a son of David; (ch. 1. 20.) though a
 carpenter, yet a person of honour. Those who are
willing to pick quarrels will overlook that which is
worthy and deserving, and fasten upon that only
which seems mean. Some sortish spirits regard no
branch, not even the Branch from the stem of Jesse,
(1. xi. 11.) if it be not the top-branch.

(2.) They upbraided him with his mother; and
what quarrel have they with her? Why, truly, his
mother is called Mary, and that was a very common
name, and they all knew her, and knew her to be
an ordinary person; she was called Mary, not Queen
Mary, nor Lady Mary, nor so much as Mistress
Mary, but plain Mary; and this is turned to his re-
proof, as men had nothing to be valued by but
foreign extraction, noble birth, or splendid titles;
poor things to measure worth by.

(3.) They upbraided him with his brethren, whose
names they knew, and had them ready enough to
serve this turn; James, and Joses, and Simon, and
Judas. Instead of ch.
5. 3. how are his
servants; thence. James, and Joses, and Simon, and
Judas, good men but poor men, and therefore des-
pised; and Christ for their sakes. These brethren,
it is probable, were Joseph's children by a former
wife; or whatever their relation was to him, they
seem to have been brought up with him in the same
family. And therefore of the calling of three of these,
who were of the twelve, to that honour (James, Si-
mon, and Jude, the same with Thaddaeus) we read
not particularly, because they needed not such an
express call into acquaintance with Christ as had
been the companions of his youth.

(4.) His sisters too are all with us; they should
therefore have loved him and respected him the
more, because he was one of themselves, but there-
fore they despised him. They were offended in
him: they stumbled at these stumbling-stones, for
he was set for a Sign that should be spoken against,

II. Some have represented this contempt, v. 57, 58.
1. It did not trouble his heart. It appears he was
not much concerned at it; He despised the shame,
Heb. 12. 2. Instead of aggravating the affront, or
expressing an offence at it, or returning such an an-
swer to their foolish suggestions as they deserved, he
mildly imputes it to the common humour of the
children of men, to undervalue excellences that are
cheap, common, and home-bred. It is usually
A prophet is not without honour, save in his own
country. Note, (1.) Prophets should have honour paid
them, and commonly have; men of God are great
men, and men of honour, and challenge re-
spect. It is strange indeed if prophets have not ho-

2. (2.) Notwithstanding this, they are commonly
least regarded and reverence in their own company,
not, and sometimes are most envied. Familiarity
bred contempt.

2. It did for the present, (to speak with reverence,) in
effect, tie his hands: He did not many mighty
works there, because of their unbelief. Note, Unbe-
lief is the great obstruction to Christ's favours. All
things are in general possible to God, (ch. 19. 26.)
but then it is to him that believes. He is the
Mystic Mark, Mark 16. 23. The grace of God is the power of God's
operations, but then it is to every one that be-

1. That if mighty works be not
wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in
Christ, but for want of faith in us. By grace ye
are saved, and that is a mighty work, but it is through
faith, Eph. 2. 8.

CHAP. XIV.

John the Baptist had said concerning Christ, He must in-
crease, but I must decrease, John 3. 30. The morning-star
is here described, and the Sun of righteousness rising
to his meridian lustre. Here is, 1. The martyrdom of John;
his imprisonment for his faithfulness to Herod, (v. 1. - 5.)
and the 'beheading' of him to please Herodias, (v. 6. - 9.)
2. The miracles of Christ. 1. His feeding five thousand
men that came to him to be taught, with five loaves and
two fishes, v. 13. - 21. 2. Christ's walking on the water to his
At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus; and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 3. For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison, for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. 4. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. 5. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. 6. But when Herod's birth-day was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. 7. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. 8. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. 9. And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. 10. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. 11. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. 12. And his disciples came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.

We have here the story of John's martyrdom.

Observe, 1. The occasion of relating this story here, v. 1, 2. Here is,
   1. The account brought to Herod of the miracles which Christ wrought. Herod, the tetrarch and chief governor of Galilee, heard of the fame of Jesus. At that time, when his countrymen slighted him, upon the account of his meanness and obscurity, he began to be famous at court. Note, God will honour those who are despised for his sake. And the gospel, like the sea, gets in one place what it loses in another. Christ had now been preaching and working miracles above two years; yet, it should seem, Herod had not heard of him till now, and now only heard the fame of him. Note, It is the unhappiness of the great ones of the world, that they are most out of the way of hearing the best things, (1 Cor. 2. 8.) which none of the princes of this world knew, 1 Cor. 1. 26. Christ's disciples were now sent abroad to preach, and to work miracles in his name, and this spread the fame of him more than ever; which was an indication of the spreading of the gospel by their means after his ascension.
   2. The construction he puts upon this; (v. 2.) He said to his servants, that told him of the fame of Jesus, As sure as we are here, this is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead. Either the leaving of Herod was not Sadducism, for the Sadducees say, There is no resurrection; (Acts 23. 8.) or else Herod's guilty conscience (as is usual with Atheists) did at this time get the mastery of his opinion, and now he concludes, whether there be a general resurrection or no, that John Baptist is certainly risen, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. John, while he lived, did no miracles; (John 10. 41.) but Herod concludes, that, being risen from the dead, he is clothed with a greater power than he had while he was living. And he very well calls his miracles those of Christ, not his own works, but mighty works showing forth themselves in him. Observe here concerning Herod,
   (1.) How he was disappointed in what he intended by beheading John. He thought if he could get that troublesome fellow out of the way, he might go on in his sins, undisturbed and uncontrolled; yet no sooner is that effected, than he hears of Jesus and his disciples preaching the same pure doctrine, that which is more, even the disciples confirming it by miracles in their master's name. Note, Ministers may be silenced, and imprisoned, and banished, and slain, but the word of God cannot be run down. The prophets live not for ever, but the word taken hold, Zech. 1. 5, 6. See 2 Tim. 2. 9. Sometimes God raises up many faithful ministers out of the ashes of one. This hope there is of God's trees, though they be cut down, Job 14. 7—9.
   (2.) How he was filled with causeless fears, merely from the guilt of his own conscience. Thus blood cries, not only from the earth on which it was shed, but from the heart of him that shed it, and makes him Mager—missab—A terror round about, a terror to himself. A guilty conscience suggests every thing that is frightful, and, like a whirlpool, gathers all itself that comes near it. Thus the water flee when none pursue; (Prov. 28. 1.) are in great fears, where no fear is, Ps. 14. 5. Herod, by a little inquiry, might have found out that this Jesus was in being long before John Baptist's death, and therefore could not be Johannes reddivius—John restored to life; and so he might have undeceived himself; but God justly left him to this infatuation.
   (3.) How, notwithstanding this, he was hardened in his wickedness; for though he was convinced that John was a prophet, and one owned of God, yet he does not express the least remorse or sorrow for his sin in putting him to death. The devils believe and tremble, but they never believe and repent. Note, There may be the terror of strong convictions, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion.
II. The story itself of the imprisonment and martyrdom of John. These extraordinary sufferings of him who was so faithful in the gospel, plainly show that bonds and afflictions will abide the professors of it. As the first Old-Testament saint, so the first New-Testament minister, died a martyr. And if Christ's forerunner was thus treated, let not his followers expect to be caressed by the world. Observe here,
   1. John's faithfulness in reproving Herod, v. 3, 4. Herod was one of John's hearers, (Mark 6. 20.) and therefore John might be the more bold with him. Note, Ministers, who are reprovers by office, are especially obliged to reprove those that are under their charge, and not to suffer sin upon them; they have the fairest opportunity of dealing with them, and with them may expect the most favourable acceptance.
   The particular sin he reproved him for, was, marrying his brother Philip's wife, not his widow, (that had not been so criminal,) but his wife. Philip was now living, and Herod inveigled his wife from him, and kept her for his own. Here was a complication of wickedness, adultery, incest, beside the wrong done to Philip, who had had a child by this woman; and it was an aggravation of the wrong, that he was his brother, his half brother by the father, but not by the mother. See Ps. 50. 20. For this sin John reproved him not by tact and oblique terms, but in plain terms, It is not lawful for thee to have her. He charges it upon him as a sin; not, It
is not honourable, or, It is not safe, but, It is not lawful; the sinfulness of sin, as it is the transgression of the law, is the worst thing in it. This was Herod's own iniquity, his beloved sin, and therefore John Baptist tells him of this particularly. Note, (1.) That which by the law of God is unlawful to other people, is lawful for us; but it is to be done with reverence and the greatest of men. They who rule over men must not forget that they are themselves but men, and subject to God. "It is not lawful for thee, any more than for the meanest subject thou hast, to debauch another man's wife." There is no prerogative, no, not for the greatest and most arbitrary kings, to break the laws of God. (2.) If princes and great men cannot, or will not, be restrained from the sin of which their servants are guilty, their fault should be told of it by proper persons, and in a proper manner. As they are not above the commands of God's word, so they are not above the reproofs of his ministers. It is not fit indeed to say to a king, Thou art Belial, (Job 34. 18.) any more than to call a brother Raca, or, Thou fool: it is not fit, while they keep within the sphere of their own authority, to arraign them. But it is fit that, by those whose office it is, they should be told what is unlawful, and told with application, Thou art the man; for it follows there, (v. 19.) that God, (whose agents and ambassadors faithful ministers are) accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.

3. The imprisonment of John for his faithfulness, v. 3. Herod laid hold on John, when he was going on to preach and baptize, put an end to his work, bound him, and put him in prison; partly to gratify his own revenge, and partly to please Herodias, who of the two seemed to be most incensed against him; it was for her sake that he did it. Note, (1.) Faithful reproofs, if they do not profit, usually provoke; if they do not do good, they are resented as affronts, and they that will not bow to the reproof, will fly in the face of the reprover and hate him, as Ahab hated Micaiah, 1 Kings 22. 8. See Prov. 9. 8.—15. 10, 12. Veritas odium parit—Truth produces hatred. (2.) It is no new thing for God's ministers to suffer ill for doing well. Troubles abide those most that are most diligent and faithful in doing their duty, Acts 20. 20. 23. It was so with the Old Testament prophets, 2 Chron. 18. 20. 21. Perhaps some of John's friends would blame him, and say it was indiscreet in reproving Herod, and tell him he had better be silent than provoke Herod, whose character he knew very well, thus to deprive him of his liberty: but away with that discretion that would hinder men from doing their duty as magistrates, ministers, or Christian friends! I believe John's own heart did not reproach him for it, but this testimony of his conscience for him made his bonds case; that he suffered for well-doing, and not as a busy-body in other men's matters, 2 Pet. 4. 15.

3. The restraint that Herod lay under from further venting of his rage against John, v. 5. (1.) He would have put him to death. That which was not intended at first when he imprisoned him, but his revenge by degrees belled up to that height. Note, The way of ungodly persecution, is down-hill; and when once a respect to Christ's ministers is cast off and broken, though in one instance, that is at length done, which the man would sooner have thought himself a dog than to have been guilty of, 2 Kings 8. 13.

(2.) That which hindered him was his fear of the multitude, that hated theJroasted. John as a firebrand. It was not because he feared God, for he had been before his eyes he would not have imprisoned him; nor because he feared John, though formerly he had had a reverence for him, (his sins had overcome that,) but because he feared the people; he was afraid for himself, his own safety, and the safety of his government, his abuse of which he knew had already rendered him odious to the people, whose resentments being so far heated already, would be apt, upon such a provocation as the putting of a prophet to death, to break out into a flame. Note, [1.] Tyrants have their fears. Those who are, and do, and will, always have fear of the multitude. It is the greatest terror of all to themselves; and when they are most ambitious to be feared by the people, are most afraid of them. [2.] Wicked men are restrained from the most wicked practices, merely by their secular interest, and not by any regard to God. A concern for their ease, credit, wealth, and safety, being their reigning principle, will keep them from many sins, which otherwise they would not be restrained from; and this is one means by which sinners are kept from being overmuch wicked, Eccl. 7. 17. The danger of sin that appears to sense, or to fancy only, influences men more than that which appears to faith. Herod feared that the putting of John to death might raise a mutiny among the people, which he did not; but he never feared that it might raise a mutiny in his own conscience, which it did, v. 2. Men fear being hanged for that which they do not fear being damned for.

4. The contrivance of bringing John to his death. Long he lay in prison; and against the liberty of the subject, (which, blessed be God, is secured to us of this nation by law,) might neither be tried nor bailed. It is easy to tell that he lay a year and a half a helpless prisoner, which was about as much time as he had spent in his public ministry, from his first entrance into it. Now here we have an account of his release, not by any other discharge than death, the period of all a good man's troubles, that brings the prisoners to rest together, so that they hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job 3. 18. Herodias laid the plot that he lay a year and a half a helpless prisoner, that he might thirst after John's blood, and would be satisfied with nothing less. Cross the carnal appetites, and they turn into the most barbarous passions; it was a woman, a whore, and the mother of harlots, that was drunk with the blood of the saints, Rev. 17. 5, 6. Herodias contrived how to bring about the murder of John so artificially as to save Hered's credit, and so to pacify the people. A sorry excuse is better than none; that if we cannot think, that if the truth were known, Herod was himself in the plot; and, for all his pretences of surprise and sorrow, was privy to the contrivance, and knew before what would be asked. And his pretending his oath, and respect to his guests, was all but sham and grimace. But if he were trepanned into it ere he was aware, yet because it was the thing he might have prevented, and would not, he is justly found guilty of the whole contrivance. Though Jezebel bring Naboth to his end, yet if Ahab take possession, he hath killed. So, though Herodias contrive the beheading of John, yet, if Herod consent to it, and take pleasure in it, he is not only an accessory, but a principal murderer. Well, the scene being laid behind the curtain, let us see how it was acted upon the stage, and in what manner Herod's death was consummated. (1.) The humouring of Herod by the damsel's dancing upon his birth-day. It seems, Herod's birth-day was kept with some solemnity; in honour of the day, there must needs be, as usual, a ball at court; and, to grace the solemnity, the daughter of Herodias danced before them: who, being the queen's daughter, it was more than she ordinarily engaged herself in. The scene of delicacy and jollity are convenient times for carrying on bad designs against God's people. When the king was made sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorners, (Hos. 7. 5.) for it is part of the spirit of a fool to do mischief, Prov. 10. 23. The
Philistines, when their heart was merry, called for Samson to abuse him. The Parisian massacre was at a wedding. This young lady's dancing pleased Herod. We are not told who danced with her, but none pleased Herod like her dancing. Note, A vain and graceless heart is apt to be greatly in love with a foolish and vile passion; and though it seem to be a delight, yet it is entering into further temptation; for by that Satan gets and keeps possession. See Prov. 23. 31, 53. Herod was now in a mirthful mood, and nothing was more agreeable to him than that which fed his vanity.

(2.) The rash and foolish promise which Herod made to this wanton girl, to give her whatsoever she would ask; and this promise confirmed with an oath, v. 7. Here in very extraordinary manner, Herod here entered into, and no way becoming a prudent man that is afraid of being snared in the words of his mouth, (Prov. 6. 2.) much less a good man that fears an oath, Eccl. 9. 2. To put this blank into her hand, and enable her to draw upon him at pleasure, was too great a recompense for such a sorry piece of merit; and, I am apt to think, Herod would not have been guilty of such an absurdity. It was often the practice of Herod (as well as the damsel. Note, Promissory oaths are ensnaring things, and, when made rashly, are the products of inward corruption, and the occasions of many temptations. Therefore swear not so at all, lest thou have occasion to say, It was an error, Eccl. 5. 6.

(3.) The bloody demand the young lady made of John the Baptist's head, v. 8. She was before instructed of her mother. Note, The case of those children is very sad, whose parents are their counsellors to do wickedly, as Ahaziah's; (2 Chron. 22. 5.) who instruct them and encourage them in sin, and set them bad examples; for the corrupt nature will sooner be quickened by bad instructions than restrained and mortified by good ones. Children ought not to obey their parents against the Lord, but, if they command them to sin, must say, as Levi did to father and mother, they have not seen them.

Herod having given her her commission, and Herodias her instructions, she requires John the Baptist's head in a charger. Perhaps Herodias feared lest Herod should grow weary of her, (as lust useth to nauseate and be cloyed,) and then would make John Baptist's reproof a pretence to dismiss her; to prevent which they contrive to harden Herod in it, v. 9. Engaging him with a demand of some particular thing, be he beheaded then, that is the death by which he must glorify God; and because it was his who died first after the beginning of the gospel, the martyrs died various kinds of deaths, and not so easy and honourable as this, yet this is put for all the rest, Rev. 20. 4, where we read of the souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus. Yet this is not enough, the thing must be humoured and gratified, and not only a revenge, but a fancy must be gratified; it must be given her here in a charger, served up in blood, as a dish of meat at the feast, or sauce to all the other dishes; it is reserved for the third course, to come up with the rarities. He must have no trial, no public hearing, no forms of law or justice must add solemnity to his death; but he is tried, condemned, and executed, in a breath. It was well for him he was so mortified to the world, that death could be no surprise to him, though ever so sudden. It must be given her here, and reckoned a recompense for her dancing, and desire no more.

(4.) Herod's grant of this demand; (v. 9.) The king was sorry, at least took him on to be so, but, for the oath's sake, he commanded it to be given her. Here is

[1.] A pretended concern for John. The king was very sorry. Note, Many a man sins with regret, that never has any true regret for his sin; is sorry to sin, yet is utterly a stranger to godly sorrow; sins with reluctance, and yet goes on to sin. Dr. Ham mond suggests, that one reason of Herod's sorrow was, because it was his birth-day festival, and it would not be an ill omen to shed blood on that day which, as other days of joy, used to be graced with acts of clemency; Natumei collins, tacete lites——We are celebrating the birth-day, let there be no contentions.

[2.] Here is a pretended conscience of his oath, with a specious show of honour and honesty; he must needs do something, for the oath's sake. Note, How to great an extent doth this think, that a wicked oath will justify a wicked action, especially if it be necessary, that it needed not be expressed, that he would do any thing for her that was lawful and honest; and when she demanded what was otherwise, he ought to have declared, and he might have done it honourably, that the oath was null and void, and the obligation of it ceased. No man can lay himself under an obligation to sin, because God has already so strongly obliged every man against sin.

[3.] Here is a real baseness in compliance with wicked companions. Herod yielding, not so much for the sake of the oath, but because it was public, and in compliment to them that sat at meat with him; he granted the demand, that he might not seem, before them, to have broken his engagement. Note, A point of honour goes much further with many than a point of conscience. Those who sat at meat with him, probably, were as well pleased with the damsel's dancing as he, and therefore would have her by all means to be gratified in a frolic, and perhaps were as willing as she to see John the Baptist's head off. However, none of them had the honesty to interpose, as they ought to have done, for the preventing of it, as Jehoiakim's princes did, Jer. 36. 25. If some of the common people had been here, they would have rescued this Jonathan, as 1 Sam. 14. 45.

[4.] Here is a real malice to John, at the bottom of this concession, or else he might have found out omissions enough to have gotten clear of his promise. Note, Though a wicked mind never wants an excuse, yet the truth of the matter is, that every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts, and enticed, Jam. 1. 14. Perhaps Herod presently reflected upon the extravagance of his promise, and when he might grant a moderate sum of money, which he loved a great deal better than John the Baptist, was glad to get clear of it so easily; and therefore immediately issues out a warrant for the beheading of John the Baptist, it should seem not in writing, but only by word of mouth; so little account is made of that precious life; he commanded it to be given her.

(5.) The execution of John, pursuant to this grant; (v. 10.) He was beheaded, and the head of John in a charger. It is probable the prison was very near, at the gate of the palace: and thither an officer was sent to cut off the head of this great man. He must be beheaded with expedition, to gratify Herodias, who was in a longing condition till it was done. It was done in the night, for it was at supper-time, after supper it is likely. It was done in the prison, not at the usual place of execution, for fear of an uproar. A great many of innocent persons were then been huddled up in corners, which, when God comes to make inquisition for blood, the earth shall dis close, and shall no more cover, Isa. 26. 21. Ps. 9. 12.

Thus was that voice silenced, that burning and shining light extinguished; thus did that prophet, that Elias, of the New Testament, fall a sacrifice to the resentments of an imperious, whorish woman. Thus did he, who was great in the sight of the Lord,
13. When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart; and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

14. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.

15. And when it was evening his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.

16. But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. 17. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.

18. He said, Bring them hither to me. 19. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake; and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 20. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. 21. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

This passage of story, concerning Christ's feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, is recorded by all the four Evangelists, which very few, if any, of Christ's miracles are; this intimates that there is something in it worthy of special remark. Observe,

I. The great resort of people to Christ, when he was retired into a desert place, v. 13. He withdrew into a solitary place, when he heard, not of John's death, but of the thoughts Herod had concerning him, that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and therefore so feared by Herod as to be hated; he departed further off, to get out of Herod's jurisdiction. Note, In times of peril, when God opens a door of escape, long since directed his disciples to Christ, and turned them over to him, but they could not leave their old master while he lived; therefore he is removed that they may go to Jesus, whom they had sometimes emulated and envied for John's sake. It is better to bring them to Christ by want and loss, than not to come to him at all. If our masters be taken from our head, this is our comfort, we have a Master in heaven, who himself is our Head.
It is lawful to flee for our own preservation, unless we have some special call to expose ourselves. Christ’s hour came not yet; and therefore he would not thrust himself upon suffering. He had secured himself by divine power; he departed by ship. But a city on a hill cannot be hid; when the people heard it, they followed him on foot from all parts. Such an interest Christ had in the affections of the multitude, the more he withdrew, the more they adhered. How often, the more a man is exerted in a thing, the more it is shut out of the sight of others by the warmth of his own zeal. As often, the scripture was fulfilled, that unto him shall the gathering of the people be. It should seem, there was more crowding to Christ after John’s martyrdom than before. Sometimes the sufferings of the saints are made to further the gospel, (Phil. 1. 12.) and “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” This is the testimony which was finished, it was recollected, and more might be seen of it. Note, When Christ and his word withdrew from us, it is best for us (whatever flesh and blood may object to the contrary) to follow it, preferring opportunities for our souls before any secular advantages wherewith. When the ark removes, ye shall remove, and go after it, Josh. 3. 3. 2. Those that truly believe in the sincere milk of the word, will not stick at the difficulties which may meet with in their attendance on it. The presence of Christ is a gospel makes a desert place not only tolerable, but beautiful; it makes the wilderness an Eden, Isa. 51. 3. 41, 19, 20.

11. The tender compassion of our Lord Jesus toward those who thus followed him, v. 14. He went forth, and appeared publicly among them. Though he retired for his own security, and his own repose, yet he went forth from his retirement, when he saw people desirous to hear him, and yearned both to toil himself, and to expose himself, for the good of souls; for even Christ pleased not himself. 2. When he saw the multitude, he had compassion on them. Note, The sight of a great multitude may justly move compassion. To see a great multitude, and to think how many precious, immortal souls here are, the greatest part of which, in which we have reason to fear, are neglected and left to perish, could grieve one to the heart. None like Christ for pity, nor as his compassion fail not. 3. He did not only pity them, but he helped them: many of them were sick, and he, in compassion to them, healed them; for he came into the world to be the great Healer. After a while, they were all hungry, and he in compassion to them, fed them. Note, In all the favours Christ showed himself, he was moved with compassion, Isa. 63. 9.

III. The motion which the text gives of the dismissing of the congregation, and Christ’s setting aside the motion. 1. The evening drawing on, the disciples moved it to Christ to send the multitude away; they thought there was a good day’s work done, and it was time to disperse. Note, Christ’s disciples are often more careful to show their discretion than to show their zeal; and their abundant ministering, rather than their abundant affection in the things of God. 2. Christ would not dismiss them hungry as they were, nor detain them longer without meat, nor put them upon the trouble and charge of buying meat for themselves, but orders his disciples to provide for them. Christ all along expressed more tenderness toward the people than his disciples did; for what are the compassions of the most merciful men, compared with the tender mercies of God in Christ? See how Christ and his angels are with those who are resolved to die for him, who need not depart. Note, Those who have Christ, have enough, and need not depart to seek a happiness and livelihood in the creature; they that have made sure of the one thing needful, need not be cumbered about much serving; nor will Christ put his willing followers upon a needless expense, but will make their attendance cheap to them.

But if they be hungry, they have need to depart, for that is a necessity which has no law, therefore give you them to eat. Note, The body is the temple of the body, it is the work of his hands, it is part of his purchase; he was himself clothed with a body, that he might encourage us to depend upon him for the supply of our bodily wants. But he takes a particular care of the body, when it is employed to serve the soul in his more immediate service. If we seek first the kingdom of God, and make that our chief care, we may depend upon God to order all things as well for us as he secures it, and may cast all our care of them upon him. These followed Christ but for a trial, in a present fit of zeal, and yet Christ took this care of them; much more will he provide for those who follow him fully.

IV. The slender provision that was made for this great multitude; and here we must compare the number of invite guests with the bill of fare.

1. The number of the guests was five thousand men, beside women and children; and it is probable the women and children might be as many as the men, if not more. This was a vast auditory that Christ preached to, and we have reason to think an attentive auditory; and yet, it should seem, far the greater part, notwithstanding this seeming zeal and enthusiasm, came to nothing; they went off and followed him no more for many are the chosen. We would rather perceive the acceptableness of the word by the conversations, than by the crowds, of its hearers; though that also is a good sight and a good sign.

2. The bill of fare was very disproportionate to the number of the guests, but five loaves, and two fishes. This provision the disciples carried about with them for a time of the family, now they were retired into the desert. Christ could have fed them by miracle, but to set us an example of providing for those of our own households, he will have their own camp victualled in an ordinary way. Here is neither plenty, nor variety, nor dainty; a dish of fish was no rarity to them that were fishermen, but it was food convenient for the twelve; two fishes for their supper, and bread to serve them perhaps for a day or two; here is no great strength or strong drink; fair water from the rivers in the desert was had to drink with their meat; and yet out of this Christ will have the multitude fed. Note, Those who have but a little, yet when the necessity is urgent, must relieve others out of that little, and that is the way to make it more. Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Yes, he can, when he pleases, a plentiful table.

V. The liberal distribution of this provision among the multitude; (v. 18, 19.) Bring them hither to me. Note, The way to have our creature-comforts comforted indeed to us, is to bring them to Christ; for everything is sanctified by his word, and by prayer to him; that is likely to prosper and do well with us, which we put into the hands of our Lord Jesus, that he may dispose of it as he pleases, and that we may take it back into his hand, and then it will be doubly sweet to us. What we give in charity, we should bring to Christ first, that he may dispose of it from us, and graciously bless it to those to whom it is given; this is doing it as unto the Lord.

Now at this miraculous meal we may observe, 1. The setting of the guests; (v. 19.) He commanded them to sit down; which intimates, that while he was preaching to them they were standing, which is a posture of reverence, and readiness for motion. But what shall we do for chairs for them all? Let them sit down on the grass. When Ahasuerus would show the riches of his glorious kingdom...
and the honour of his excellent majesty, in a royal feast for the great men of all his provinces, the beds or couches they sat on were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marlins, Esther 1. 6. Our Lord Jesus did now show, in a divine feast, the riches of a more glorious kingdom than that, and the honour of a more excellent majesty, even a dominion over nature itself; but here is not so much as a cloth spread, no plates or napkins laid, no knives or forks, not so much as a bench to sit down on; but, as if Christ intended indeed to reduce the world to the plainness and simplicity, and so to the innocency and happiness, of Adam in paradise, did here serve the meat on the ground. By doing every thing thus, without any pomp or splendour, he plainly showed that his kingdom was not of this world, nor cometh with observation.

2. The craving of a blessing. He did not appoint one of his disciples to be his chaplain, but he himself looked up to heaven, and blessed, and gave thanks; he praised God for the provision they had, and prayed to God to bless it to them. His craving a blessing, was commanding a blessing; for as he preached, so he prayed, like one having authority; and in this prayer and thanksgiving, we may suppose, he had special reference to the multiplying of this food; but herein he has taught us that good duty of craving a blessing and giving thanks at our meals: God's good creatures must be received with thanksgiving, 1 Thess. 5. 18. 4. Samuel blessed the feast, 1 Sam. 9. 13. 15. Acts 2. 46, 47.—27, 34, 35. This is eating and drinking to the glory of God; (1 Cor. 10. 31.) giving God thanks, (Rom. 14. 6.) eating before God, as Moses, and his father-in-law, Exod. 18. 12, 15. When Christ blessed, he looked up to heaven, to teach us, in prayer, to eye God as a Father in heaven; and when we receive our creature-comforts to look thitherward, as taking them from God's hand, and depending on him for a blessers.

3. The carving of the meat. The Master of the feast was himself head-carver, for he brake, and gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Christ intended hereby to put honour upon his disciples, that they might be respected as workers together with him: as also to signify in what way the spiritual food of the word should be dispensed to the world; from Christ, as the original Author, by his ministers. That Christ designed for the churches, he signified by his servant John; (Rev. 1. 1, 4.) they delivered all that, and that only, which they received from the Lord. 1 Cor. 11. 23. Ministers can never fill the people's hearts, unless Christ first fill their hands: and what he has given to the disciples, they must give to the multitude; for they are stewards, to give to every one their portion of meat, ch. 24. 45. And, blessed be God, be the multitude ever so great, there is enough for all, enough for each.

4. The increase of the meat. This is taken notice of only in the effect, not in the cause or manner of it; here is no mention of any word that Christ spoke, by which the food was multiplied; the purposes and intentions of his mind and will shall take effect, though they be not spoken out: but this is observable, that the meat was multiplied, not in the heap at first, but in the distribution of it. A widow's oil increased in the pouring out, so here the bread in the breaking. Thus grace grows by being acted, and, while other things perish in the using, spiritual gifts increase in the using. God ministers seed to the sower, and multiplies not the seed hearred, up, but the seed sown, 2 Cor. 9. 10. Thus there is the bread increased, and yet increased; that scattereth, and so increaseth.

VI. The plentiful satisfaction of all the guests with this provision. Though the disproportion was so great, yet there was enough and to spare.

1. There was enough; They did all eat and were filled. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; so runs the promise, (Psalm 37. 19.) They shall be satisfied. As there was enough for all, they did all eat, so there was enough for each, they were filled; and though there was but a little, there was enough, and that is as good as a feast. Note, The blessing of God can make a little go a great way; as, if God blasts what we have, we eat, and have not enough, Hag. 1. 9.

2. There was to spare; They took up of the fragments that remained, twelve baskets full, one basket for each apostle; thus what they gave they had again, and a greater deal more with it; and they were so far from being nice, that they could make this broken meat serve another time, and be thankful. This was to manifest and magnify the miracle, and to show that the provision Christ makes for those who are his is not bare and scanty, but rich and plentiful; bread enough, and to spare, (Luke 15. 17.) an overflowing fulness. Elisha's multiplying the loaves was somewhat like this, but far short of it; and then it was said, They shall eat and leave, 2 Kings 4. 43.

It is the same divine power, though exerted in an ordinary way, which multiplies the seed sown in the ground every year, and makes the earth yield her increase; so that what was brought out by handfuls, is brought home in sheaves: This is the Lord's doing; it is by Christ that all natural things consist, and by the word of his power that they are upheld.

22. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. 23. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. 24. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. 25. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. 26. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. 27. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. 28. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. 29. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. 30. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! 31. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? 32. And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. 33. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

We have here the story of another miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his friends and followers, his walking upon the water to his disciples. In the foregoing miracle he acted as the Lord of nature, improving its powers for the supply of those
who were in want; in this, he acted as the Lord of nature, correcting and controlling its powers for the succour of those who were in danger and distress.

1. Christ's dismissing of his disciples and the multitude, after he had fed them miraculously. He constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him into the other side. (v. 22.) St. John gives a particular reason for the hasty breaking up of this assembly, because the people were so affected with the miracle of the loaves, that they were about to take him by force, and make him a king; (John 6.) to avoid which, he immediately scattered the people, sent away the disciples, lest they should join with them, and he himself withdrew, John 6. 15.

When they had sat down to eat and drink, they did not rise up to play, but each went to his business.

1. Christ sent the people away. It intimated somewhat of solemnity in the dismissing of them; he sent them away with a blessing, with some parting words of caution, counsel, and comfort, which might abide with them.

2. He constrained the disciples to go into a ship first, for till they were gone the people would not stir. The disciples were loath to go, and would not have gone, if he had not constrained them. They were loath to go to sea without him. If they presence go not with us, carry we not up hence, Exod. 33. 13.

They were loath to leave him alone, without any guard, or any ship to wait for him; but they did it in pure obedience to his command.

II. Christ's retirement hereupon; (v. 23.) He went up into a mountain apart to pray. Observe here,

1. That he was alone; he went apart into a solitary place, and was there all alone. Though he had so much work to do with others, yet he chose sometimes to be alone, to set us an example. Those are not the best ministers that do not care for being alone; that cannot enjoy themselves in solitude, when they have none else to converse with, none else to enjoy, but God and their own hearts.

2. That he was alone at prayer; that was his business in this solitude, to pray. Though Christ, as God, was Lord of all, and was prayed to, yet Christ, as Man, had the form of a servant, of a beggar, and prayed. Christ has herein set before us an example how to pray, in the performance of his duty, according to the rule he gave, ch. 6. 11. In this mountain there was some private oratory or convenience, provided for such an occasion; it was usual among the Jews to have such. Observe, When the disciples went to sea, their Master went to pray; when Peter was to be sifled as wheat, Christ prayed for him.

3. That he was long alone; there he was when the evening was come, and for aught that appears, there he was till towards morning; the fourth watch of the night. The night came on, and it was a stormy, tempestuous night, yet he continued instant in prayer.

Note, It is good, at least sometimes, upon special occasions, and when we find our hearts enlarged, to continue long in secret prayer, and to take full scope in pouring out our hearts before the Lord. We must not restrain prayer, Job 15. 4.

III. The condition that the poor disciples were in at this time: Their ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, v. 24. We may observe here,

1. That they were got into the midst of the sea when the storm rose. We may have fair weather at the beginning of our voyage, and yet meet with storms before we arrive at the port we are bound for. The Lord had not him that girdeth on the harness boast as he that putteth it off; but after a long calm expect some storm or other.

2. The disciples were now where Christ sent them, and yet met with this storm. Had they been flying from their Master, and their work, as Jonah was, when he was arrested by the storm, it had been no matter for their complaint; but their business was to demand from their Master to go to sea at this time, and were going about their work. Note, It is no new thing for Christ's disciples to meet with storms in the way of their duty, and to be sent to sea when their Master foresees a storm; but let them not take it unkindly; what he does they know not now, but they shall know hereafter, that Christ designeth thereby to bring them into himself with the more wonderful grace to them and for them.

3. It was a great discouragement to them now that they had not Christ with them, as they had formerly when they were in a storm; though he was then asleep indeed, yet he was soon awakened, (ch. 8. 24.) but now he was not with them at all. Thus Christ uses his disciples first to lesser difficulties, and then to greater, and so trains them up by degrees to live by faith, and not by sense.

4. Though the wind was contrary, and they were tossed with waves, yet being ordered by their Master to the other side, they did not tuck about and come back again, but made the best of their way forward. Note, Though troubles and difficulties may disturb us in our duty, they must not drive us from it; but through the midst of them we must press forwards.

IV. Christ's approach to them in this condition; (v. 25.) and in this we have an instance,

1. Of his goodness, that he went unto them, as one that took cognizance of their case, and was under a concern about them, as a father about his children.

Note, The extremity of the church and people of God is Christ's opportunity to visit them and appear for them; but he came not till the fourth watch, toward three o'clock in the morning, for then the God of watchmen was there. It was a beautiful sight to see that the Lord appeared for Israel in the Red sea, (Exod. 14. 24.) so was this. He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth, but, when there is occasion, walks in darkness for their succour; helps, and that right early.

2. Of his power, that he went unto them, walking on the sea. This is a great instance of Christ's sovereign dominion over all the creatures; they are all under his command. He controls the heavens, and his creatures, and changes the qualities that we called essential. We need not inquire how this was done, whether by condensing the surface of the water, (when God pleases, the depths are congealed in the heart of the sea, Exod. 13. 8.) or by suspending his gravitation of his body, which was transfigured as he pleased; it is sufficient that it proves his divine power, for it is God's prerogative to tread upon the waves of the sea, (Job 9. 8,) as it is to ride upon the wings of the wind. He that made the waters of the sea a wall for the Redeemer of the Lord, (Isa. 51. 10.) here makes them a walk for the Redeemer himself, who, as Lord of all, appears with one foot on the sea and the other on dry land, Rev. 19. 2. The same power that made iron to swim, (2 Kings 6. 6.) did this. What alsed thee, O thou sea? Ps. 114. 5. It was at the presence of the Lord. Thy way, O God, is in the sea, Ps. 104. 8. Note, Christ can take what were pleasures to save his people.

V. Here is an account of what passed between Christ and his distressed friends upon his approach.

1. Between him and all the disciples. We are here told,

(1.) How their fears were raised; (v. 26.) When they saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; gáraçcΣ, ev; - It is an apparition; so it might much better he rendered. It seems, the evidence and appearance of spirits was generally believed by all except the Sadducees.
whose doctrine Christ had warned his disciples against; yet, doubtless, many supposed apparitions have been merely the creations of men's own fear and fancy. These disciples asked, "Lord, is this spirit in the Lord?" it can be no other. Note, [1.] Even the appearances and approaches of deliverance are sometimes the occasions of trouble and perplexity to God's people, who are sometimes most frightened when they are least nay, when they are most favoured, as the Virgin Mary, Luke 1. 29. Exod. 3. 6. 7. The comforts of the Spirit of adoption are introduced in the terrors of the appearance of a spirit, or the fancy of it, cannot be frightful, and strike a terror upon us, because of the distance of the world of spirits from us, the just quarrel good spirits have with us, and the inveterate enmity evil spirits have against us: see Job 4. 14. 15. The more acquaintance we have with God, the Father of spirits, and the more careful we are to keep ourselves in his love, the better able we shall be to deal with those fears. [3.] The perplexing, disguising fears of good people, arise from their mistakes and misapprehensions concerning Christ, his person, offices, and undertakings; the more clearly and fully we know his name, with the more assurance we shall trust in him, Ps. 9. 10. [4.] A little thing frightens us in a storm. When without are frightful waves and tempest, the disciples fancied it was some evil spirit that raised the storm. Note, Most of our danger from outward troubles arises from the occasion they give for inward troubles. (2.) How these fears were silenced, v. 27. He straightway relieved them, by showing them their mistake; when they were wrestling with the waves, he declined his succour for some time; but he hastened his succour against their fright, as much the more dangerous; he straightway laid that storm with his word, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. [1.] He rectified their mistake, by making himself known to them, as Joseph to his brethren; It is I. He does not name himself, as he did to Paul, I am Jesus; for Paul as yet knew him not; but to these disciples it was enough to say, It is I; they knew his voice instantly, John 20. 16. They need not ask, Who art thou, Lord? Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? They could say with the spouse, It is the voice of my Beloved, Cant. 2. 8.—5. 2. True believers know it by a good token. It was enough to make them easy, to understand who it was they saw. Note, A right knowledge opens the door to true comfort, especially the knowledge of Christ. [2.] He encouraged them against their fright; It is I, and therefore, First, Be of good cheer; Secondly, Be courageous; pluck up your spirits, and be courageous. If Christ's disciples be not cheerful in a storm, it is their own fault, he would have them so. Secondly, Be not afraid; 1. Be not afraid of me, now that you know it is I; surely you will not fear for you know I mean you no hurt." Note, Christ will not be a terror to those to whom he manifests himself; when they come to understand him aright, the terror will be over. 2. "Be not afraid of the tempest, of the winds and waves, though noisy and very threatening; fear them not, while I am so near you. I am he that concerns himself for you, and will not stand by, and see you perish." Note, Not he, means he a terror to those that have Christ near them, and know he is theirs; no, not death itself. 2. Between him and Peter, v. 28—31. where observe, (1.) Peter's courage, and Christ's countenancing that. [1.] It was very bold in Peter, that he would venture to come to Christ upon the water; (v. 28.) Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee. Courage was Peter's master-grace; and that made him so forward above the rest to express his love to Christ, though others, perhaps, might have been no other. [2.] First, It is an instance of Peter's affection to Christ, that he desired to come to him. When he sees Christ, whom, doubtless, during the storm, he had many a time wished for, he is impatient to be with him. He does not say, Bid me walk on the waters, as desiring it for the miracle-sake; but, Bid me come to thee, as desiring it for Christ's sake; "Let me come to thee," says he, "how to trust, that love will break through fire and water, if duly called to it, to come to Christ. Christ was coming to them, to succour and deliver them. Lord, said Peter, bid me come to thee. Note, When Christ is coming towards us in a way of mercy, we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty; and herein we must be willing and bold to venture with him and venture for him. Those that would have benefit by Christ as a Saviour, must thus by faith come to him. Christ had been now, for some time, absent, and hereby it appears why he absentened himself; it was to endear himself so much the more to his disciples at his return, to make it highly seasonable and doubly acceptable. Note, When, for a small moment, Christ has forsaken his people, his returns are welcome, and most affectionately embraced; when gracious souls, after long seeking, find their Beloved at last, they hold him, and will not let him go, Cant. 3. 4. Secondly, It is an instance of Peter's caution and due observance of the will of Christ, that he would not come without a warrant. Not, "If it be thou, I will come;" but, If he be thou, bid me come. Note, The boldest spirits must wait for a call to hazardous enterprises, which to rashly raise, with the hope of providential hints, wisdom is profitable to direct. Thirdly, It is an instance of Peter's faith and resolution, that he ventured upon the water when Christ bid him. To quit the safety of the ship, and throw himself into the jaws of death, to despise the threatening waves he so lately dreaded, argued a very strong dependence upon the power and word of Christ. What difficulty or danger could stand before such a faith and such a zeal? [2.] It was very kind and condescending in Christ, that he was pleased to own him in it, v. 29. He might have condemned the propost as foolish and rash; nay, and as proud and assuming; "Shall Peter pretend to do as his Master does?" But Christ knew that it came from a sincere and zealous affection, and in a way which he approved of it. Christ is well pleased with the expressions of his people's love, though mixed with manifold infirmities, and makes the best of them. First, He bid him come. When the Pharisees asked a sign, they had not only a repulse, but a reproof, for it, because they did it with a design to tempt Christ; when Peter asked a sign, he had it, because he did it with a view to trust Christ. It is called, "Come, come to Christ; venture all in his hand, and commit the keeping of your souls to him; venture through a stormy sea, a troublous world, to Jesus Christ." Secondly, He bore him out when he did come; Peter walked upon the water. The communion of true believers with Christ is represented by their
being quickened with him, raised up with him, made to sit with him, (Eph. 2. 5, 6,) and being crucified with him, Gal. 2. 20. Now, methinks, it is represented in Scripture as being born into the waters. Through the strength of Christ we are borne up above the world, enabled to trample upon it, kept from sinking into it, from being overwhelmed by it, obtain a victory over it, (1 John 3. 4,) by faith in Christ's victory, (John 16. 33,) and with him are crucified to it, Gal. 6. 14. See blessed Paul walking upon the water with Jesus, and more than a conqueror through him, and treading upon all the temptations of the devil, able to separate him from the love of Christ, Rom. 8. 35, &c. Thus the sea of the world is become like a sea of glass, concealed so as to bear; and they that have gotten the victory, stand upon it and sing, Rev. 15. 2, 3.

He walked upon the water, not for diversion or ostentation, but to go to Jesus; and in that he was thus wonderfully borne up. Note, When our souls are following hard after God, then it is that his right hand upholdeth us; it was David's experience, Ps. 63. 8. Special supports are promised, and are to be expected, only in spiritual pursuits. When God bears his Israel upon eagles' wings, it is to bring them to himself; (Exod. 19. 4,) nor can we ever come to Jesus, unless we be upheld by his power; it is in his own strength that we wrestle with him, that we reach after him, that we press forward toward the mark, being kept by the hour, Heb. 12. 1. By faith, and not our strength, must depend upon, as Peter when he walked upon the water: and there is no danger of sinking while underneath are the everlasting arms.

(2.) Here is Peter's cowardice, and Christ's reproving him and accusing him. Christ bid him come, not only that he might walk upon the water, and so know Christ's power, but that he might sink, and so know his own weakness; for as he would shew us his faith, so must we depend upon, as Peter when he walked upon the water: and there is no danger of sinking while underneath are the everlasting arms.

[1.] Peter's great fear; (v. 30.) He was afraid. The strongest faith and the greatest courage have a mixture of fear. Those that can say, Lord, I believe; must say, Lord, help my unbelief. Nothing but perfect love will quite cast out fear. Good men often fail in those graces which they are most eminent for, and which they have then in exercise; to see the hand of God so clearly in the proof of their faith, as it seemed at first, but afterwards his heart failed him. The lengthening out of a trial discovers the weakness of faith.

Here is, First, The cause of this fear; He saw the wind boisterous. While Peter kept his eye fixed upon Christ, and upon his word and power, he walked upon the water well enough; but when he took his eye from Christ, he knew the danger he was in, and observed how the floods lift up their waves, then he feared. Note, Looking at difficulties with an eye of sense more than at precepts and promises with an eye of faith, is at the bottom of all our inordinate fears, both as to public and personal concerns. Abraham was strong in faith, because he considered not his own body; (Rom. 4. 19,) he minded not the discouraging insuperabilities which the promise lay under, but kept his eye upon God's power; and so, with as great hope, believed in his promise, as when he saw the wind boisterous, should have remembered what he had seen, (ch. 8. 27,) when the winds and the sea obeyed Christ; but therefore we fear continually every day, because we forget the Lord our Maker, Isa. 51. 12, 13.

Secondly, The effect of this fear; He began to sink. While faith kept up, he kept above water; but when faith staggered, he began to sink. Note, The sinking of our spirits is owing to the weakness of our faith; we are upheld, but if we are saved) through faith; (1 Pet. 1. 5,) and therefore, when our souls are cast down and dismayed, the sovereign remedy is, to hope in God, Ps. 43. 5. It is the great duty of the regenerate to be strong in the faith, to be strong to believe, and to have the spirit of power, and of might, and of understanding, (2 Tim. 1. 7, 8;) for we all have not an equal share of faith, nor can it be equally strong in all. The unbelief of Peter was a strength to the faith of Christ, and the faith of Christ was a support to the unbelief of Peter.

Thirdly, The remedy he had recourse to in his distress, the old tried, approved remedy, and that was prayer; he cried, Lord, save me. Observe, 1. The manner of his praying; it is fervent and important; He cried. Note, When faith is weak, prayer should be strong. Our Lord Jesus has taught us in the day of our fear to offer up strong cries, Hcb. 5. 7. Sense of danger will make us cry, sense of duty and dependence on God should make us cry to him. 2. The matter of his prayer was pertinent, and to the purpose; he was afraid, and the great Saviour, he came to save; these that would be saved, must not only come to him, but cry to him, for salvation; but we are never brought to this, till we find ourselves sinking; sense of need will drive us to him.

[2.] Christ's great favour to Peter, in this fright. Though there was a mixture of presumption with Peter's faith in his first adventure, and of unbelief with his faith in his after-fainting, yet Christ did not cast him off for his fear.

First, He saved him; he answered him with the saving strength of his right hand, (Ps. 20. 6,) for immediately he stretched forth his hand, and caught him. Note, Christ's time to save is, when we sink, (Ps. 18. 4–7,) he helps at a dead lift. Christ's hand is still stretched out to all believers, to keep them from sinking, these whom he hath once apprehended as his own, and has called to his name, to the end of the world, he will catch out of the water too. Though he may seem to have left his hold, he doth but seem to do so, for they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand, John 10. 28. Never fear, he will hold his own. Our deliverance from our own fears, which else would overwhelm us, is owing to the hand of his power and grace, Ps. 34. 4.

Secondly, He rebuked him; for as many as he loves and saves, he reproves and chides; O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Note, 1. Faith may be true, and yet weak; at first, like a grain of mustard-seed. Peter had faith enough to bring him upon the water, yet, because not enough to carry him through, Christ tells him he had but little. 2. Our discouraging doubts and fears are all owing to the weakness of our faith: therefore we doubt, because we are not of little faith. It is the weakness of faith to resolve doubts, the doubts of sense, in a stormy day, so as even then to keep the head above water. Could we but believe more, we should doubt less. 3. The weakness of our faith, and the prevalence of our doubts, are very displeasing to our Lord Jesus. It is true, he doth not cast off weak believers, but it is as true, that he is not pleased with weak faith, no, not in those that are nearest to him. Wherefore didst thou doubt? What reason was there for it? Note, Our doubts and fears would soon vanish before a strict inquiry into the
cause of them; for, all things considered, there is no good reason why Christ's disciples should be of a doubtfull mind, no, not in a stormy day, because he is ready to help them, a very present Help.

The reason of the storm coming into the ship, Peter was there. When Christ was come into the ship, they were presently at the shore. Christ walked upon the water till he came to the ship, and then went into that, when he could as easily have walked to the shore; but when ordinary means are to be had, miracles are not to be expected. Though Christ needs not instruments for the doing of his work, he is pleased to use them. Observe, WHEN the storm came into the ship, Peter came in with him. Companions with Christ in his patience, shall be companions in his kingdom, Rev. 1. 9. Those that walk with him, shall reign with him; those that are exposed, and that suffer with him, shall triumph with him.

When they were come into the ship, immediately the storm ceased, for it had done its work, its trying work. He that has gathered the wind into his fists, and bound the waters in a garment, is the same that ascended and descended; and his word even stormy winds fulfil, Ps. 148. 8. When Christ comes into a soul, he makes winds and storms to cease there, and commands peace. Welcome Christ, and the noise of her waves will soon be quelled. The way to be still is, to know that he is God, that he is the Lord with thee.

VII. The adoration paid to Christ hereupon; (v. 33.) They that were in the ship came and worshipped him, and said, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God. Two good uses they made of this distress, and this deliverance.

1. It was a confirmation of their faith in Christ, and abundantly convinced them that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him; for none but the world's Creator could multiply the leaves, none but his Governor could tread upon the waters of the sea; they therefore yield to the evidence and make confession of their faith; Thou truly art the Son of God. They knew before that he was the Son of God, but now they know it better. Faith, after a conflict with unbelief, is sometimes the more active, and gains to greater degrees of strength by being exercised. Note, The breaker knows it of a truth. When. It is good for us to know more and more of the excellency of those things wherein we have been instructed, Luke 1. 4. Faith then grows, when it arrives at a full assurance, when it sees clearly, and saith, Of a truth.

2. They took occasion from it to give him the glory due unto his name. They not only owned that great truth, but were suitably affected by it; they worshipped Christ. Note, When Christ manifests his glory for us, we ought to return to it him; (Ps. 50. 15.) I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Their worship and adoration of Christ were thus expressed, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. Note, The matter of our creed may and must be made the matter of our praise. Faith is the very root, foundation, and means of worship, and worship the genuine product of faith. He that comes to God must believe; and he that believes in God, will come, Heb. 11. 6.

34. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, 35. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36. And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

We have here an account of miracles by wholesale, which Christ wrought on the other side the water, in the land of Gennesaret. Whithersoever Christ went, he was doing good. Gennesaret was called Petrah, or Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and either gave the name to, or took the name from, this sea, which is called, (Luke 5. 1.) The lake of Gennesaret; it signifies the valley of branches. Observe here, 1. The forwardness and faith of the men of that place. These were more noble than the Gergesenes, their neighbours, who were borderers upon the same lake. These besought Christ to depart from them, they had no occasion for him; these besought him to help them, they had need of him. Christ reckons it the greatest honour we can do him, to make use of him. Now here we are told,

1. How the men of that place were brought to Christ; they had knowledge of him. It is probable that his miraculous passage over the sea, which they that were in the ship would industriously spread the report of, might help to make way for his entertainment in those parts; and perhaps it was one thing Christ intended in it, for he has great reaches in what he does. This they had knowledge of, and of the other miracles Christ had wrought, and therefore they flocked to him. Note, They that know Christ's name, will make their application to him: if Christ were better known, he would not be neglected; he is trusted as far as he is known.

They had knowledge of him, that is, of his being among them, and that he would be but a while among them. Note, The discerning of the day of our opportunities is a good step toward the improvement of it. This was the condemnation of the world, that Christ was in the world, and the world knew him not; (John 1. 10.) Jerusalem knew him not, (v. 19, 42.) but there were some who, when he was among them, had knowledge of him. It is better to know that there is a prophet among us than that there has been one, Ezek. 2. 5.

2. How they brought others to Christ, by giving notice to their neighbours of Christ's being come into those parts; They sent out into all that country. Note, Those that have got the knowledge of Christ themselves, shun not to declare it to all that come near them. We must eat these spiritual morsels alone; there is in Christ enough for us all, so that there is nothing got by monopolizing. When we have opportunities of getting good to our souls, we should bring as many as we can to share with us. More than we think of would close with opportunities, if they were but called upon and invited to them. They sent into their own country, because it was their own, and they desired the welfare of it. Note, We can no better testify our love to our country than by promoting and propagating the knowledge of Christ in it. Neighbourhood is an advantage of doing good, which must be improved. Those that are near to us, we should contrive to do something for, at least by our example, to bring them nearer to Christ.

What their business was with Christ; not only, perhaps not chiefly, if at all, to be taught, but to have their sick healed; They brought unto him all that were diseased. If love to Christ and his doctrine will not bring them to him, yet self-love would. Did we but rightly seek our own things, the things of our own peace and welfare, we should seek the things of Christ. We should do him honour, and please him, by deriving grace and righteousness from him. Note, Christ is the proper Person to bring the diseased to; Whither should they go but to the Physician, to the Sun of righteousness, that hath healing under his wings?
his garment, v. 36. They applied themselves to him, (1.) With great importunity; they besought him. Well may we beseech to be healed, when God by his ministers beseecheth us that we will be healed. Note, The great importunity, and the favours and blessings are to be obtained from Christ by meekness; *Ask, and it shall be given.* (2.) With great humility; they came to him as those that were sensible of their distance, humbly beseeching him to help them; and their desiring to touch the hem of his garment, intimates that they thought themselves unworthy that he should take any particular notice of them, that he should so much as speak to their case, much less touch their hands by the hem of his garment; but they will look upon it as a great favour, if he will give them leave to touch the hem of his garment. The eastern nations show respect to their princes by kissing their sleeve or skirt. (3.) With great assurance of the all-sufficiency of his power, not doubting but they should be healed, even by touching the hem of his garment; that they should receive abundant communications from him by the smallest token or symbol of communion with him. They did not expect the formality of striking his hand over the place of persons diseased, as Naaman did; (2 Kings 5. 11.) but they were sure that there was in him such an overflowing fulness of healing virtue, that they could not fail of a cure, who were but admitted near him. It was in this country and neighbourhood that the woman with the bloody issue was cured by touching the hem of his garment; (Luke 8. 47.) and who admitted for that purpose; and therefore, and thence, probably, they took occasion to ask this. Note, The experiences of others in their attendance upon Christ may be of use both to direct and to encourage us in our attendance upon him. It is good using those means and methods which others before us have sped well in the use of. 11. The fruit and success of this their application to Christ. It was not in vain that these seed of Jacob sought him, for as many as touched, were made perfectly whole. Note, 1. Christ’s cures are perfect cures. Those that he heals, he heals perfectly. He doth not do his work by halves. Though spiritual healing be not perfected at first, yet, doubtless, he that has begun the good work, will perform it, Phil. 1. 6. 2. There is abundance of healing virtue in Christ for all that apply themselves to him, be they ever so many. That precious ointment which was poured upon his head for his anointing, shall be spread on the posterity of them that touch him, the more they touch him, the more shall it be; Ps. 133. 2. The least of Christ’s institutions, like the hem of his garment, is replenished with the overflowing fulness of his grace, and he is able to save to the uttermost. 3. The healing virtue that is in Christ, is put forth for the benefit of those that by a true and lively faith touch him. Christ is in heaven, but his word is nigh us, and he himself in that word. When we mix faith with the word, apply it to ourselves, and submit to its influences and commands, then we touch the hem of Christ’s garment. It is but thus touching, and we are made whole. On such easy terms are spiritual cures offered by him, that he may truly be said to heal freely; so that if our souls die of their wounds, it is not owing to our Physician, it is not for want of skill or will in him; but it is purely owing to ourselves. He could have healed us, he would have healed us, but we would not be healed; so that our blood will lie upon our own heads. 1. T**HEN came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2. Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4. For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6. And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7. Ye hypocrites, well did Esias prophesy of you, saying, 8. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. The inattentive heat of the Jewish teachers for the support of their hierarchy, occasioned many excellent discourses of our Saviour’s for the settling of the truth, as here, 1. Here is the cavil of the Scribes and Pharisees at Christ’s disciples, for eating with unwashed hands. The Scribes and Pharisees were the great men of the Jewish church, men whose gain was godliness, great enemies to the gospel of Christ, but colouring their opposition with a pretence of zeal for the law of Moses; when really nothing was intended but the support of their own tyranny over the consciences of men. They were men of learning and men of business. These Scribes and Pharisees here introduced were of Jerusalem, the holy city, the headcity, whither the tribes went up, and where were set the thrones of judgement; they should therefore have been better than others, but they were worse. No external privileges, if they be not duly improved, commonly swell men up the more with pride and malignity. Jerusalem, which should have been a pure spring, was now become a poisoned sink. How is the faithful city become a harlot? Now if these great men be the accusers, pray what is the accusation? What articles do they exhibit against the disciples of Christ? Why, truly, the thing laid to their charge, is, nonconformity to the traditions of their church; (v. 2.) Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? This charge they make good in a particular instance; They wash not their hands when they eat bread. A very high misdemeanor! It was a sign that Christ’s disciples conducted themselves inoffensively, when this was the worst thing they could charge them with. Observe, 1. What was the tradition of the elders—That people should often wash their hands, and always at meat. This they placed a great deal of religion in, supposing that the meat they touched with unwashed hands would be defiling to them. The
Pharisees practised this themselves, and with a great deal of strictness imposed it upon others, not under civil penalties, but as matter of conscience, and making it a sin against God if they did not do it. Rabbi Joshua determined, "that to eat with unwashed hands is as great a sin as adultery." And Rabbi Akiba being kept a close prisoner, having water sent him both to wash his hands with, and to drink with his meat, the greatest part being accidentally shed, he washed it himself, and thus would not have himself alone to drink, saying he would rather die than transgress the tradition of the elders. Nay, they would not eat meat with one that did not wash before meat. This mighty zeal in so small a matter would appear very strange, if we did not still see it incident to church-oppressors, not only to be found of practising their own inventions, but to be furious in pressing their own imposition.

2. What was the transgression of this tradition or injunction by the disciples; it seems, they did not wash their hands when they ate bread, which was the more offensive to the Pharisees, because they were men who in other things were strict and conscientious. The custom was innocent enough, and had a decency in its civil use. We read of the water for purifying at the marriage where Christ was present, and they put it into a kist, that it might not be drunk, and so put an end to that use of it. But when it came to be practised and imposed as a religious rite and ceremony, and such a stress laid upon it, the disciples, though weak in knowledge, yet were so well taught as not to comply with it, or observe it; no, not when the Scribes and Pharisees had their eye upon them. They had already learned St. Paul's lesson. All things are lawful for me; yet, I will not be brought under the power of any; especially not of those who sell to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over, 1 Cor. 6. 12.

3. What was the complaint of the Scribes and Pharisees against them. They quarrel with Christ about it, supposing that he allowed them in it, as he did, no doubt, by his own example; Why do thy disciples transgress the commandments of God? And why dost thou suffer them to do it?" It was well that the complaint was made to Christ; for the disciples themselves, though they knew their duty in this case, were perhaps not so well able to give a reason for what they did as were to be wished.

II. Here is Christ's answer to this cavil, and his justification of the disciples in that which was chargeable against them. Note, While we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, he will be sure to bear us out in it.

Two ways Christ replies upon them:

1. By way of reprimand, v. 3-6. They were saying in the eyes of his disciples, but Christ shows them a beam in their own. But that which he charges upon them, is, not bare a reprimand, for it will be no vindication of ourselves to condemn our neighbours for an evil; but there is such a closure of their tradition (and the authority of that was it they built their charge upon) as makes not only a non-compliance lawful, but an opposition a duty. That human authority must never be submitted to, which sets up in competition with divine authority.

(1.) The charge in general is, You transgress the commandment of God by your tradition. They called it the tradition of the elders. A tradition is an imposition, without the antiquity of the usage, and the authority of them that imposed it, as the church of Rome does upon fathers and councils; but Christ calls it their tradition. Note, Illegal impositions will be laid to the charge of those who support and maintain them, and keep them up, as well as of those who first invented and enjoined them: Mic. 6. 16. You transgress the commandment of God. Note, Those who are most zealous of their own impositions, are most careless of God's commandments; which is a good reason why Christ's disciples should stand upon their guard against such impositions, lest though at first they seem only to infringe the liberty of Christians, they come at length to confront the authority of Christ. Though the Pharisees, in this command of washing before meat, did not intervene upon any command of God; yet, because in other instances they did, he justifies Christ's disciples' disobedience to this.

(2.) The proof of this charge is, a particular instance, that of their transgressing the fifth commandment. [171]

1. Let us see what the command of God is, (v. 4.) what the precept, and what the sanction of the law is.

The precept is, Honour thy father and thy mother; this is enjoined by the common Father of man kind, and by owing respect to them whom Providence has made the instruments of our being, we give honour to him who is the Author of it, who has thereby, as to us, put some of his image upon them. The whole of a child's duty to its parents is included in this of honouring them, which is the spring and foundation of all the rest. If I be a Father, where is my honour? Our Saviour here supposes it to mean the duty of children to maintain their parents in a decent provision, ministering to their wants, if there be occasion, and being every way serviceable to their comfort. Honour widows, that is, maintain them, 1 Tim. 5. 3.

The sanction of this law in the fifth commandment, is, a promise, that thy days may be long; but our Saviour waves that, lest any should thence infer it to be only a thing commendable and praisable, and insists upon the penalty annexed to the breach of this commandment in another scripture, which denotes the duty to be highly and indispensably necessary; He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death; this law we have, Exod. 21. 17. The sin of cursing parents is here opposed to the duty of honouring them. Those who speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, who mock at them, or give them taunting and opprobrious language, break this law. If to call a brother Raca be so penal, what is it to call a father so? By our Saviour's application of this law, it appears, that denying service or relief to parents is included in cursing them. Though the language be respectful enough, and nothing abusive in it, yet what will that avail, if the deeds be not agreeable? It is but like him that said, I go, Sir, and went not, ch. 21. 30.

[172] Let us see what was the contradiction which the tradition of the elders gave to this command. It was not direct and downright, but implicit; their casuists gave them such rules as furnished them with an easy evasion from the obligation of this commandment, v. 5, 6. You hear what God saith, but ye say so and so. Note, That which men say, even great men, and learned men, and men in authority, must be examined by that which God saith; and if it be found the command is contradicted, it may and must be rejected, Acts 4. 19. Observe, First, What their tradition was; That a man could not in any case bestow his worldly estate better than to give it to the priests, and devote it to the service of the temple; and that, when any thing was so devoted, it was not only unlawful to alienate it, but all other obligations, though ever so just and sacred, were thereby superseded, and a man was thereby discharged from them. And this proceeded partly from their ceremonialism, and the superstitions regard they had to the temple, and partly from their covetousness, and love of money: for what was given to the temple they were savers by. The former was, in pretence, the latter was, in truth, at the bottom of this tradition.

Secondly, How they allowed the application of
this to the case of children. When their parents' necessities called for their assistance, they pleaded, that all they could spare from themselves and their children, they had devoted to the treasury of the temple; It is a gift, as whatsoever thou livest be free, and therefore their parents must expect nothing from them; suggesting, withal, that the spiritual advantage of what was so devoted, would redound to the parents, who must live upon that air. This, they taught, was a good and valid plea, and many unprofitable, unnatural children made use of it, and they justified them in it, and said, He shall be free; so we supply the sense. Some go further, and say it thus: He doth well, his days shall be long in the land, and he shall be looked upon as having duly observed the fifth commandment. The pretence of religion would make his refusal to provide for his parents not only passable but plausible. But the absurdity and impurity of this tradition were very evident; for revealed religion was intended to improve, not to overthower, natural religion; one of the fundamental laws of which is this of honouring our parents; and had they known what that meant, I will have justice, and mercy, and not sacrifice, they had not thus made the most arbitrary rites destructive of the most necessary morals. This was making the command of God of no effect. Note, Whatever leads to, or countenances, disobedience, does, in effect, make void the command; and that they take upon them to dispense with God's law, do, in Christ's account, repent, and disannul it. To break the law is hard, but to teach men so, as the Scribes and Pharisees did, is much worse, ch. 5. 19. To what purpose is the command given, if it be not obeyed? The rule is, as to us, of none effect, if we be not ruled by it. It is time for thee, Lord, to work; high time for the great Reformer, the great Refiner, to appear; for they have made void thy law; (Ps. 119. 126.) not only sinned against the commandment, but, as far as they could, nullified away the commandment. But, thanks be to God, in spite of them and all their traditions, the command stands in full force, power, and virtue.

2. The other part of Christ's answer is by way of reprehension; and that which he here charges them with, is hypocrisy; Ye hypocrites, v. 7. Note, It is the prerogative of him who searcheth the heart, and knows what is in man, to pronounce who are hypocrites. The eye of man can perceive open profaneness, but not such as of Christ that can detect hypocrisy, Luke 16. 15. And as it is a sin which his eye discovers, so it is a sin which all others of his soul hates.

Now Christ fetches his reproof from Isa. 29. 13. Well did Esai prophesy of you. Isaiah spoke it of the men of that generation to which he prophesied, yet Christ applies it to these Scribes and Pharisees. Note, The reproofs of sin and sinners, which we find in the old Scripture, are proved to apply to present persons and practices to the end of the world; for they are not of private interpretation, 2 Pet. 1. 20. The sinners of the latter days are prophesied of, 1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 1. 2 Pet. 3. 3. Threatenings directed against others, belong to us, if we be guilty of the same sins. Isaiah prophesied not of them only, but of all other hypocrites, against whom that word of his is still levelled, and stands in force. The prophets of old, thus, said, if the Lord be not with us, we are undone. This prophecy exactly denounces a hypocritical nation, Isa. 9. 17.—10. 6. Here is, (1.) The description of hypocrites, in two things. [1.] To their own performances of religious worship, v. 8. When they draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, their heart is far from him. Observe, First, How far a hypocrite goes; he draws nigh to God, and honours him; he is, in profession, a worshipper of God. The Pharisees went up to the temple, to pray; he does not stand at that distance which those are at, who live without God in the world, but has a name among the people here. They honour him; that is, they take on them to honour God, they join with those that do so. Some honour God has even from the services of hypocrites, as they help to keep up the face and form of godliness in the world, whence God fetches honour to himself, though they intend it not to him. When God's enemies submit themselves but feignedly, when they lie unto him, so the word is, (Ps. 60.) he redounds to his honour, and he gets himself a name.

Secondly, Where he rests and takes up; this is done but with his mouth and with his lips. It is pieti but from the teeth outwards; he shows much love, and that is all, there is in him his heart no true love; they make their voice to be heard, (Isa. 38. 4.) mention the name of the Lord, Isa. 48. 1. Hypocrites are those that only make a lip-labour of religion and religious worship. In word and tongue, the worst hypocrites may do as well as the best saints, and speak as fair with Jacob's voice.

Thirdly, What that is wherein he comes short; it is in the main matter; Their heart is far from me, habitually alienated and estranged, (Eph. 4. 18.) actually wandering and dwelling upon something else; no serious thoughts of God, no pious affection; no fixed purpose to keep God in heart and head, eternity, no thoughts agreeable to the service. God is near in your mouth, but far from their reins, Jer. 12. 2. Ezek. 33. 31. The heart, with the fool's eyes, is in the ends of the earth. It is a silly dove that is without heart, and so it is a silly dutv, Hos. 7. 11. A hypocrite says one thing, but thinks another. The great thing that God looks at and requires, is, the heart; (Prov. 23. 26.) if he be far from him, it is not a reason for slighting it, and therefore not an acceptable one, it is the sacrifice of fools, Eccl. 5. 1.

[2.] In their prescriptions to others. This is an instance of their hypocrisy, that they teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The Jews then, as the Papists since, paid the same respect to oral tradition that they did to the word of God, receiving it pari atestis actus at reverentia—with the same pious affection and reverence. Conc. Trident. Sess. 4. Decr. 1. When men's inventions are tacked to God's institutions, and imposed accordingly; this is hypocrisy, a mere human religion. The commandments of men are properly conversant about the things of men, but God will have his own work done by his own rules, and accepts not that which he did not himself appoint. That only comes to him, that comes from him.

(2.) The doom of hypocrites; it is put in a little compass; In vain do they worship me. Their worship does not attain the end for which it was appointed; it will neither please God, nor profit themselves. If it be not in spirit, it is not in truth, and so it is all nothing. That man who only seems to be religious, but is not so, his religion is vain; (James 1. 26.) and if our religion be a vain occupation, a vain religion, how great is that vanity! How sad is it to live in an age of prayers and sermons, and sabbaths and sacraments, in vain, because he has not the heart of God in them. Lip-labour is lost labour, Isa. 1. 11. Hypocrites sow the wind and reap the whirlwind; they trust in vanity and vanity will be their recompense.

Thus Christ justified his disciples in their disdaine to the traditions of the elders; and this the Scribes and Pharisees not by their cavilline. We read not of any reply they made; if they were not satisfied, yet they were silenced; and could not resist the power with which Christ spake.
10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13. But he answered and said, Every plant which by nature Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. 15. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17. Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18. But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20. These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

Christ having proved that the disciples, in eating with unwashed hands, were not to be blamed, as transgressing the traditions and injunctions of the elders, comes here to show that they were not to be blamed, as having done any thing that was in itself evil. In the former part of his discourse he overturned the authority of the law, and in this the reason of it. Observe, 1. The solemn introduction to this discourse; (v. 16.) He called the multitude. They were withdrawn while Christ discoursed with the Scribes and Pharisees; probably those proud men ordered them to withdraw, as not willing to talk with Christ in their hearing; Christ must favour them at their pleasure with a discourse in private. But Christ had a regard to the multitude; he soon despatched the Scribes and Pharisees, and then turned them off, and invited the multitude, to be his hearers: thus the poor are evangelized; and the foolish things of the world, and things that are despised, hath Christ chosen. The humble Jesus embraced those whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, and to them he designed it for a mortification. He turns from them as wilful and unteachable, and turns to the multitude, who, though weak, were humble, and willing to be taught. To them he said, Hear, and understand. Note, What we hear from the mouth of Christ, we must give all diligence to understand. Not only scholars, but even the multitude, the ordinary people, must apply their minds to understand the words of Christ. He therefore calls upon them to understand, because the lesson he was now about to teach them, was contrary to the notions which they had sucked in with their milk from their teachers; and overturned many of the customs and usages which they were wedged to, and laid stress upon. Note, There is need of a great intention of mind and clearness of understanding, to free men from those corrupt principles and practices which they have been bred up in and long accustomed to; for in that case the understanding is commonly bribed and biased by prejudice.

II. The truth itself laid down, (v. 11.) in two propositions, which were opposite to the vulgar errors of that time, and were the more surprising in him, for the which goes into the mouth defiles the man. It is not the kind or quality of our food, nor the condition of our hands, that affects the soul with any moral pollution or defilement. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, Rom. 14. 17. That defiles the man, by which guilt is contracted before God, and the man is rendered offensive to him, and disfigured for communion with him; now what we eat with our other senses, and our other organs, and inwardly and inwardly, does not this; for to the pure all things are pure, Tit. 1. 15. The Pharisees carried the ceremonial pollutions, by eating such and such meats, much further than the law intended, and burdened it with additions of their own, which our Saviour witnesses against; intending hereby to pave the way to a repeal of the ceremonial law in that matter. He was now beginning to teach his followers to call nothing common or unclean; and if Peter, when he was bid to kill and eat, had remembered this word, he would not have said, Not so, Lord, Acts 10. 15—15, 28.

2. But that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. We are polluted, not by the meat we eat with unwashed hands, but by the words we speak from an unsanctified heart; so it is that the mouth is the seat of corruption. There are one of them that eat no flesh, Acts 15. 29. Christ, in a former discourse, had laid a great stress upon our words; (ch. 12. 36, 37.) and that was intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at him: this here is intended for reproof and warning to those that cavilled at the disciples, and censured them. It is not the disciples that defile themselves with what they eat, but the Pharisees that defile themselves with what they speak spitefully and censoriously of them. Note, Those who charge one another for transgressing the commandments of men, many times bring greater guilt upon themselves by transgressing the law of God against rash judging. Those most defile themselves, who are most forward to censure the defilements of others.

III. The offence that was taken at this truth, and the account brought to Christ of that offence; (v. 12.) The Pharisees said, etc. Note, That the Pharisees were offended, and didst then not foresee that they would be so, at this saying, and would think the worse of thee and of thy doctrine for it, and be the more enraged at thee? 1. It was not strange that the Pharisees should be offended at this plain truth, for they were men made up of error and enmity, mistake and malice. Sore eyes cannot bear clear light; and nothing is more provoking to proud imposers than the undeviating of those whom they have first blindfolded, and then enslaved. It should seem that the Pharisees, who were strict observers of the traditions, were more offended than the Scribes, who were the teachers of them; and perhaps they were as much galled with the latter part of Christ's doctrine, which taught a strictness in the government of his tongue, as with the former part, which taught an indifference about washing our hands; great defenders for the formalities of religion, being commonly as great enemies to the substantial parts of it.

2. The disciples thought it strange that their Master should say that which he knew would give so much offence; he did not use to do so: surely, think they, if he had considered how provoking it would be, he would not have said what he said, and to whom he said it, and what would be the effect of it; and would teach us, that though in indifferent things we must be tender of giving offence, yet we must not, for fear of that, evade our truth or duty. Truth must be owned, and duty
done; and if any be offended, it is his own fault; it is scandal, not given, but taken.

Perhaps they did themselves stumble at the word Christ said, which they thought bold, and scarcely reconcileable with the difference that was put by the law of God between clean and unclean meats; and therefore objected this to Christ, that they might themselves be better informed. They seem likewise to have a concern upon them for the Pharisees, though they had quarrelled with them; which teaches us to forgo, and seek the good, not pecuniary spiritual good, of our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. They would not have the Pharisees go away displeased at any thing Christ had said; and therefore, though they do not desire him to retract it, they hope he will explain, correct, and justify it. Weak hearers are sometimes more solicitous than they should be not to have wicked hearers offended. But if we please them with the concealment of truth, and repressing of their errors and corruptions, we are not the servants of Christ.

IV. The doom passed upon the Pharisees and their corrupt traditions; which comes in as a reason why Christ cared not though he offended them, and therefore why the disciples should not care; because they were a generation of men that hated to be reformed, and were not like to be reformed by their own repentance. The people of the Lord are planted a noble vine; but now that they are become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, God disowned them, as not of his planting. Note, (1.) In the visible church, it is no strange thing to find plants that our heavenly father has not planted. It is implied that whatever is good in the church, is of God's planting. Isa. 41. 19. But let the husbandman be ever so careful, his vineyard will cast forth weeds of and formalities. The people of God are planted a noble vine; but now that they are become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, God disowned them, as not of his planting. Note, (2.) Those that are of the spirit of the Pharisees, they are sown in the word, and sowing, what figure soever they make, and of what denomination soever they be, God will not own them as of his planting. By their fruit you shall know them. (3.) Those plants that are not of God's planting, shall not be of his protecting, but shall undoubtedly be rooted up. What is not of God shall not stand, Acts 3. 38. What things are unscriptural, will wither and die of themselves, or be justly expunged by the church; however, in the great day these tares that offend will be handled for the fire. What is become of the Pharisees and their traditions? They are long since abandoned; but the gospel of truth is great, and will remain. It cannot be rooted up.

2. The ruin of them, and their followers, who had their persons and principles in admiration, v. 14. Why?

1.) Christ bids his disciples let them alone. "Have no converse with them or concern for them; neither court their favour, nor dread their displeasure; care not though they he offended, they will take their course, and let them take the issue of it. They are wedded to their own fancies, and will have every thing their own way; let them alone. Seek not to please a generation of men that please not God, (1 Thess. 2. 15.) and will be pleased with nothing less than an absolute dominion over your consciences. They arejoin'd to idols, (Ephraim, (Hos. 4. 17.) the idols of their own fancy; let them alone, let them be filthy still," Rev. 22. 11. The case of those sinners is sad indeed, whom Christ orders his ministers to let alone.

2.) He gives them two reasons for it. Let them alone; for,

[1.] They are proud and ignorant; two bad qualities that often meet, and render a man incurable in his folly, Prov. 26. 12. They are blind leaders of the blind. They are grossly ignorant in the things of God, and strangers to the spiritual nature of the divine law; and yet so proud, that they think they are wiser and better than others, and undertake to be leaders of others, to show others the way to heaven, when they themselves know not one step of the way; and, accordingly, they prescribe to all, and prescribe these who will not follow them. Though they were blind, if they had owned it, and come to Christ for eye-salve, they might have seen, but they disclaimed the intimation of such a thing; (John 9. 40.) Are we blind and do we also stumbled? (John 9. 41.) But they are three blind guides of the blind; (Rem. 2. 19, 20.) were appointed to be so, and fit to be so; that every thing they said, was an oracle and a law; "Therefore let them alone, their case is desperate; do not meddle with them; you may even provoke them, but never convince them." How miserable was the case of the Jewish church now when their leaders were blind, so self-conceitely foolish, as to be peremptory in their conduct, while the people were so sottishly foolish as to follow them with an implicit faith and obedience, and willingly walk after the commandment, Hos. 5. 11. Now the prophecy was fulfilled, Isa. 29. 10, 14. And it is easy to imagine what will be in the end hereof, when the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so, Jer. 5. 31.

[2.] They are pestering to destruction, and will surely be plunged into it: Both shall fall into the ditch. This must needs be the end of it, if both be so blind, and yet both so bold, venturing forward, and yet not aware of danger. Both will be involved in the general desolation coming upon the Jews, and both drowned in eternal destruction and perdition. The blind leaders and the blind followers will perish together. We find (Rev. 22. 15.) that hell is the portion of those that are of a seditious mind, and that love it when it is thrown wide open. The deceived and the deceivers are obnoxious to the judgment of God, Job 12. 16. Note, First, Those that by their cunning craftiness draw others to sin and error, shall not, with all their craft and cunning, escape ruin themselves. If both fall together into the ditch, the blind leaders will fall undermost, and have the worst of it; see Jer. 14. 15, 16. The prophets shall be consumed first, and then the people to whom they prophesied. Jer. 20. 6. 28, 15, 16. Secondly, The sin and ruin of the deceivers will be no security to those that are deceived by them. Though the leaders of this people cause them to err, yet they that are led of them are destroyed, (Isa. 9. 16.) because they shut their eyes against the light which would have rectified their mistake. Seneca, complaining of most people's being led by common opinion and practice, (Unnatiique omnium parens—quaeque sed nuda—Trecentum accurate asserta, et praestat utrum, et praestat usu, et praestat examinare,) concludes, Inde tanta concursatio aliorum super alios ruunt—Hence crowds fall upon crowds, in vast confusion. De Vita Beata. The falling of both together will aggravate the fall of both for they that have ths
mutually increased each other's sin, will mutually exasperate each other's ruin.

V. Instruction given to the disciples concerning the truth Christ had laid down, v. 10. Though Christ had said this, and taught them, yet, as ignorant were they not to be taught, he can have compassion on the ignorant who are willing to learn, Heb. 5. 2. If the Pharisees, who made void the law, be offended, let them be offended; but this great peace have they who love the law, that nothing shall offend them, but, some way or other, the offence shall be taken off, Ps. 119. 163.

Here is, 1. Their desire to be better instructed in this matter; (v. 15.) in this respect, as in many others, Peter was their speaker; the rest, it is probable, putting him on to speak, or intimating their concurrence; Declare unto us this parable. What Christ said, was plain, but, because it agreed not with the notions they had imbibed, though they would not contradict it, yet they called it a parable, and could not understand it. Note, (1.) Weak understandings are apt to turn plain truths into parables, and to seek for a knot in a burlap. The disciples often did so, as John 16. 17. even the grasshopper is a burden to a weak stomach, and babies in understanding cannot hear and digest strong meat. (2.) Where a weak head doubts concerning any word of Christ, an upright heart and a willing mind will seek for instruction. The Pharisees were offended, but kept it to the bottom of their hearts, they hated to be informed; but the disciples, though offended, sought for satisfaction, imputing the offence, not to the doctrine delivered, but to the shallowness of their own capacity.

2. The reproof Christ gave them for their weakness and ignorance; (v. 16.) Are ye also yet without understanding? As many as Christ loves and teaches, he thus rebukes. Notice, They are very ignorant indeed, who understand not that moral pollutions are abundantly worse and more dangerous than ceremonial ones. Two things aggravated their dullness and darkness.

(1.) That they were the disciples of Christ; "Are ye also without understanding? Ye whom I have admitted into so great a degree of familiarity with me, being so happy as to be made acquainted with the secrets of my love?"

Note, the ignorance of gospel grace is so great, that profess religion, and enjoy the privileges of church-membership, are justly a grief to the Lord Jesus. "Nn wonder that the Pharisees understand not this doctrine, who know nothing of the Messiah's kingdom; but ye that have heard it, and embraced it yourselves, and preached it to others, are ye also such strangers to the spirit and genius of it?"

(2.) That they had been a great while Christ's scholars; "Are ye yet so, after ye have been so long under my teaching?" Had they been but of yesterday in Christ's school, it had been another matter, but to have been for so many months Christ's constant hearers, and yet to be without understanding, was a great reproach to them. Note, Christ expects from us some proportion of knowledge, and grace, and grace, and grace, to the time and means we have had. See John 14. 9. Heb. 5. 12. 2 Tim. 3. 7, 8.

3. The explication Christ gave them of this doctrine of pollutions. Though he chid them for their dullness, he did not cast them off, but pitied them, and taught them, as Luke 24. 25—27. He here shows us,

1. What little danger we are in of pollution from that which entereth at the mouth, v. 17. Asordinate appetite, intemperance, and excess in eating, come out of the heart, and are defiling; but meat in itself is not so, as the Pharisees supposed. What there is of dregs and defilement in our meat, nature (or rather the God of nature) has provided a way to clear us of it; it goes in at the belly, and is cast out into the draught, and nothing remains to us but pure nourishment. So fearfully and wonderfully are we made and preserved and our souls held in life. The expulsive faculty is as necessary in the body as it is in the soul; for the same reason that sin is superfluous, or noxious; so happily is nature enabled to help itself, and shift for its own good: by this means nothing defiles; if we eat with unwashed hands, and so any thing unclean mix with our food, nature will separate it, and cast it out, and it will be no defilement to us. It may be a piece of cleanliness, but it is no point of conscience, to wash before meat; and we may, as the Pharisees supposed, eat with the despised; it is not the practice itself, but the opinion it is built upon, that Christ condemns, as if meat commended us to God; (1 Cor. 8. 8.) whereas christianity stands not in such observances.

(2.) What great danger we are in of pollution from that which proceeds out of the mouth, (v. 18.) out of the abundance of the heart: compare ch. 12. 4. There is no defilement in the products of God's bounty: the defilement arises from the products of our own corruption. Now here we have,

[1.] The corrupt foundation of that which proceeds out of the mouth; it comes from the heart; that is the spring and source of all sin, Jer. 8. 7. It is the heart that is so desperately wicked; (Jer. 17. 9.) for there is no sin in word or deed, which was not first in the heart. This is the root of bitterness. It is the inward part of a sinner, that is very wickedness, Ps. 5. 9. All evil speakings come forth from the heart, and are defiling; from the corrupt heart comes the corrupt communication.

[2.] Some of the corrupt streams which flow from this fountain, specified; though they do not all come out of the mouth, yet they all come out of the man, and are the fruits of that wickedness which is in the heart, and is wrought there, Ps. 58. 2. First, Evil thoughts, sins against all the commandments. Therefore David puts vain thoughts in opposition to the whole law, Ps. 119. 113. These are the first-born of the corrupt nature, the beginning of its strength, and do most resemble it. These, as the son and heir, abide in the house, and lodge within us. There is a great deal of all these things in the heart of man; and it is aggravating to it further. Carnal fancies and imaginations are evil thoughts, wickedness in the contrivance, (διασκεδασίας κακῶν,) wicked plots, purposes, and devices of mischief to others, Mic. 2. 1. Secondly, Murders, sins against the sixth commandment; these come from a malice in the heart against our brother's life, or a contempt of it. Hence he that hates his brother, is said to be a murderer; he is so by his thoughts' bar, 1 John 3. 15. War is in the heart, Ps. 55. 21. James 4. 1. Thirdly, Adulteries and fornications, sins against the seventh commandment; these come from the wanton, unclean, carnal heart; and the lust that reigns there, is conceived there, and brings forth these sins, James 1. 15. There is adultery in the heart first, and then in the act, ch. 5. 26. Fourthly, Covetousness, sins against the eighth commandment, cheats, wrongs, rapines, and all injurious contracts; the fountain of all these is in the heart, that is it that is exercised in these covetous practices, (2 Pet. 2. 14.) that is set upon riches, Ps. 62. 10. Achan coveted, and then took, Joshua 7. 20, 21. Fifthly, False witness, against the ninth commandment; it comes from a complication of falsehood and covetousness, or falsehood and malice in the heart. If truth, holiness, and love, which God requires in the inward parts, reigned as they ought, there would be no false-witness bearing, Ps. 64. 6. Jer. 9. 8.

Sixthly, Phephemes, speaking evil of God, again •
the third commandment; speaking evil of our neighbour, against the ninth commandment; these come from a contempt and disesteem of both in the heart; thence the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost proceeds (ch. 12. 33, 34.) these are the overflows of the gall within.

Now these are the things which defile a man, v. 20. Note, Sin is defiling to the soul, renders it unlovely and abominable in the eyes of the pure and holy God, unfit for communion with him, and for the enjoyment of him in the new Jerusalem, into which nothing shall enter, that defileth, or worketh uncleanness, and these are defiled by sin, and that makes every thing else so, Tit. 1. 15. This defilement by sin, was signified by the ceremonial pollutions which the Jewish doctors added to, but understood not. See Heb. 9. 13, 14. 1 John 1. 7.

These therefore are the things we must carefully avoid, and all approaches toward them, and not lay stress upon the washing of the hands. Christ doth not yet repeal the law of the division of meats, (that was not done till Acts 10.) but the tradition of the elders, which was tacked to that law; and therefore he concludes, To eat with unwashed hands, (which was the matter now in question,) this defileth not a man. If he wash, he is not the better before God; if he wash not, he is not the worse.

21. Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. 22. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me! 26. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. 27. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table. 28. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

We have here that famous story of Christ's casting the devil out of the woman of Canaan's daughter; it has something in it singular and very surprising, and which looks favourably upon the poor Gentiles, and is an earnest of that mercy which Christ here showed, as a gleam of that light which was to lighten the Gentiles. 26. 22. Christ came to his own, and his own received him not; but many of them were grieved with him, and were offended in him; and observe what follows, v. 21. 1. Jesus went thence. Note, Justly is the light taken from those that either play by it, or rebel against it. When Christ and his disciples could not be quiet among them, he left them, and so left an example to his own people, (ch. 10. 14.) Shake off the dust of your feet. Though Christ endure long, he will not always endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. He had said, (v. 14.) Let them alone, and he did so. Note, Wifflul prejudices against the gospel, and cavils at it, often provoke Christ to withdraw, and to remove the candlestick out of its place, Acts 15. 43, 51.

11. When he went thence, he departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; not to those cities, (they were excluded from any share in Christ's mighty works, ch. 11. 21, 22.) but into that part of the land of Israel which lay that way: thither he went, as Elisha to Saragita, a city of Sidon; (Luke 4. 23.) thither he went to look after this poor woman, whom he had mercy in reserve for. While he went about doing good, he was never out of his way. The work of the kingdom of God is so large, that he that seeketh shall find; shall have their share of his benign influences; and as now the ends of the earth, so afterward the ends of the earth, shall see his salvation, Isa. 49. 6. Here it was, that this miracle was wrought, in the story of which we may observe,

1. The address of the woman of Canaan to Christ, v. 22. She was a Gentile, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel; probably none but those accursed nations that were devoted by that word, Cursed be Canaan. Note, The doom of political bodies doth not always reach every individual member of them. God will have his remnant out of all nations, chosen vessels in all coasts, even the most unlikely; she came out of the same coasts. If Christ had not now made a visit to these coasts, though the mercy was worth travelling far for, it is probable that there might have been none to be moved by him. It is often an excitement too dormant faith and zeal, to have opportunities of acquaintance with Christ brought to our doors, to have the word nigh us.

Her address was very important, she cried to Christ, as one in earnest; cried, as being at some distance from him, not daring to approach too near, being a Canaanite, lest she should give offence. In her address,

(1.) She relates her misery: My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil, xxxi. 21, 22. She is ill-bewitched, or possessed. There were degrees of that misery, and this was the worst sort. It was a common case at that time, and very calamitous. Note, The vexations of children are the trouble of parents, and nothing should be more so than their being under the power of Satan. Tender parents very sensibly feel the miseries of these that are pieces of themselves, which are vexed with the devil, yet she is my daughter still. The greatest afflictions of our relations do not dissolve our obligations to them, and therefore ought not to alienate our affections from them. It was the distress and trouble of her family, that now brought her to Christ; she came to him, not for teaching, but for healing; yet, because she came in faith, he did not reject her. Though it is need that all be received and considered, she shall not therefore be driven from him. It was the affliction of her daughter that gave her this occasion of applying to Christ. It is good to make the afflictions of others our own, in sense and sympathy, that we may make them our own, in improvement and advantage.

(2.) She requests for mercy: Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David. In calling him Lord, she calls him, Son of David; that is the great thing which faith should fasten upon, and fetch comfort from. From the Lord we may expect acts of power, he can command deliverances; from the Son of David we may expect all the mercy and grace which were foretold concerning him. Though a Gentile, she owns the promise made to the fathers of the Jews, and the honour of the house of David. The Gentiles must receive christianity, not as an improvement of natural religion, but as the perfection of the Jewish religion, with an eye to the Old Testament.

Her petition is, Have mercy on me. She doth not limit Christ to this or that particular instance of
mercy, but mercy, mercy is the thing she begs; she pleads not merely, but depends upon mercy; 

Have mercy upon me. Mercies to the children are mercies to the parents; favours to ours are favours to us, and are so to be accounted. Note, It is the duty of parents always to intercede for their children, and to beseech and pray for them, especially for their souls; "I have a son, a daughter, grievously vexed with a proud will, an unclean devil, a malicious devil, led captive by his will; Lord, help them." This is a case more deplorable than that of a bodily possession. Bring them to Christ by faith and prayer, who alone is able to heal them. Parents should look upon it as a great mercy to the souls of their children, to have their power broken in the souls of their children.

2. The discouragements she met with in this address: in all the story of Christ's ministry we do not meet with the like. He was wont to countenance and encourage all that came to him, and either to answer before they called, or to hear while they were yet speaking; but here was one otherwise treated; and what could be the reason of it? (1.) Some think that Christ showed himself backward to gratify this poor woman, because he would not give offence to the Jews, by being as free and as forward in his favour to the Gentiles as to them. He had bid his disciples not go into the way of the Gentiles, (ch. 10. 5.) and therefore would not himself seem so inculcable to them as to others, but rather more shy. Or rather, it may be thought, he was so moved by her heart; he knows what is in the heart, knew the strength of her faith, and how well able she was, by his grace, to break through such discouragements; he therefore met her with them, that the trial of her faith might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 Pet. 1. 5, 7. This was like God's tempted Abraham, (Gen. 22. 1.) like the angel's wrestling with Jacob, (Gen. 32. 24.) Many of the methods of Christ's providence, and especially of his grace, in dealing with his people, which are dark and perplexing, may be explained with the key of this story, which is for that end left upon record, to teach us that there may be love in Christ's heart while there are frowns in his face, and to encourage us, therefore, though he stay us, yet he trust in him.

Observe the particular discouragements given her:

[1.] When she cried after him, he answered him not a word, v. 23. His ear was wont to be always open and attentive to the cries of poor suppliants, and his lips, which dropped as the honey-comb, always ready to give an answer of peace; but to this poor woman he turned a deaf ear, and she could give neither an alms nor an answer. It was a wonder that she did not fly off in a fret, and say, "Is this he that is so famed for clemency and tenderness? Have so many been heard and answered by him, as they talk, and must I be the first rejected sinner? Why so distant to me, if it be true that he hath stooped to so many?" But Christ knew what he did, and therefore did not answer, that she might be the better prepared to see, when he should appear to her, whether she had a true heart, or whether he made the most of it, and was pleased with her, and strengthened her with strength in her soul to prosecute her request, (Ps. 138. 3. Job 23. 6.) though he did not immediately give her the answer she expected. By seeming to draw away the desired mercy from her, he drew her on to be so much the more importunate for it.

Note, Every accepted prayer is not immediately an answered prayer. Sometimes (He heard her heart,) he seems not to regard his people's prayers, like a man asleep or astonished, (Ps. 44. 23. Jer. 14. 9. Ps. 22. 1, 2.) nay, to be angry at them; (Ps. 80. 4. Lam. 3. 8, 44.) but it is to prove, and so to improve, their faith, and to make his after-appearances for them more glorious to himself, and the more welcome to them; for the vision, at the end, shall speak, and shall not lie, Hab. 2. 3. See Job 35. 14.

[2.] When the disciples spake a good word for her, he gave a reason why he refused her, which was yet more discouraging.

But Christ was more careful, that the disciples interposed on her behalf; they said, Send her away, for she crieth after us. It is desirable to have an interest in the prayers of good people, and we should be desirous of it. Yet the disciples, though wishing she might have what she came for, yet therein consulted rather their own ease than the poor woman's satisfaction; "Send her away with a cure, for she crieth, and with good earnest; she crieth after us, and is troublesome to us, and shames us." Continued importunity sometimes be uneasy to men, even to good men; but Christ loves to be cried after.

Secondly, Christ's answer to the disciples quite dashed her expectations; "I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" you know I am not, she is none of them, and would you have me go beyond my commission?" Importunity seldom conquers the settled reason of a wise man; and those refusals are most silencing, which are so backed. He doth not only answer her, but he argues against her, and stops her mouth with a reason. It is true, she is a lost sheep, and hath as much need of his care as any, but she is not of the house of Israel, to whom he was first sent, (Acts 5. 26.) and therefore, while he was not interested in the case of the Gentiles (which most of those who would have occasioned our question whether we be of those to whom Christ was sent, But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction between Jew and Gentile is taken away; we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me?" But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction between Jew and Gentile is taken away; we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me?" But, blessed be God, no room is left for that doubt; the distinction between Jew and Gentile is taken away; we are sure that he gave his life a ransom for many, and if for many, why not for me?"

Thirdly, When she continued her importunity, he insisted upon the importunity of the thing, and gave her a most strong, and, are they not upon the same level with that rain from heaven, and those fruitful seasons, which God gave to the nations whom he suffered to walk in their own ways; (Acts 14. 16, 17.) no, these were peculiar favours, appropriated to the peculiar people, the garden inclosed. Christ preached to the Samaritans, (John 4. 41.) but we read not of any cures he wrought among them; that salvation was of the Jews; (John 4. 42.) and no more of those times, which were called doves, and, in comparison with the house of Israel, who were so dignified and privileged. Christ here seems to allow it, and therefore thinks it not meet that the Gentiles should share in the favours bestowed on the Jews. But see how the tables are turned; after the bringing of the Gentiles into the camp of the children of Israel, the Decree for the law are called doves, Phil. 3. 2.

Now this Christ urgeth against this woman of Canaan; "How can she expect to eat of the children's bread, who is not of the family?" Note, Those whom Christ intends most signally to honour, he first humbles and lays low in a sense of their own
meanness and unworthiness. We must first see ourselves to be as dogs, less than the least of all God's creation, and then humbly conciliatory, and not offended with them. 2. Christ delights to express great faith with great trials, and sometimes reserves the sharpest for the last, that, being tried, we may come forth like gold. This general rule is applicable to other cases for direction, though here used only for trial. Special ordinances and church-privileges are children's bread, and must not be prostituted to the grossly ignorant and profane. Christ, thus true to all, but spiritual dignities are appropriated to the household of faith; and therefore promiscuous admission to them, without distinction, wastes the children's bread, and is the giving of that which is holy to the dogs, ch. 7. 6. Procul hone, procul inde, profani—Off, ye profane.

3. Here is the strength of her faith and resolution, in breaking through all these discouragements. Many a one, thus tried, would either sink down into silence, or broken out into passion. "Here is cold comfort," might she have said, "for a poor distressed creature; as good for me to have staid at home, as come hither to be taunted at and abused at this rate; not only to have a pitious case slighted, but to be called a dog!" A proud, unheated heart would not have borne it. The reputation of the house of Israel was not now so great in the world, but Christ might manifest a partial regard to the people of Israel. It is not within the power of being retorted, had the poor woman been so minded. It might have occasioned a reflection upon Christ, and might have been a blemish upon his reputation, as well as a shock to the good opinion she had entertained of him; for we are apt to judge of persons as we ourselves find them; and think that they are what they are to us. "Is this the son of David?" (might she have said.) Is this he that should reign? Does he not pity that poor slighted creature? I am sure I have no reason to give him that character, for I was never treated so roughly in my life; he might have done as much for me as for others; or, if not, he needed not to have set me with the dogs of his flock. I am not a dog, I am a woman, and an honest woman, and a woman in misery; and I am sure it is not meet to call me dog."

No, here is not a word of this. Note, A humble, meek, and womanly spirit ever remains the same, and takes every thing in good part, that he saith and doeth, and puts the best construction upon it. She breaks through all these discouragements,

1. With a holy earnestness of desire in prosecuting her petition. This appeared upon the former refusal; (v. 23.) Then came she, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. [1.] She continued to pray. What Christ said, silenced the disciples; but hear no more of them, they took the answer but the woman did not. Note, The more sensibly we feel the burden, the more resolutely we should pray for the removal of it. And it is the will of God, that we should continue instant in prayer, should always pray, and not faint. [2.] She improved in prayer. Instead of blaming Christ, or charging him with unkindness, she seems rather to suspect herself, and lay the fault upon herself. She fears lest, in her first address, she had not been humble and reverent enough, and therefore now she comes, and worshipped him, and paid him more respect than she had done; or she fears that she had not been earnest enough, and therefore now she cries, Lord, help me. Note, When the answers of prayer are deferred, God is thereby teaching us to pray more, and pray better. It is then time to inquire wherein we have gone amiss, and wherein we have been amiss may be amended for the future. Disappointments in the success of prayer, must be ex- clinations to do the duty of prayer. Christ, in his agency, prayed more earnestly. [3.] She waives the question, whether she was of those to whom Christ was sent or no; she will not argue that with him, though partly upon his own ground. One, that has been ex- cluded to the house of Israel; but, "Whether an Is- raelite or no, I come to the Son of David for mercy, and I will not let him go, except he bless me." Many weak Christians perplex themselves with questions and doubts about their election, whether they are of the house of Israel or no; such had better mind their errand to God, and continue instant in prayer for mercy and grace; throw themselves by faith at the feet of Christ. Be not shy, If Christ will have me here; and then that matter will by degrees clear itself. If we cannot reason down our unbelief, let us pray it down. A fervent, affectionate Lord, help me, will help us over many of the discouragements which are sometimes ready to bear us down and overwhelm us. [4.] Her prayer is very short, but comprehensive and fervent; Lord, help me. Take care not to be as many are here, and commencing her case: "If the Messiah may be sent only to the house of Israel, the Lord help me, what will become of me and mine." Note, It is not in vain for broken hearts to beseech themselves; God looks upon them then, Jer. 31. 18. Or, Secondly, As begging grace to assist her in this hour of temptation. She found it hard to keep up her faith when it was thus frowned upon, and therefore prays, "Lord, help me; Lord, strengthen my faith." It is by degrees to Lord, let thy right hand uphold me, while my sail is following hard after thee," Ps. 63. 8. Or, Thirdly, As enforcing her original request; "Lord, help me; Lord, give me what I come for." She believed that Christ could and would help her, though she was not of the house of Israel; else she would have dropped her petition. Still she keeps up good thoughts of Christ, and will not quit her hold. Lord, help me, is a good prayer, if well put up; and such as Be not shamed to be thus, but prevail, and obtain all that is needed of Christ. "Lord, help me," and that we should take God's name in vain in it.

2. With a holy skillfulness of faith, suggesting a very surprising plea. Christ had placed the Jews with the children, as little-plants round about God's table, and had put the Gentiles with the dogs, under the table; and she doth not deny the aptness of the similitude. Note, There is nothing but contradicting any word of Christ, though it bear ever so justly, that will remove the displeasure of God, and is not object against it, resolves to make the best of it; (v. 27.) Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. Now here,

[1.] Her acknowledgment was very humble: Truth, Lord. Note, You cannot speak so meanly and slightly of a humble believer, but he is ready to speak as meanly and slightly of himself. Some that seem to dispraise and disparage themselves, will yet take it as an affront if others do so too; but one that is humbled aright, will subscribe to the most abusing challenges, and not call them abusing ones. "Truth, Lord; I cannot deny it; I am a dog, and have no right to the children's bread." David, Thou hast done foolishly, very foolishly: Truth, Lord, Asaph, Thou hast been as a beast before God: Truth, Lord, Agur, Thou art more brutish than any man: Truth, Lord. Paul, Thou hast been the chief of sinners, art less than the least of saints, not meet to be called an apostle: Truth, Lord.

[2.] Her improvement of this into a plea was very ingenious: Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It was by a singular acumen, and spiritual quickness and sagacity, that she discerned matter of argument in that which looked like a slight. Note, A lively, active faith will make that to be us, which seems to be against us. But, as it is in a man's own interest, so in the interest of the cause, and sweetness out of the strong. Unbelief is apt to mistake recruits for enemies, and to draw dismal conclusions even from comfortable promises; (Judges 13. 22, 23,) but faith can find encouragement even
in that which is discouraging, and get nearer to God by taking hold on that hand which is stretched out to push it away. So good a thing it is to be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa. 11. 3.

Her plea is, Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs. It is true, the full and regular provision is intended for the children only, but the small casual, neglected crumbs are allowed to the dogs, and are not grudged the dogs under the table, that attend there expecting the rest. Gentiles cannot expect the special ministry and miracles of the Son of David, that belongs to the Jews: but they begin now to be weary of their meat, and to play with it, they find fault with it, and curmudge it away; surely then some of the broken meat may fall to a poor Gentile; "I beg a cure by the, which is but as a crumb, though of the same precious bread, yet but a small inconsiderable piece, prepared of the loaves which they have." Note, When we are ready to surfeit on the children's bread, we should remember how many there are, that would be glad of the crumbs. Our broken meat in spiritual privileges, would be a feast to many a soul; Acts 13. 42. Observe here, First. Her humility and necessity made her glad of crumbs. Those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve nothing, will be thankful for any thing; and then we are prepared for the greatest of God's mercies, when we see ourselves less than the least of them. The least of Christ is precious to a believer, and the very crumbs of the bread of life.

Secondly. Her faith encouraged her to expect these crumbs. Why should it not be at Christ's table as at a great ban's, where the dogs are fed as sure as the children? Observe, She calls it their master's table; if she were a dog, she was his dog, and it cannot be ill with us, if we stand but in the meanest relation to Christ; "Though unworthy to be called children, yet make me as one of the hired servants; nay, rather let me be set with the dogs than turned out of the house; for in my Father's house there is not only bread enough, but to spare," Luke 15. 17, 19. It is good lying in God's house, though we lie at the threshold there.

4. The happy issue and success of all this. She came off with credit and comfort from this struggle; and, though a Canaanitish, approved herself a true daughter of Israel, who, like a prince, had power with God, and prevailed. Hitherto Christ hid his face from her, but now he reveals his heart in everlasting kindness, v. 27. Then Jesus answered and said, A woman here is thy faith. This was like Joseph's making himself known to his brethren, I am Joseph: so here, in effect, I am Jesus. Now he begins to speak like himself, and put on his own countenance. He will not contend for ever.

(1.) He commended her faith. A woman, great is thy faith. Observe, [1.] It is her faith that he commends. Then were there many gracefull other graces, and all other grace shone bright in her conduct of this affair—wisdom, humility, meekness, patience, perseverance in prayer; but these were the product of her faith, and therefore Christ fastens upon that as most commendable; because all graces faith honours Christ most, therefore of all graces Christ honours faith most. [2.] It is the greatness of her faith. Note, Faith, This is the faith of all the world; it is acknowledged, yet it is not in all alike strong; all believers are not of the same size and stature. Secondly. The greatness of faith consists much in a resolute adherence to Jesus Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, even in the face of discouragements; to love him, and trust him, as a Friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an Enemy. This is great faith! Thirdly. Though weak compared with the, if true, shall not be rejected, yet great faith shall be commended, and shall appear greatly well pleasing to Christ;

for in them that thus believe he is most admired. Thus Christ commended the faith of the centurion, and he was a Gentile too: he had a strong faith in the power of Christ, this woman in the good will of Christ: both were acceptable.

(2.) He cured her daughter; "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt: I can deny thee nothing, take what thou canst for." Note, Great believers may have what they will, for all the asking. When our will conforms to the will of Christ's precept, his will concurs with the will of our desire. Those that will deny Christ nothing, shall find that he will deny them nothing at last, though for a time he seems to hide his face from them. "Thou wouldst have the sins pardoned, thy corruptions mortified, thy nature sanctified; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And what canst thou desire more?" When we come, this poor woman did, to pray against Satan and his kingdom, we concur with the intercession of Christ, and it shall be accordingly. Though Satan may sift Peter, and buffet Paul, yet, through Christ's prayer and the sufficiency of his grace, we shall be more than conquerors, Luke 22. 31, 32. 2 Cor. 12. 7, 9. Rom. 16. 20.

The event was answerable to the word of Christ. Her daughter was made whole from that very hour, from thenceforward was never vexed with the devil any more; the mother's faith prevailed for the daughter's cure. Though the patient was at a distance, that was no hinderance to the efficacy of Christ's word. He spake, and it was done.

29. And Jesus departed thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee: and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. 30. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: 31. Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. 32. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. 33. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? 34. And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. 35. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. 36. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. 37. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left, seven baskets full. 38. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides women and children. 39. And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.
sent his word, and healed them. Note. All diseases are at the command of Christ, to go and come as he bids them. This is an instance of Christ's power and goodness, which may comfort us in all our weaknesses; and of his pity, which may comfort us in all our miseries. 3. The influence that this had upon the people, v. 31.

(1.) They wondered, and well they might. Christ's works should be our wonder. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous, Ps. 118. 23. The spiritual cures that Christ works, are wonderful. When blind souls are made to see by faith, the dumb to speak in prayer, the lame to walk in holy obedience, it is to be wondered at. Sing unto the Lord a new song, for thus he has done marvelous things.

(2.) They glorified the God of Israel, whom the Pharisees, when they saw these things, blasphemed. Miracles, which are the matters of our wonder, must be the matter of our praise; and mercies, which are matter of our rejoicing, must be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those that were healed, glorified God; if he heal our diseases, all that is within us must bless his holy name; and we have reason to be grateful to God.

II. Here is a particular account of his feeding four thousand men with seven loaves, and a few little fishes, as he had lately fed five thousand with five loaves. The guests indeed were now not quite so many as then, and the provision a little more, which does not intitle that Christ's arm was shortened, but that he wrought his miracles as the occasion required, and not for ostentation, and therefore he suited them to the occasion: both then and now he took as many as were to be fed, and made use of all that was at hand to feed them with. When once the utmost powers of nature are exceeded, we must say, This is the finger of God; and it is neither here nor there how far they are outdone; so that this is no less a miracle than the other. For it is not the number of the loaves that here is, 1. Christ's pity; (v. 52.) I have compassion on the multitude. He tells his disciples this, both to try and to excite their compassion. When he was about to work this miracle, he called them to him, and made them acquainted with his purpose, and conversed with them about it, not because he needed their advice, but because he would give an instance of his compassion, and he called them at first to signify to them that it was a miracle which was peculiar, for the servant knows not what his Lord doth, but treated them as friends and counsellors. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? Gen. 18. 17. In what he said to them, observe,

(1.) The case of the multitude; They continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. This is an instance of their zeal, and the strength of their affection to Christ, and the power he has over them. He left them not, but continued with them, to attend upon them on weekdays, but underwent a deal of hardship, to continue with him; they wanted their natural rest, and, for that appeared lay like soldiers in the field; they wanted necessary food, and had scarcely enough to keep life and soul together. In those hotter countries they could better bear long fasting than we can in those colder climates; but though it could not but be grievous to the body, and might en-
danger their health, yet the zeal of God's house thrust them up, and they esteemed the words of Christ more than their necessary food. We think three hours too much to attend upon public ordinances; but these people stayed together three days, and yet suffered not at it, nor said, Behold, what a seriousness is it! Observe, With what tenderness Christ spake of it; I have compassion on them. It had become to them to have compassion on him, who took so much for them. What should we have bread? Christ asked, How many loaves have ye? Note, When we cannot have what we would, we must make the best of what we have, and do good with it as far as it will go: we must not think so much of our wants as of our havings. Christ herein went according to the rule he gave to Martha, not to be troubled about many things, norumbered about much serving. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but last with nothing.

[2.] How his power was discovered to the multitude, in the plentiful provision he made for them; the manner of which is much the same as before, ch. 14. 18, &c. Observe here,

First, The provision that was at hand; seven loaves, and a few little fishes: the fish not proportionable to the bread, for bread is the staff of life. It is probable that the fish was as such as they had themselves taken; for they were fishes, and were now near the sea. Note, It is comfortable to eat the labour of our hands, (Ps. 128. 2) and to enjoy that which is any way the product of our own industry, Prov. 12. 27. And what we have got by God's blessing on our labour we should be free of; for therefore we must labour, that we may have to give, Ps. 22. 29.

Secondly, The putting of the people in a posture to receive it; (v. 35.) He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. They saw but very little provision, yet they must sit down, in faith that they should have a meal's meat out of it. They who would have spiritual food from Christ, must sit down at his feet, to hear his word, and expect it to come in an unseen way.

Thirdly, The distributing of the provision among them. He first gave thanks.—*Grasirize*. The word used in the former miracle was εὐδοκίαν—be blessed. It comes all to one; giving thanks to God is a proper way of craving a blessing from God. And when we come to ask and receive further mercy, we ought to give thanks for the mercies we have received. He then brake the loaves, (for it was in distributing the bread, that Christ first multiplieth, and sent it to his disciples, and to the multitude. Though the disciples had distrusted Christ's power, yet he made use of them now as before; he is not provoked, as he might be, by the weaknesses and infirmities of his ministers, to lay them aside; but still he gives to them, and they to his people, of the word of life.

Fourthly, The plenty there was among them; (v. 37.) They did all eat, and were filled. Note, Those whom Christ feeds, he fills. While we labour for the world, we labour for that which satisfieth not; (Isa. 55. 2) but those that duly wait on Christ shall be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, Ps. 63. 4. Christ thus fed people once and again, to intimate that though he was called Jesus of Nazareth, yet he was of Bethlehem, the breed of David; or rather, that he was himself the breed of life.

To show that they had all enough, there was a great deal left—seven baskets full of broken meat; not so much as there was before, because they did not gather after so many eaters, but enough to show that with Christ there is bread enough, and to share; supplies of grace for more than seek it, and for those that seek more.
St. Matthew, XVI.

Fifthly, The account taken of the guests; not that they might pay their share, (here was no reckoning to be discharged, they were fed gratis,) but that they might be witnesses to the power and goodness of Christ, and that this might be some resemblance of that universal providence that gives food to all flesh, Ps. 104. 16. Here were four thousand men fed; but what were they to that great family which is provided for by the divine care every day? God is a great Housekeeper, on whom the eyes of all the creatures wait, and he giveth them their food in due season, Ps. 104. 27—145. 15.

Lastly, The dismissal of the multitude, and Christ’s departure to another place; (v. 39.) He sent away the people. Though he had fed them twice, they must not expect miracles to be their daily bread. Let them now go home to their callings, and to their own tables. And he himself departed by ship to another place: for, being the Light of the world, he must be still in motion, and go about to do good.

Chap. XVI.

None of Christ’s miracles are recorded in this chapter, but four of his discourses. Here is, 1. A conference with the Pharisees, who challenged him to show them a sign from heaven, v. 1. 4. 2. Another with his disciples about the least of them, v. 5. 12. 3. Another with them concerning himself, as the Christ, and concerning his church built upon him, v. 13. 20. 4. Another concerning his sufferings for them, and theirs for him, v. 21. 28. And all these are written for our learning.

1. The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red: 3. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4. A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

We have here Christ’s discourse with the Pharisees and Sadducees, men at variance among themselves, as appears, Acts 23. 7, 8. and yet unanimous in their opposition to Christ; because his doctrine did equally overthrow the errors and heresies of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits and a future state; and the pride, tyranny, and hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who were the great imposing of the traditions of the elders. Christ and Christianity meet with opposition on all hands.

I. Their demand, and the design of it.

1. The demand was of a sign from heaven; this they desired him to show them; pretending they were very willing to be satisfied and convinced, when really they were far from being so, but sought excuses for an obstinate infidelity. That which they pretended to desire, was,

(1.) Some other sign than what they had yet had. They had great plenty of signs; every miracle Christ wrought was a sign, for no man could do what he did unless God were with him. But this will not serve, they must have a sign of their own choosing; they despised those signs which relieved the necessity of the sick and sorrowful, and insisted upon some signs which would gratify the curiosity of the proud. It is fit that the proofs of divine revelation should be chosen by the wisdom of God, not by the follies and fancies of men. The evidence that is given, is sufficient to satisfy an unprejudiced understanding, but was not intended to please a vain humour. And it is an instance of the deceitfulness of the heart, to think that we should be wrought upon by the means and advantages which we have not, while we slight those which we have. If we hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would we be wrought upon though one rose from the dead.

(2.) It must be a sign from heaven, They would have such miracles to prove his commission, as were wrought at the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; thunder, and lightning, and the voice of words, were the sign from heaven they required. Whereas the sensible signs and terrible ones were not agreeable to the spiritual and comfortable dispensation of the gospel. Now the word comes more nigh us, (Rom. 10. 8.) and therefore the miracles do so, and do not oblige us to keep such a distance as these did, Heb. 12. 18.

2. The design was, to tempt him; not to be taught by him, but to ensure him. If he should show them a sign from heaven, they would attribute it to a confederacy with the prince of the power of the air; if he should shew no such sign, they would have that to say for themselves, why they did not believe on him. They now tempted Christ as Israel did. 1 Cor. 10. 9. and observe their perverseness; then, when they had signs from heaven, they tempted Christ, saying, Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Now that he had furnished a table in the wilderness, they tempted him, saying, Can he give us a sign from heaven? If he be wise in his own counsell, he answered these fools according to their folly, Prov. 26. 5. In his answer,

1. He condemns their overlooking of the signs they had, v. 2. 3. They were seeking for the signs of the kingdom of God, when it was already among them. The Lord was in this place, and they knew it not. Thus their unbelieving ancestors, when miracles were their daily bread, asked, Is the Lord among us, or is he not?

To expose this, he observes to them,

(1.) Their skillfulness and sagacity in other things, particularly in natural prognostications of the weather; “You know that a red sky over night is a presage of fair weather, and a red sky in the morning, of foul weather. There are common rules drawn from observation and experience, by which it is easy to foretell very probably what weather it will be. When these causes have begun to work, we may easily guess at their issue, so uniform is nature in its motions, and so consistent with itself. We know not the balancings of the clouds, (Job 37. 16.) but we may spell something from the faces of them. This gives no countenance at all to the wild and ridiculous predictions of the astrologers, the star-gazers, and the monthly prognosticators, (Isa. 47. 13.) concerning the weather long before, and which foolish people are imposed upon; we are sure, in general, that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, shall not cease. But as to the particulars, till, by the weather-glasses, or otherwise, we perceive the immediate signs and harbingers of the change of weather, it is not for us to know, no, not that concerning the times and seasons. Let it suffice, that it shall be what weather pleases God; and that which pleases God, should not displease us.

(2.) Their sottishness and stupidity in the concerns of their souls; Can ye not discern the signs of the times?

[1.] “Do you not see that the Messiah is come?” The sceptre was departed from Judah, Daniel's
weeks were just expiring, and yet they regarded not. The miracles Christ wrought, and the gathering of the people to him, were plain indications that the King of grace was at hand; that this was the day of their visitation. Note, First, There are signs of the times, by which wise and upright men are enabled to make moral prognostications, and so far to understand the motions and methods of Providence, as from thence to take their measures, and to know what Israel ought to do, as the men of Israel, as the physician from some certain symptoms finds the disease, ch. 4. 12. Second, There are marks who are skilful enough in other things, and yet cannot or will not discern the day of their opportunities, are not aware of the wind when it is fair for them, and so let slip the gale. See Jer. 8. 7.

12. Against them. Here, we will slight the signs of God's ordaining, to seek for signs of our own prescribing.

[2.] Do not yourselves see your own ruin coming for rejecting him? You will not entertain the gospel of peace, and can you not evidently discern that hereby you pull an inevitable destruction upon your own heads? Note, It is the undoing of multitudes, that they are not aware what will be the end of their refusing Christ.

2. He refuses to give them any other sign, (v. 4.) as he had done before in the same words, ch. 12. 38. Those that persist in the same iniquities, must expect to meet with the same reproofs. Here, as there, (1.) He calls them an adulterous generation; because, while they professed themselves of the true church and spouse of God, they treacherously departed from him, and brake their covenants with him. The Pharisees were a generation pure in their own eyes, having the way of the adulterous woman, that thinks she has done no wickedness, Prov. 30. 20. 21. But, alas! Will they ever prove this to be true? They will not be prescribed to; we ask, and have not, because we ask amiss. (3.) He refers them to the sign of the prophet Jonas, which should yet be given them; his resurrection from the dead, and his preaching by his apostles to the Gentiles; these were reserved for the last and highest evidences of his divine mission. Note, Though the fancies of profane men may be heard, and their law broken, the humble shall be supported, and the unbelief of them that perish, left for ever inexusable, and every mouth shall be stopped.

This discourse broke off abruptly; he left them, and departed. Christ will not tarry long with those that tempt him, but justly withdraws from those that are disposed to quarrel with him. He left them as irreclaimable; Let them alone. He left them to themselves, let them in the hand of their own counsels; so he gave them up to their own hearts' lusts.

5. And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. 6. Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. 7. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. 8. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? 9. Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 10. Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? 11. How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? 12. Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning bread, in which, as in many other discourses, he speaks to them of spiritual things under a similitude, and they misunderstand him of carnal things. The occasion of it was, their forgetting to victual their ship, and to take along with them provisions for their family on the other side the water; usually they carried bread along with them, because they were sometimes in desert places; and when they were not, yet this would not be burdensome. But now they forgot; we will hope it was because their minds and memories were filled with better things. Note, Christ's disciples are often such as have no great forecast for the world.

I. Here is the caution Christ gave them, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. He had now been discoursing with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and saw them to be men of such a spirit, that they never turned away from his discourse, but did nothing to do with them. Disciples are in most danger from hypocrites, against those that are openly vicious they stand upon their guard, but against Pharisees, who are great pretenders to devotion, and Sadducees, who pretend to a free and impartial search after truth, they commonly lie unguarded: and therefore the caution is doubled, Take heed, and beware. The current principles and prejudices of the Pharisees and Sadducees are compared to leaven; they were souring, and swelling, and spreading, like leaven; they fermented wherever they came.

II. Their mistake concerning this caution, v. 7. They thought Christ hereby upbraided them with their improvidence and forgetfulness, that they were so busy attending to his discourse with the Pharisees, that therefore they forgot the necessary things of their own concerns. Christ himself did eat with them, (Prov. 23. 6.) whereas the danger was not in their bread, (Christ himself did eat with them, Luke 7. 36.—14. 1.—11. 37.) but in their principles.

III. The reproof Christ gave them for this.

1. He reproves their distrust of his ability and readiness to supply them in this strait; (v. 8.) O ye of little faith, why are ye in such perplexity, because ye have taken no bread? that ye can mind nothing else, that ye think your Master is as full of it as you, and apply every thing he saith to that? He does not chide them for their little forecast, as they expected he would. Note, Parents and masters must not be angry at the forgetfulness of their children and servants, more than is necessary to make them take more heed another time; we are all apt to be forgetful of our duties, we should serve to Peradventure it was an oversight. See how easily Christ forgave his disciples' carelessness, though it was in such a material point as taking bread; and do likewise. But that which he chides them for, is, their little faith.

(1.) He would not have them to depend upon him
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and were in reputation, which made the object of
inspection by the greater. In our age, we may reckon
atheism and deism to be the leave of the Sadducees,
and property to be the leave of the Pharisees, against
both which it concerns all christians to stand upon
their guard.

13. When Jesus came into the coasts
of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples
saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of
man, am? 14. And they said, Some say
that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias;
and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
15. He saith unto them, But whom say ye
that I am? 16. And Simon Peter answer-
ed and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the
living God. 17. And Jesus answered
and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon
Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not re-
vealed it unto thee, but my Father which
is in heaven. 18. And I say also unto thee,
that thou art Peter: and upon this rock I
will build my church; and the gates of hell
shall not prevail against it. 19. And I will
give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of
heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind
on earth shall be loosed in heaven: and
whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be
loosed in heaven. 20. Then charged he his
disciples that they should tell no man that
he was Jesus the Christ.

We have here a private conference which Christ
had with his disciples concerning himself. It was
in the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, the utmost
borders of the land of Canaan northward; there in
that remote corner, perhaps, there was less flustering
after him than in other places, which gave him leisure
for this private conversation with his disciples.
Note, When ministers are abridged in their public
work, they should endeavour to do the more in
their own families.

Christ is here catechising his disciples.
1. He inquires what the opinions of others were
concerning him; Whom do men say that I, the Son
of man, am? 1. He called himself the Son of man; which
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others. He was called, and justly, the Son of God,
for so he was; (Luke 1. 35.) but he called himself
the Son of man; for he is really and truly “Man,
made of a woman.” In courts of honour, it is a rule
to distinguish men by their highest titles; but Christ,
having now acquitted himself, though he was the Son
of God, will be known by the style and title of the
Son of man. Ezekiel was often called so to keep him
humble: Christ called himself so, to show he was
humble. Or, (2.) As a title peculiar to him as

by comparing this with his other discourses, to arrive
at the sense of it in their own thoughts. Thus Christ
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ing the understanding to the Spirit of revelation in
the word. And those truths are most precious,
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Mediator. He is made known, in Daniel's vision, as the Son of man, Dan. 7. 13. I am the Messiah, that Son of man that was foretold. But
2. Here, and what people's sentiments were concerning him: "Whom do men say that I am? The Son of man?" (So I think it might better be read.) "Do they own me for the Messiah?" He asks, not, "Who do the Scribes and Pharisees say that I am?" They were prejudiced against him, and said that he was a deceiver and in league with Satan; but, "But, if men, and what I am?" He referred to the common people, whom the Pharisees desired to be long from. Christ asked this question, not as one that knew not; for if he knows what men think, much more what they say; nor as one desirous to hear his own praises, but to make the disciples solicitous concerning the success of their preaching, by showing that he himself was so. The common people conversed more familiarly with the disciples than they did with their Master, and therefore from them he might better know what they said. Christ had not plainly said who he was, but left people to infer it from his works, John 10. 24, 25. Now he would know what inferences the people drew from them, and from the miracles which his apostles wrought in his name.
3. To this question the disciples gave him an answer; (ver. 14.) Some say, thou art John the Baptist, &c. Others, he is a prophet, as that said, that he was the true prophet. The disciples, however, do not mention that opinion, but only such opinions as were wide of the truth, which they had gathered up from their countrymen. Observe,
(1.) They are different opinions; some say one thing; and others another. Truth is one; but those who vary from that commonly vary one from another. Thus Christ came eventually to split division, Luke 12. 51. Being so noted a person, every one would be ready to pass his verdict upon him, and, "Many men, many minds:" those that were not willing to own him to be the Christ, wandered in endless mazes, and followed the chase of every uncertain guess and wild hypothesis.
(2.) They are honourable opinions, and bespeak the respect they had for him, according to the best of their judgment. These were not the sentiments of his enemies, but the sober thoughts of those that followed him with love and wonder. Note, It is possible for men to have good thoughts of Christ, and yet not right ones, a high opinion of him, and yet not high enough.
They suppose him to be one risen from the dead; which perhaps arose from a confused notion they had of the resurrection of the Messiah, before his public preaching, as of Jonas. Or their notions arose from an excessive value for antiquity; as if it were not possible for an excellent man to be produced in their own age, but it must be one of the ancients returned to life again.
(4.) They are all false opinions, but built upon nothing. Christ's doctrines and miracles bespeak him to be an extraordinary Person; but because of the meanness of his appearance, so different from what they expected, they would not own him to be the Messiah, but will grant him to be any thing rather than that.
[1.] Some say, Thou art John the Baptist. Herod said so; (ch. 14. 2.) and those about him would be made to own it. This was effectually carried on by an opinion they had, that those who died as martyrs, should rise again before others; which some think the second of the seven sons refers to, in his answer to Antiochus, 2 Macc. 7. 9. The King of the world shall raise us up, who have died for his laws, unto everlasting life.
[2.] Some, Elias; taking occasion, no doubt, from the prophecy of Malachi, (ch. 4. 5.) Behold, I will send you Elijah. And the rather, because Elijah (as Christ) did many miracles, and was himself, in his translation, the greatest miracle of all.
[4.] Or, one of the prophets. This shows what an honourable idea they entertained of the prophets; and yet the very men who are actuated and slew them, ch. 23. 29. Rather than they would allow Jesus of Nazareth, one of their own country, to be such an extraordinary person as his works bespake him to be, they would say, "It was not, he, but one of the old prophets.
II. He inquires what their thoughts were concerning him; "But who say ye that I am? Ye tell me what other people say of me; can ye say better?" 1. The disciples had themselves been better taught than others; had, by their intimacy with Christ, greater advantages of getting knowledge than others had. Note, It is justly expected, that those who enjoy greater plenty of the means of knowledge and grace than others, should have a more clear and distinct knowledge of the things of God than others. But Christ, who makes this the occasion to show that the common people, who had not such advantages, than others, should have truer sentences concerning him, and be able to give a better account of him than others. 2. The disciples were trained up to teach others, and therefore it was highly requisite that they should understand the truth themselves; "Ye that are to preach the gospel of the kingdom, what are your notions of him that sends you?" Note, Ministers must be examined before they be sent; that the ministers of Christ may not give a dark, and who they say that he is; for how can they be owned as ministers of Christ, that are either ignorant or erroneous concerning Christ? This is a question we should every one of us be frequently putting to ourselves, "Who do we say, what kind of one do we say, that the Lord Jesus is? Is he precious to us? Is he in our eyes the chief of ten thousand? Is he the Beloved of our souls? Is he our portion and inheritance?" We cannot have communion with us, according as our thoughts are right or wrong concerning Jesus Christ.
Well, this is the question; now let us observe,
(1.) Peter's answer to this question, v. 16. To the former question concerning the opinion others had of Christ, several of the disciples answered, according as they had heard people talk; but to this Peter answers in the name of all the rest, they are speaking to it, and concerning it in Peter. Peter's temper led him to be forward in speaking upon all such occasions, and sometimes he spake well, sometimes amiss; in all companies there are found some warm, bold men, to whom a preceidency of speech falls of course; Peter was such a one: yet we find other of the apostles sometimes speaking as the mouth of the Lord; John 14. 25. Acts 20. 29. Phil. 1. 27. Jude, John 14. 5, 8. 22. So that this is far from being a proof of such privity and superiority of Peter above the rest of the apostles, as the church of Rome ascribes to him. They will needs advance him to be a judge, when the utmost they can make of him, is, that he was but foreman of the jury, to speak for the rest, and that only for hac vice—for [for me]. And it is not strange that a steward of the house, only chairman upon this occasion.
Peter's answer is short, but it is full, and true, and to the purpose; Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. Here is a confession of the Christian faith, addressed to Christ, and so made an act of devotion. Here is a confession of the true God as the living God, in opposition to dumb and dead idols, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, whom to know is
life eternal. This is the conclusion of the whole matter.

[1.] The people called him a Prophet, that Prophet; (John 6. 14.) but the disciples own him to be the Christ, the anointed One; the great Prophet, Priest, and King of the church; the true Messiah promised to the fathers, and depended on by them as He that shall come. It was a great thing to believe this concerning one whose outward appearance was so contrary to the general notion the Jews had of the Messiah.

[2.] He called himself the Son of man; but they owned him to be the Son of the living God. The people's notion of him was, that he was the ghost of a dead man, Elias or Jeremiah; but they know and believe him to be the Son of the living God, who has life in himself, and has given to his Son to have life in himself, and to be the Life of the world. If he be the Son of the living God, he is of the same nature with him; and though his divine nature was now vailed with the cloud of flesh, yet there were those who looked through it, and saw his glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Now can we with an assurance of faith subscribe to this confession? Let us then, with an hearty avowal and acknowledgment of it, and tell him so; Lord Jesus, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

(2.) Christ's approbation of his answer; (v. 17—19.) in which Peter is replied to, both as a believer and as an apostle.

[1.] As a believer, v. 17. Christ shows himself well pleased with Peter's confession, that it was so clear and express, without ifs and orns. Note, the proficiency of Christ's disciples in knowledge and grace is very acceptable to him; and Christ shows him whence he received the knowledge of this truth. At the first discovery of this truth in the dawning of the gospel-day, it was a mighty thing to believe it; all men had not this knowledge, had not this faith. But, First, Peter had the happiness of it; Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona. He reminds him of his rise and original, the meanness of his parentage, the obscurity of his extraction; he was Bar-jonas—The son of a dove; so some. Let him remember the rock out of which he was hewn, that he may see he was not born to this dignity, but preferred to it by the divine favour; it was free grace that made him to differ. Those that have received the Spirit, must remember who is their Father, 1 Sam. 16. 12. Having entertained this, he makes him sensible of his great happiness as a believer; Blessed art thou. Note. True believers are truly blessed, and those are blessed indeed whom Christ pronounces blessed; his saying they are so, makes them so. "Peter, thou art a happy man, who thus knowest the joyful sound," Ps. 89. 15. Blessed are your eyes, ch. 13. 16. All happiness attends the right knowledge of Christ.

Secondly, God must have the glory of it; "For flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee. Thou hadst this neither by the invention of thy own wit and reason, nor by the instruction and information of others; this light sprang neither from nature nor from education, but from my Father, who is in heaven." Note. 1. The christian religion is a revealed religion, has its rise in heaven; it is a religion from above, given by inspiration of God, not the learning of men or the modern discovery of reason. 2. Saving faith is the gift of God, and, wherever it is, is wrought by him, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, and upon the score of his mediation, Phil. 1. 29. Therefore thou art blessed, because my Father has revealed it to thee. Note. The revealing of Christ to us and in us is a distinguishing token of God's good will, and a firm foundation of true happiness; and blessed are they that are thus highly favoured.

Perhaps Christ discerned something of pride and vain-glory in Peter's confession; a subtle sin, and which is apt to mingle itself even with our good duties. It is hard for good men to compare themselves with others, and not to have too great a conceit of themselves; to prevent this, we should consider that our preference to others is no achievement of our own, but the free gift of God's grace to us, and not to others; so that we have nothing to boast of, Ps. 115. 1. 1 Cor. 4. 7. [2.] Christ replies to him as an apostle or minister, v. 18, 19. Peter, in the name of the church, had confessed Christ, and to him therefore the promise intended for the church by Jeremiah (Note). There is nothing lost by being forward to confess Christ; for those who thus honour him, he will honour.

Upon occasion of this great confession made of Christ, which is the church's homage and allegiance, he signed and published this royal, this divine charter, by which that body politic is incorporated. Such is the communion between Christ and the church, the Bridegroom and his Bride, in the generation of the world from the beginning, and it was built upon the rock of the promised Seed, Gen. 3. 15. But now, that promised Seed being come, it was requisite that the church should have a new charter, as christian, and standing in relation to a Christ already come. Now here we have that charter; and a thousand pities it is, that this word, which is the great support of the kingdom of Christ, should be treated with so little respect, and be passed into the service of antichrists. But the devil has employed his subtlety to pervert it, as he did that promise, Ps. 91. 11. which he perverted to his own purpose, ch. 4. 6. and perhaps both that scripture and this he thus perverted because they stood in his way, and therefore he owed them a spite.

Now the purport of this charter is,

First, To establish the being of the church; "I say also unto thee. It is Christ that makes the grant, he who is the church's Head and Ruler, to whom all judgment is committed, and from whom all power is derived; he who makes it pursuant to the authority received from the Father, and his undertaking for the salvation of the elect. The grant is put into Peter's hand: "I say it to thee. The Old-Testament promises relating to the church were given immediately to particular persons, Abraham and David; which yet gave no supremacy to them, much less to any of their successors; so the New-Testament charter is here delivered to Peter as an agent, but to the use and behoof of the church in all ages, according to the purposes therein specified and contained. Now it is here premised, 1. That Christ would build his church upon a rock. This is the title is incorporated by the style and title of Christ's church. It is a number of the children of men called out of the world, and set apart from it, and dedicated to Christ. It is not thy church, but mine. Peter remembered this, when he cautioned ministers not to lord it over God's heritage. The church is Christ's peculiar, appropriated to him. The world is God's, and they that dwell therein; but the church is a chosen remnant, that stands in relation to God through Christ the Mediator. It bears his inscribed superscription.

(1.) The Builder and Maker of the church is Christ himself; I will build it. The church is a temple which Christ is the Builder of, Zech. 6. 11, 13. Herein Solomon was a type of Christ, and Cyrus, Isa. 44. 28. The materials and workmanship are his. By the working of his Spirit with the preaching of his word he adds souls to his church,
and so builds it up with living stones, 1 Pet. 2. 5.  
Ye are God's building; and building is a progressive work; the church is a foundation, the building will not stand; it is composed of persons, each in its place, like a house in forming, like a house in the building. It is committed to all those who wish well to the church, that Christ, who has divine wisdom and power, undertakes to build it up.

(2.) The foundation on which it is built, is this Rock: Let the architect do his part ever so well, if the foundation is not sound, the building will not stand; let us therefore see on what foundation it is, and let us be sure it must be of Christ, for other foundation can no man lay. See Isa. 28. 16.

[1.] The church is built upon a rock; a firm, strong, and lasting foundation, which time will not waste, nor will it sink under the weight of the building. Christ would not build his house upon the sand, for he knew that storms would arise. A rock is high, Ps. 61. 2. Christ's church does not stand upon a level with this world; a rock is large, and extends far, so does the church's foundation; and the more large, the more firm; those are not the church's friends, that narrow its foundations.

[2.] It is built upon this rock; thou art Peter, which signifies a stone or rock; Christ gave him that name when he first called him, (John 1. 42.) and hence Peter, thou art Peter. "Peter, thou dost answer thy name, thou art a solid, substantial disciple, fixed and stayed, and one that there is some hold of. Peter is thy name, and strength and stability are with thee. Thou art not shaken with the waves of men's fluctuating opinions concerning me, but established in the present truth," 2 Pet. 1. 12. From the mention of this significant name, occasion is taken for this metaphor of building upon a rock.

First, Some by this rock understand Peter himself as an apostle, the chief, though not the prince, of the twelve; senior among them, but not superior over them. The church is built upon the foundation of the apostles, Eph. 2. 20. The first stones of that building were laid in and by their ministry; hence their names are said to be written in the foundations of the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 14. Now Peter being that apostle by whose hand the first stones of the church were laid, both in Jewish converts, (Acts 2.) and in the Gentile converts, (Acts 10.) he might in some sense be said to be the rock on which it was built. Cephas was one that seemed to be a pillar, Gal. 2. 9. But it sounds very harsh, to call a man that only lays the first stone of a building, which is a transient act, the foundation on which it is built, which lays the groundwork, which, if not well laid, would not serve to support the pretensions of the Bishop of Rome; for Peter had no such headship as he claims, much less could derive it to his successors, least of all to the Bishops of Rome, who, whether they are so in place or no, is a question, but that they are not so in the truth of Christianity, is past all question.

Secondly, Others by this rock understand Christ; "The rock was Peter, upon which he build his church," Perhaps he laid his hand on his breast, as when he said, Destroy this temple, (John 2. 19.) when he spoke of the temple of his body. Then he took occasion from the temple, where he was, so to speak of himself, and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of that; so here he took occasion from the rock which his rock and gave occasion to some to misunderstand him of Peter. But this must be explained by those many scriptures which speak of Christ as the only Foundation of the church; see 1 Cor. 3. 11. 1 Pet. 2. 6. Christ is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls, and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.

Thirdly, Others by this rock understand this confession which Peter made of Christ, and this comes all to one with understanding it of Christ himself: It was a good confession which Peter witnessed, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God; the rest concurred with him in it. "Now," saith Christ, "this is that great truth upon which I will build my church," 1. Take away this truth itself, and the universal church falls to the ground. If Christ be not the Son of God, Christianity is a cheat, and the church is a mere chimera; our preaching is vain, your sanctification of the powers of darkness, and your sign is vain, Col. 1. 13, 14, 17. If Jesus be not the Christ, these that own him are not of the church, but deceivers and deceived. 2. Take away the faith and confession of this truth from any particular church, and it ceases to be a part of Christ's church, and relapses to the state and character of infidelity. This is circulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae—that article, with the admission of the denial of which the church either rises or falls; "the main hinge on which this ship of salvation turns," those who let this go, do not hold the foundation; and though they may call themselves christians, they give themselves the lie; for the church is a sacred society, incorporated upon the certainty and assurance of this great truth; and great is it, and has prevailed.

2. Christ here promises to preserve and secure his church; The gates of hell shall not prevail against it; neither against this truth, nor against the church which is built upon it.

(1.) This implies that the church has enemies that fight against it, and endeavour its ruin and overthrow, here represented by the gates of hell, that is, the city of hell; (which is directly opposite to this heavenly city, this city of the living God,) the devil's interest among the children of men. The gates of hell are the powers and policies of the devil's kingdom, the dragon's head and horns, by which he makes war with the Lamb; all that comes out of hell-gates, as being hatched and contrived there. These fight against the church by opposing gospel-truths, corrupting gospel-ordinances, persecuting good ministers and good christians; drawing or driving, persuading by craft or forcing by cruelty, to that which is inconsistent with the purity of religion: this is the design of the gates of hell, to root out the name of christianity, (Ps. 83. 4;) to devour the man child, (Rev. 12. 9;) to raise this city to the ground.

(2.) This assures us that the enemies of the church shall not gain their point. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, in which his truths and ordinances shall be owned and kept up, in spite of the rage of the devil and his agents. They shall not prevail against it, Ps. 129. 1, 2. This gives no security to any particular church, or church-governors, that they shall never err, never apostatize or be destroyed; but that somewhere or other the christian religion shall have a being, though not always in the same degree of purity and splendour, yet so as that the entail of it shall never be quite cut off. This is a promise of a spiritual and everlasting Church, (Rev. 12. 14.) cast down, but not destroyed, (2 Cor. 4. 9.) as dying, and behold we live, 2 Cor. 6. 9. Corruptions grieving, persecutions grievous, but neither fail. The church may be failed in particular encounters, but in the main battle it shall come off more than a conqueror. Particular believers are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 5. 6.

Secondly, The other part of this charter is, to settle the order and government of the church, v. 19. When a city or society is incorporated, officers are appointed and empowered to act for the common good. A city without government is a chaos. Now this constituting of the government of the church, is here expressed by the delivering of the keys, and, with them, a power to bind and loose. This is not to be understood of any peculiar power that Peter
was invested with, as if he were sole door-keeper of the kingdom of heaven, and had that key of David, which belonged only to the Son of David; so, this invests all the apostles and their successors with a ministerial power to guide and govern the church of Christ, as it exists in particular congregations or churches, according to the rules of the gospel. Christ's apostles are "The keys of the kingdom of heaven; so Ambrose De Dignit. Sacerd. Only the keys were first put into Peter's hand, because he was the first that opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts 10. 28. As the king, in giving a charter to a corporation, impowers the corporation to hold courts in his name, so ministers, mastery of fact, and determine therein according to law, confirming what is done, regularly, as if done in any of the superior courts; so Christ, having incorporated his church, hath appointed the office of the ministry for the keeping up of order and government, and to see that his laws be duly served; I will give thee the keys. He doth not say, "I have given them," or "I do now;" but "I will do it," meaning to give those gifts, Ephes. 4. 8. then this power was actually given, not to Peter only, but to all the rest, ch. 28. 19, 20. John 20. 21. He doth not say, The keys shall be given, but, I will give them; for ministers derive their authority from Christ, and all their power is to be used in his name, 1 Cor. 3. 4.

Now, 1. The power here delegated, is a spiritual power; it is a power pertaining to the kingdom of heaven, that is, to the church, that part of it which is militant here on earth, to the gospel-dispensation: that is it about which the apostolical and ministerial power is wholly conversant. It is not any civil, secular power that is hereby conveyed, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; their instructions afterward were in things pertaining to the kingdom of God, Acts 1. 3.

2. The power of the keys that is given, alluding to the custom of investing men with authority in such a place, by delivering to them the keys of the place. Or as the master of the house gives the keys to the steward, the keys of the stores where the provisions are kept, that he may give to every one in the house their portion of meat in due season, (Luke 12. 42.) and so as there is occasion, according to the rules of the family. Ministers are stewards, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Tit. 1. 7. Eliakim, who had the key of the house of David, was over the household, Isa. 22. 22.

3. It is a power to bind and loose, that is, (following the metaphor of the keys,) to shut and open. Joseph, who was lord of Pharaoh's house, and steward of the stores, had power to bind his princes, and to teach his senators wisdom, Ps. 103. 21, 22. When the stores and treasures of the house are shut up from any, they are bound, interdices tibi acqua et igne — forbid thee the use of fire and water; when they are opened to them again, they are loosed from that bond, are discharged from the censure, and restored to their liberty.

4. It is a power which Christ hath promised to own the due administration of; (he will ratify the sentence of his stewards with his own approbation;) It shall be bound in heaven, and loosed in heaven: not that Christ hath hereby obliged himself to confirm all the acts of his ministers, even those that are duly passed according to the word, clave non errante — the key turning the right way, such are sealed in heaven; that is, the word of the gospel, in the mouth of faithful ministers, is to be looked upon, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, and to be received accordingly, 1 Thess. 2. 13. John 13. 20. Now the keys of the kingdom of heaven are,

(1.) The key of doctrine, called the key of knowledge; Your business shall be to explain to the world the will of God, both as to truth and duty; and for this you shall have your commissions, credentials, and full instructions, to bind and loose; these, in the common speech of the Jews, at that time, signified to prohibit and declare that, which the law of Moses was now to be allowed, as the eating of such and such meats; some things allowed there were now to be forbidden, as divorce; and the apostles were empowered to declare this to the world, and men might take it upon their words. When Peter was first called to be a minister of a new world, to bind and to loose nothing common or uncleann, this power was exercised. There is also an ordinary power hereby conveyed to all ministers, to preach the gospel as appointed officers; to tell people, in God's name, and according to the scriptures, what is good, and what the Lord requires of them; and who declare the whole counsel of God, use these keys well, Acts 20. 27.

Some make the giving of the keys to the psalmist a privilege of the church in the person of its president, or governing doctor of the law, which was to put into his hand the keys of the chest where the book of the law was kept, denoting his being authorized to take and read it: and the binding and loosing, to allude to the fashion about their books, which were in rolls; they shut them by binding them up with a string, which they untied when they opened them. Christ gives his apostles power to shut or open the book of the gospel to people, as the case required. See the exercise of this power, Acts 13. 46.—18. 6. When ministers preach pardon and peace to the penitent; wrath and the curse to the impenitent, in Christ's name, they act then pursuant to this authority of binding and loosing.

(2.) The key of discipline, which is but the application of the former to particular persons, upon a right estimate of their characters and actions. It is not legislative power that is here conferred, but judicial; the judge doth not make the law, but only declare what is law, and, upon an impartial inquiry into the merits of the cause, gives sentence accordingly. Such is the power of the keys, wherever it is lodged, with reference to church-membership and the privileges thereof. [1.] Christ's ministers have a power to admit into the church; "Go discip[le] all nations, baptizing them;" those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to him, admit them and their spiritual members of the church by baptism. Ministers are to let in to the wedding-feast those that are bidden; and to keep out such as are apparently unfit for so holy a communion. [2.] They have a power to expel and cast out such as have forfeited their church membership, that is binding; refusing to unbelieve; the application of gospel-promises and the seals of them; and declaring to such as appear to be in the gall of bitterness and the smoke that rises out of the matter, as Peter did to Simon Magnus, though he had been baptized; and this is a binding over to the judgment of God. [3.] They have a power to restore and to receive in again, upon their repentance, such as had been thrown out; to loose those whom they had bound; declaring to them, that, if their repentance be sincere, the promise of pardon belongs to them. The apostles had a miraculous gift of healing the sick; but even the rule of outward appearances, (as Acts 8. 21. 1 Cor. 5. 1. 2 Cor. 2. 7. 1 Tim. 1. 20.) which ministers may still make a judgment upon, if they be skilful and faithful.

Lastly, Here is the charge which Christ gave his disciples, to keep this private for the present; (v. 20.) They must tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ. What they had professed to him, they
must not publish to the world, for several reasons; 1. Because this was the time of preparation for his kingdom; the great thing now preached, was, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and therefore those things were now to be insisted on, which were proper to make way for Christ; as the doctrine of repentance; not this great truth, in and with which the kingdom of heaven was to be actually set up. Every thing is beautiful in its season, and it is good advice, Prepare thy work, and afterwards build, Prov. 24. 27. 2. Christ would have his Messiahship proved by his works, and would rather they should testify of him than that his disciples should, because their testimony was but as his own, which he insisted not on. See John 5. 31, 54. He was so secure of the demonstration of his miracles, that he waved other witnesses, John 10. 25, 38. 3. If they had known that he was Jesus the Christ, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, 1 Cor. 2. 8. 4. Christ would not have the apostles preach this, till they had the most convincing evidence ready to allege in confirmation of it. Great truths may suffer damage by being asserted before they can be sufficiently proved. Now the great proof of Jesus being the Son of God, was his resurrection, and he declared to be the Son of God, with power; and therefore the divine wisdom would not have this truth preached, till that could be alleged for proof of it. 5. It was requisite that the preachers of so great a truth should be furnished with greater measures of the Spirit than the apostles as yet had; therefore the open asserting of it was adjourned till the Spirit should be poured out upon them. But when Christ was glorified and the Spirit poured out, we find Peter proclaiming upon the house-tops what was here spoken in a corner, (Acts 2. 36.) That God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ; for as there is a time to keep silence, so there is a time to speak. 21. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. 22. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 23. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples concerning his own sufferings; in which observe, 1. Christ's foretelling of his sufferings. Now he began to do it, and from this time he frequently spake of them. Some hints he had already given of sufferings, as when he said, Destroy this temple: when he spake of the Son of man being lifted up, and of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood: but now he began to show it, to speak plainly and expressively of it. Hitherto he had not touched upon this, because the disciples were weak, and could not well bear the sight of him, and seeing so very melancholy; but now that they were more ripe in knowledge, and strong in faith, he began to tell them this. Note, Christ reveals his mind to his people gradually, and lets in light as they can bear it, and are fit to receive it. From that time, when they had made that full confession of Christ, that he was the Son of God, then he began to show them this. When he found them knowing in one truth, he taught them another; for to him that has, shall be given. Let them first be established in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and then go on to perfection, Heb. 6. 1. If they had not been well grounded in the belief of Christ's being the Son of God, it would have been a great shaking to their faith. All truths are not to be spoken to all persons at all times, but such as are proper and suitable to their present state. Now observe, 1. What he foretold concerning his sufferings, the particulars and circumstances of them, are all surprising. (1.) The place where he should suffer. He must go to Jerusalem, the head city, the holy city, and suffer there. Though he lived most of his time in Galilee, he must die at Jerusalem; there all the sacrifices were offered, there therefore he must die, who is the great Saviour. (2.) The persons by whom he should suffer; the elders, and chief priests, and scribes: these made up the great sanhedrim, which sat at Jerusalem, and was had in veneration by the people. Those that should have been most forward in owning and adoring Christ, were the most bitter in persecuting him. It was strange that men of knowledge in the scriptures, and professing the coming, and pretended to have something sacred in their character, should use him thus barbarously when he did come. It was the Roman power that condemned and crucified Christ, but he lays it at the door of the chief priests and Scribes, who were the first movers. (3.) What he should suffer; He must suffer many things, and be killed. His enemies' insatiable malice, and his own invincible patience, appear in the variety and multiplicity of his sufferings, (he suffered many things,) and in the extremity of them; nothing less than his death would satisfy them, he must be killed. The suffering of many things, if not unto them, is more tolerable; for while there is life, there is hope; and death, without such prefaces, would be less terrible; but he must first suffer many things, and then be killed. (4.) What should be the happy issue of all his sufferings; he shall be raised again the third day. As the prophets, so Christ himself, when he testified beforehand his sufferings, testified, with all the glory that should follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11. His rising again the third day proved him to be the Son of God, notwithstanding his sufferings; and therefore he must be kept up. For when he spake of the cross and the shame, he spake in the same breath of the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. Thus we must look upon Christ's suffering for us, trace it in the way to his glory; and thus we must look upon our suffering for Christ, look through it to the recompense of reward. If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. 2. Why he foretold his sufferings. (1.) To show that they were the product of an eternal counsel and consent; were agreed upon between the Father and the Son from eternity; thus it pleased Christ to suffer. The matter was settled in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge, in pursuance of his own voluntary suspicion and undertaking for our salvation; his sufferings were no surprise to him, did not overtake him as a snare, but he had a distinct and certain foresight of them, which greatly magnifies his love, John 18. 4. (2.) To rectify the mistakes which his disciples had imbibed concerning the eternal pomp and power of his kingdom. Believing him to be the Messiah, they counted upon nothing but dignity and authority in the world; but here Christ reads them another lesson, tells them of the cross and sufferings; nay, that the chief priests are the elders, whom, it is likely, they expected to be
the supports of the Messiah's kingdom, should be its great enemies and persecutors; this would give them quite another idea of that kingdom which they themselves had preached the approach of; and it was requisite that this mistake should be got of early, to make their preaching plain with, and warned not to expect great things in this world. (3.) It was to prepare them for the share, at least, of sorrow and fear, which they must have in his sufferings. When he suffered many things, the disciples could not but suffer some; if their Master be killed, they will be seized with terror; let them know it before, that they may provide accordingly, and being fore-warned, may be fore-armed.

II. The offence which Peter took at this; he said, De be it far from thee, Lord: probably he spake the sense of the rest of the disciples, as before, for he was chief speaker. He took him, and began to rebuke him. Perhaps Peter was a little elevated with the great things Christ had now said unto him, which made him more bold with Christ than did become him; so hard is it to keep the spirit low and humble in the midst of great advancements!

1. It did not become Peter to contradict his Master, or take upon him to advise him; he might have wished, that, if it were possible, this cup might pass away, without saying so peremptorily, This shall not be, when Christ had said, It must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cress to us, it becomes us diligently to acquiesce in, and not to protest to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, Rom. 11. 34.

2. It savoured much of fleshly wisdom, for him to appear so warmly against suffering, and to startle thus at the offence of the cross. It is the corrupt part of us, that is thus solicitious to sleep in a whole day, and rather than Christ should be crucified, to have no but he may be spared. This regard not, when Christ had said, it must be. Shall any teach God knowledge? He that reproveth God, let him answer it. Note, When God's dispensations are either intricate or cress to us, it becomes us diligently to acquiesce in, and not to protest to, the divine will; God knows what he has to do, without our teaching. Unless we know the mind of the Lord, it is not for us to be his counsellors, Rom. 11. 34.

3. It was much to the advantage of Peter, if he had been disposed to acquiesce in, and not to protest to, the divine will; he would have had more opportunity of seeing Christ in the suffering, and of living under the influence of so many holy and spiritual things as they relate to this present life, to which they are unequal; but there are other rules to measure them by, which, if duly observed, will enable us cheerfully to bear them, Rom. 8. 18. See how passionately Peter speaks; "Be it far from thee, Lord. God forbid, that thou shouldst suffer and be killed; we cannot bear the thoughts of it." Master, spare thyself; so it might be read; Ἀδελφό, σώσον. Be merciful to thyself, and then this shall not be to thee. Note, A good man may by a surprise of temptation soon grow very unlike himself. He answered him as he did Satan himself, ch. 4. 10. Note, (1.) It is the subtlety of Satan, to send temptations to us by the unsuspected hands of our best and dearest friends. Thus he assaulted Adam by Eve, Job by his wife, and hurled Christ by his beloved Peter. It concerns us therefore to be ignorant of his devices, but to stand against his wiles and deceptions, by standing always upon our guard against sin, whoever moves us to it. Even the kindnesses of our friends are often abused by Satan, and made use of as temptations to us. (2.) Those who have their spiritual senses exercised, will be aware of the voice of Satan, even in a friend, a disciple, a minister, that disguises them from their duty. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Such suitings must be accounted kindnesses, Ps. 141. 5. (4.) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

4. What was the ground of this displeasure; why did Christ thus resent a motion that seemed not only harmless, but kind? Two reasons are given:

(1.) Thou art an offence to me; Exod. 32: 11. Thou art my hinderance; (so it may be read;) thou standest in my way. Christ was hastening on in the work of our salvation, and his heart was so much upon it, that he took it ill to be hindered, or tempted to start back from the hardest and most discouraging part of his undertaking. So strongly was he engaged for our redemption, that they who but indirectly endeavoured to divert him from it, offended him in a very tender and sensible manner. Peter was not so sharply reproved for disowning and denying his Master in his sufferings as he was for dissuading him from them; though that was the defect, this the excess, of kindness. It argues a very great firmness and resolution of mind in any business, when it is an offence to be disowned, and a man will not endure to hear any thing to the contrary; like that of Ruth, Entreat me not to leave thee, Note, Our love to Christ is often our greatest woe. We must not regard who speaks, so much as what is spoken; we must learn to know the devil's voice when he speaks in a saint as well as when he speaks in a serpent. Whoever takes us off from that which is good, and would have us afraid of doing too much for God, speaks Satan's language. (3.) We must in free and faithful in reproving the dearest friend we have, that saith or doth amiss, though he may be under colour of kindness to us. We must not compliment, but rebuke, mistaken courtesies. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Such suitings must be accounted kindnesses, Ps. 141. 5. (4.) Whatever appears to be a temptation to sin, must be resisted with abhorrence, and not parleyed with.

See why he called Peter Satan, when he suggested this to him; because, whatever stood in the way of our salvation, he looked upon as coming from the devil, who is a sworn enemy to it. The same Satan that afterward tempted Jesus to destroy him in his undertaking, here prompted Peter plausibly to divert him from it. Thus he changes himself into an angel of light. Thou art an offence to me. Note, [1.] Those that engage in any great and good work, must expect to meet with hindrance and opposition from friends and foes, from within and without. [2.] Those that obstruct our progress in any work for Christ, may be looked upon as his enemies. Thou dost the will of God, as Christ did, whose meat and drink it was to do it, when it is a trouble to us to be solicited from our duty. Those that hinder us from doing or suffering for God, when we are called to it, what ever they are in other things, in that they are Satan's adversaries to us.

(2.) Thou savourrest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men. Note, [1.] The things that are of God, that is, the concerns of his
will and glory, often clash and interfere with the things that are of men, that is, with our own wealth, pleasure, and reputation. While we mind christian duty as our way and work, and the divine favour as our end and portion, we savour the things of God; but if these be minded, the flesh must be denied, hazards must be run and hardships borne; and here is the trial which of the two we savour. [2.] Those that are not in Christ shall be deadening. Trouble and danger are offered for Christ, when they are called to it, savour more of the things of man than of the things of God; they relish those things more themselves, and make it appear to others that they do so.

24. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25. For whatsoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27. For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 28. Verily I say unto you, There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

Christ, having showed his disciples that he must suffer, and that he was ready and willing to suffer, here shows them that they must suffer too, and must be ready and willing. It is a weighty discourse that we have in these verses:

1. Here is the law of discipleship laid down, and the terms fixed, upon which we may have the honour and benefit of it, v. 24. He said this to his disciples, not only that they might instruct others concerning it, but that by this rule they might examine their own sincerity. Observe,

1. What it is to be a disciple of Christ; it is to come after him. When Christ called his disciples, this was the word of command, Follow me. A true disciple of Christ is one that offers his life for his Master, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that comes after Christ, not one that prescribes to him, as Peter now undertook to do, forgetting his place. A disciple of Christ comes after him, as the sheep after the shepherd, the servant after his master, the soldiers after their captain; he is one that aims at the same end that Christ aimed at, the glory of God, and the glory of his name; and we that walk in the same way that he walked in, is led by his Spirit, treads in his steps, submits to his conduct, and follows the Lamb, whithersoever he goes, Rev. 14. 4.

2. What are the great things required of those that will be Christ's disciples; If any man will come, he must deny—If any man be willing to come. It denotes a deliberate choice, and cheerfulness and resolution in that choice. Many are deterred by chance or the will of others than by any act of their own will; but Christ will have his people volunteers, Ps. 110. 3. It is as if Christ had said, "If any of the people that are not my disciples, be steadfastly minded to come to me, and if you that are, be in like manner minded to adhere to me, it is upon these terms, these and no other; you must follow me in sufferings as well as in other things, and therefore when you sit down to count the cost, reckon upon it."

Now what are these terms?

1. Let him deny himself. Peter had advised Christ to spare himself, and would be ready, in the like case, to take the advice; but Christ tells them all, they must be so far from sparing themselves, that they must deny themselves. Herein they must come after Christ, for his birth, and life, and death, were all a continued act of self-denial, a self-emptying, a self-sacrificing, and self-enduring. Verily and against the grain to flesh and blood, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised before us and for us, both for our redemption and for our instruction; and the servant is not above his lord. Note, All the disciples and followers of Jesus Christ must deny themselves. It is the fundamental law of admission into Christ's school, and the first and greatest lesson which we are to learn, viz. to lay down ourselves; it is both the strait gate, and the narrow way; it is necessary in order to our learning all the other good lessons that are there taught. We must deny ourselves absolutely, we must not admire our own shadow, nor gratify our own humour; we must not lean to our own understanding, nor seek our own things, nor be our own end. We must deny our own will, and do Christ's will. To deny ourselves is to give up the old life, and take on the new; and it is the duty, the pleasure, and the service of our interest in the world; we must deny ourselves for our brethren, and for their good; and we must deny ourselves for ourselves, denying the appetites of the body for the benefit of the soul.

2. Let him take up his cross. The cross is here put for all sufferings, as men or Christians; providence and grace, afflictions, persecutions for righteousness, evil that befalls, every trouble that betides us, either for doing well or for not doing ill. The troubles of Christians are fitly called crosses, in allusion to the death of the cross, which Christ was obedient to; and it should reconcile us to troubles, and take off the terror of them, that they are what we bear in common with Christ, and such as he hath borne before us. Note, [1.] Every disciple of Christ hath his cross, and must count upon it; as each hath his special duty to be done, so each hath his special trouble to be borne, and every one feels most from his own burden. Crosses are the common lot of God's children, but of this common lot each hath his particular share. That is our cross which Infinite Wisdom has appointed for us, and a Sovereign Providence has laid on us, as fitted for us. It is good for us to call the cross were we under, and to use it as a school, and a school of grace. We are to think we could bear such a one's cross better than our own; but that is best, which is, and we ought to make the best of it. [2.] Every disciple of Christ must take up that which the wise God hath made his cross. It is an allusion to the Roman custom of compelling those that were condemned to be crucified, to carry their cross; when Simon carried Christ's cross after him, so that cross was bound up to him, and it was said, that the cross lies in our way, and is prepared for us. We must not make crosses to ourselves, but must accommodate ourselves to those which God has made for us. Our rule is, not to go a step out of the way of duty, either to meet a cross, or to miss one. We must not by our rashness and indiscretion pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take the cross as it comes. The Roman law was, so manage an affliction, that it may not be a stumbling-block or hinderance to us in any service we have to do for God. We must take it up out of our way, by getting over the offence of the cross; None of these things move me; and we must then go on with it in our way, though it lie heavy. Secondly, That which we have to do is, not only to bear the cross, (that is a stock or a stone or a stick, etc.), but actually be bent under it, but we must take up the cross, must improve it to some good advantage
We should not say, "This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it;" but "This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it shall work for my good." When we rejoice in our afflictions, and glory in them, we take them up in the particular of taking up the cross. Suffering saints must look unto Jesus, and take from him both direction and encouragement in suffering. Do we bear the cross? We therein follow Christ, who bears it before us, bears it for us, and so bears it from us. He bore the heavy end of the cross, the end that had the curse upon it, that was a heavy end, and so made the other light and easy for us. Or, we may take it in general, we must follow Christ in all instances of holiness and obedience. Note, The disciples of Christ must study to imitate their Master, and conform themselves in every thing to his example, and continue in well-doing, whatever crosses lie in their way. To do well and to suffer ill, is to follow Christ. If any man will come after me, let him follow me; that seems to be idem per idem— the same thing over and over again. What is the difference? Surely it is this, If any man will come after me, let him follow me; and so have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow me in truth, and so do the work and duty of a disciple. Or thus, If any man will set out after me, in good beginnings, let him continue to follow me with all perseverance. That is following the Lord fully, as Caleb did. Those that come after Christ, must fulfil after him.

How are arguments to persuade us to submit to these laws, and come up to these terms. Self-denial, and patient suffering, are hard lessons, which will never be learned if we consult with flesh and blood; let us therefore consult with our Lord Jesus, and see what advice he gives us; and here he gives us,

1. Some considerations proper to engage us to these duties of self-denial and suffering for Christ.

Firstly, The weight of that eternity which depends upon our present choice; (v. 25.) Whosoever will save his life, by denying Christ, shall lose it; and whosoever is contented to lose his life, for owning Christ, shall find it. Here are life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, set before us. Observe,

[1.] The misery that attends the most plausible and easy way. Whosoever will save his life in this world, if be by sin, he shall lose it in another; he that forsakes Christ, to preserve a temporal life and avoid a temporal death, will certainly come short of eternal life, and will be hurt of the second death, and certainly held by it. There cannot be a fairer pretence for apostasy and iniquity than saving the life by it, so cogent is the law of self-preservation; and yet even that is folly, for it will prove in the end self-destruction; the life saved is but for a moment, and the death snuffed is but as a sleep; but life is everlasting, and the death run upon is the depth and complement of all misery, and an endless separation from all good. Now, let any rational man consider of it, take advice and speak his mind, whether there is any thing got, at long run, by apostasy, though a man save his estate, preferment, or life, by it.

[2.] The advantage that attends the most perilous and expensive course; Whosoever will lose his life for Christ's sake, shall find it in a better, infinitely to his advantage. Note, First, Many a life is lost, for Christ's sake, in doing his work, by labouring fervently for his name; in suffering work, by being patiently obedient to him in his ways. Christ's holy religion is handed down to us, sealed with the blood of thousands, that have not known their own souls, but have despised their loves, (as Job speaks in another case,) though very valuable ones, when they have stood in competition with their duty and the testimony of Jesus, Rev. 20. 4. Secondly, Though many have been losers for Christ, even of life itself, yet never any one dies, or was lost, for the present end. The loss of other comforts, for Christ, may possibly be made up in this world; (Mark 10. 30.) the loss of life cannot, but it shall be made up in the other world, in an eternal life; the believing prospect of which hath been the great support of suffering saints in all ages. An assurance of the life they should find, in lieu of the life they hazard, hath enabled them to triumph over death, in all its terrors; to go smiling to a scaffold, and stand singing at a stake, and to call the utmost instances of their enemies' rage but a light affliction.

[3.] The worth of the soul which lies at stake, and the worthlessness of the world in comparison of it; (v. 26.) What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?—So the same word which is translated his life, (v. 25.) for the freedom of life, God hath placed that common principle, that, whatever a man gets, if he lose his life, it will do him no good, he cannot enjoy his gains. But it looks higher, and speaks of the soul as immortal, and a loss of it beyond death, which cannot be compensated by the gain of the whole world. Note, First, Every man has a soul of his own. The soul is the spiritual and immortal part of man, which thinks and reasons, and endures and reflects and knows, and possesses the body now, and will shortly act in a separation from the body. Our souls are our own not in respect of dominion and propriety, (for we are not our own, All souls are mine, saith God,) but in respect of nearness and concern; our souls are our own, for they are ourselves. Secondly, It is possible for the soul to be lost, and there is danger of it. The soul is lost when it is eternally separated from all the good to all the evil that this world yields it; and so, when it dies, it will die at last, and cannot be separated from the favour of God, and sunk under his wrath and curse. A man is never undone till he is in hell. Thirdly, If the soul be lost, it is of the sinner's own losing. The man loses his own soul, for he does that which is certainly destroying to it, and neglects that which alone would be saving, Hos. 13. 9. The sinner dies because he will die; his blood is on his own head. Fourthly, One soul is more worth than all the world: our own souls are of greater value to us than all the wealth, honour, and pleasures of this present time, if we had them. Here is the whole world set in the scale against one soul, and Tekel written upon it; it is weighed in the balance, and found too light to weigh it down. This is Christ's judgment upon the matter, and he is a competent Judge; he had reason to know the price of souls, for he redeemed them all, nor would he undertake the matter for more made it. Fifthly, The winning of the world is often the losing of the soul. Many a one has ruined his eternal interests by his preposterous and inordinate care to secure and advance his temporal ones. It is the love of the world, and the eager pursuit of it, that drowns men in destruction and perdition. Sixthly, The loss of the soul is so great a loss, that the gain of the whole world will not counterbalance it, or make it up. He that loses his soul, though it be to gain the world, makes a very bad bargain for himself, and will sit
attending him, who should live to see it. As soon was assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ come in the flesh; so some here are assured that they shall not taste death (death is a sensible thing, its terrors are seen, its bitterness is tasted) till they had seen the Lord's Christ coming in his kingdom. At the end of time, he shall be in his glory, but now, in the fulness of time, he was to come in his own kingdom, his mediatorial kingdom. Some little specimen was given of his glory a few days after this, in his transfiguration; (ch. 17, 1.) then he tried his robes. But this point at Christ's coming by the pouring out of his Spirit, the planting of the gospel-church, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the taking away of the place and nation of the Jews, who were the most bitter enemies to Christianity. Here was the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Many then present lived to see it, particularly John, who lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and saw Christianity planted in the world. Let this encourage the followers of Christ to suffer for him, [1.] That their undertaking shall be succeeded; the apostles were employed in setting up the kingdom; we shall know, for their comfort, that, whatever opposition they meet with, yet they shall carry their point. shall see of the travail of their soul. Note, It is a great encouragement to suffering saints, to be assured, not only of the safety, but of the advancement, of Christ's kingdom among men; not only notwithstanding their sufferings, but by their sufferings. A believing prospect of the kingdom of grace, as well as of our share in the kingdom of glory, may carry us cheerfully through our sufferings. [2.] That their cause shall be pleaded; their deaths shall be revenged, and their persecutors reckoned with. [3.] That this shall be done shortly, in the present age. Note, The nearer the church's deliverances are, the more cheerful should we be in our sufferings. Behold, the Judge standeth at the door. It is spoken as a favour to those that should survive the present cloudy time, that they should see better days. Note, It is desirable to share with the church in her joys, Dan. 12. 12. Observe, Christ saith, Some shall live to see those glorious days, not all; some shall enter into the promised land, but others shall fall in the wilderness. He does not tell them who should live to see this kingdom. If we had known, they should have cast off the thoughts of dying, but some of them shall; Behold, the Lord is at hand. The Judge standeth before the door; be patient, therefore, brethren.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ in his pomp and glory, transfigured, v. 1. 13. II. Christ in his power and grace casting the devil out of a child, v. 14. 21. And, III. Christ in his poverty and humiliation, 1. Foretelling his sufferings, v. 22. 23. 2. Paying tribute, v. 24. 27. So that here is Christ, the brightness of his Father's glory, by himself purging our sins, paying our debts, and destroying for us him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus were the several inducements of Christ's gracious intentions admirably interwoven.

1. AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart. 2. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias, talking with him. 4. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou
wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. 6. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. 8. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. 10. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the Scribes that Elias must first come? 11. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias shall first come, and restore all things. 12. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but they did done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. 13. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

We have here the story of Christ's transfiguration; he had said that the Son of man should shortly come in his kingdom, with which promise all the three evangelists industriously connect this story; as if Christ's transfiguration was intended for a specimen and an earnest of the kingdom of Christ, and of that light and love of his, which therein appears to his select and sanctified ones. Peter speaks of this as the power and coming of our Lord Jesus; (2 Pet. 1. 16.) because it was an emanation of his power, and a previous notice of his coming, which was fitly introduced by such prefaces.

When Christ was here in his humiliation, though his state, in the main, was a state of abasement and afflictions, there were some glimpses of his glory intensified, that he himself might be more enouraged in his sufferings, and others the less offended. His birth, his baptism, his temptation, and his death, were the most remarkable instances of his humiliation; and these were each of them attended with some signal points of glory, and the smiles of heaven. But the series of his public ministry being a continued humiliation, here, just in the midst of that, comes in this discovery of his glory. As, now, the time of his transfiguration was for the less occasions, so, when he was on earth, he had his accomplishments. Now concerning Christ's transfiguration, observe,

1. The circumstances of it, which are here noted, 1. The time; six days after he had the solemn conference with his disciples, ch. 16. 21. St. Luke saith, It was about eight days after, six whole days intervening, and this the eighth day; that day seven-light. St. Matthew repeats only that it was be said or done by our Lord Jesus for six days before his transfiguration; thus, before some great appearances, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, Rev. 8. 1. Then when Christ seems to be doing nothing for his church, expect, ere long, something more than ordinary.

2. The place; it was on the top of a high mountain afar. Christ chose a mountain, (1.) As a secret place, he went apart; for though a city upon a hill can hardly be hid, two or three persons upon a hill can hardly be found; therefore their private oratories were commonly upon mountains. Christ chose a retired place to be transfigured in, because his appearing publicly in his glory was not agreeable to his present state, and thus he would show his humanity, and teach us that privacy much befriended our communion with God. Those that would maintain intercourse with heaven, must frequently withdraw from the converse and business of this world; and they will find themselves never less alone than when alone, for the Father is with them. (2.) Though a sublime place, elevated above things below. Note, Those that would have a tranquil retirement with God, must not only retire, but ascend; lift up their hearts, and seek things above. The call is, Come up hither, Rev. 6. 1.

3. The witnesses of it. He took with him Peter and James and John. (1.) He took three, a competent number to testify what they should see; for out of the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. Christ makes his appearances certain enough, but not too common, or too visible, but to believers, (Acts 10. 41.) that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed. (2.) He took these three because they were the chief of his disciples, the first three of the worthies of the Son of David; probably they excelled in gifts and graces; they were Christ's favourites, singled out to be the witnesses of his retirements. They were present when he raised the damsel to life, Mark 5. 42. They were afterward to be the witnesses of his agony, and this was to prepare them for that. Note, A sight of Christ's glory while we are here in this world, is a good preparative for our sufferings with him, as these are preparatives for the sight of his glory in the other world. Paul, who had abundance of trouble, had abundance of revelations.

11. The manner of it; (v. 2.) He was transfigured before them. The substance of his body remained the same, but the accidents and appearances of it were greatly altered; he was not turned into a spirit, but his body, which had appeared in weakness and dishonour, now appeared in power and glory. He was transfigured, μεταφωσθη—a man was metamorphosed. The profane poeams amused and abused the world with idle extravagant stories of metamorphoses, especially those of gods, natures disparaging and diminishing to them, equally false and ridiculous; to these some think Peter has an eye, when, being about to mention this transfiguration of Christ, he saith, We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made it known unto you. 2 Pet. 1. 16. Christ was both God and man; but, in the days of his flesh, he took on him the form of a servant—μεταφωσθη, Phil. 2. 7. He drew a veil over the glory of his godhead; but now, in his transfiguration, he put by that veil, appeared μεταφωσθη—in the form of God, (Phil. 2. 6.) and gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory, which could not but change his form.

The great truth which we declare, is, that God is Light, (1 John 1. 5.) dwells in light, (2 Tim. 6. 16.) covers himself with light; Ps. 104. 2. And therefore when Christ would appear in the form of God, he appeared in the glory of all visible beauty, the first-born of the creation, and most nearly resembling the eternal Parent. Christ is the Light; while he was in the world, he shined in darkness, and therefore the world knew him not; (John 1. 5, 10.) but, at this time, that Light shined out of the darkness.

Now his transfiguration appeared in two things:

1. His face did shine as the sun. The face is the principal part of the body, by which we are known;
therefore such a brightness was put on Christ's face, that face which afterward he hid not from shame and suffering. It shone as the sun when he goes forth in his strength made clear, so bright is the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world. The face of Moses shone but as the moon, with a borrowed, reflected light, but Christ's shone as the sun, with an innate, inherent light, which was the more sensibly glorious, because it suddenly broke out, as it were, from behind a black cloud.

His vesture was white as the snow. All his body was altered, as his face was, so that beams of light, darting from every part through his clothes, made them white and glittering. The shining of the face of Moses was so weak, that it could easily be concealed by a thin vail; but such was the glory of Christ's body, that his clothes were enlightened by it.

III. The companions of it. He will come, at last, with ten thousands of his saints; and, as a specimen of that, there now appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him, v. 3. Observe, 1. There were glorified saints attending him, that, when there were three to bear record on earth, Peter, James, and John, there might some be to bear record from heaven too. Thus here was a lively resemblance of Christ's kingdom, which is made up of saints in heaven and on earth, and to which belong the spirits of just men made perfect. We see here, that they who are fallen asleep in Christ, are not perished, but exist in a separate state, and shall be forthcoming when there is occasion. 2. These two were Moses and Elias, men very eminent in their day. They had both fasted forty days and forty nights, as Christ did, and wrought other miracles, and were both remarkable at their going out of the world as well as in their living in the world. Elias was borne up by angels to heaven in a fiery chariot, and died not. The body of Moses was never found, possibly it was preserved from corruption, and reserved for this appearance. The Jews had great respect for the memory of Moses and Elias, and therefore they came to witness of him, they came to carry tidings concerning him to the upper world. In them they had the law and the prophets, the law and the prophets, and here testimony from them. Moses and Elias appeared to the disciples; they saw them, and heard them talk, and, either by their discourse or by information from Christ, they knew them to be Moses and Elias; glorified saints shall know one another in heaven. They talked with Christ. Note, Christ has communicated with his blessed, and will be stranger to no any of the members of that glorified corporation. Christ was now to be sealed in his prophetic office, and therefore these two great prophets were fittest to attend him, as transferring all their honour and interest to him; for in these last days God speaks to us by his Son, Heb. 1. 1.

IV. The great pleasure and satisfaction that the disciples took in the sight of Christ's glory. Peter, as usual, was full of enthusiasm, and, indeed, it is good for us to be here. Peter here expresses,

1. The delight they had in this converse; Lord, it is good to be here. Though upon a high mountain, which we may suppose rough and unpleasant, bleak and cold, yet it is good to be here. He speaks the sense of his fellow-disciples; it is good not only for them, but for us. He did not covet to monopolize this favour, but looked for us also. He saith this to Christ. Pious and devout affections love to see ourselves before the Lord Jesus. The soul that loves Christ and loves to be with him, loves to go and tell him so; Lord, it is good for us to be here. This intimates a thankful acknowledgment of his kindness in admitting them to his favour. Note, Communion with Christ is the delight of christians. All the disciples of the Lord Jesus reckon it is good for them to be with him in the holy mount. It is good to be here where Christ is, and whither he brings us along with him by his appointment; it is good to be here, retired and alone with Christ; to be here, where we may behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus, Ps. 27. 4. It is pleasant to hear Christ compare notes with Moses and the prophets, to see how all the institutions of the law, and all the predictions of the prophets, pointed at Christ, and were fulfilled in him. 2. The joy they had of the continuance of it, Lord, it is good for us to be here. There was in this, as in many other of Peter's sayings, a mixture of weakness and of good will, more zeal than discretion.

(1.) Here was a zeal for this converse with heavenly things, a laudable complacency in the sight they had of Christ's glory. Note, Those that by faith behold the beauty of the Lord in his house, cannot but desire to dwell there all the days of their life. It is good having a nail in God's holy place, (Ezra 9. 8.) a constant abode; to be in holy ordinances as a man at home, not as a wayfaring man. Peter thought this mountain was a fine spot of ground to build upon, and he was for making tabernacles there; as Moses in the wilderness made a tabernacle for the Shekinah, or divine glory.

In another place, Peter saw his Master and the heavenly guests, with some commendable forgetfulness of himself and his fellow-disciples, that he would have tabernacles for Christ, and Moses, and Elias, but none for himself. He would be content to lie in the open air, on the cold ground, in such good company; if his Master have but where to lay his head, no matter whether he himself has or no.

(2.) Yet in this zeal he betrayed a great deal of weakness and inconsideration. What need had Moses and Elias of tabernacles? They belonged to that blessed world, where they hunger no more, nor doth the sun shine upon them. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and bid his disciples expect the like; Peter forgets that, or, to prevent it, will needs be building tabernacles in the mount of glory, out of the way of trouble. Still he harps upon, Master, spare not. Note, There is a proclivity in good men to expect the crown without the cross. Peter was for laying hold of this as the prize, though he had not as yet fought his fight, nor finished his course, as those other disciples, ch. 20. 21. We are out in our aim, if we look for a heaven here upon earth. It is not for strangers and pilgrims, (such are we in our best circumstances in this world,) to talk of building, or to expect a continuing city.

Yet it is some excuse for the inconstancy of Peter's proposal, not only that he knew not what he said, (Luke 9. 33.) but also that he submitted the proposal to the wisdom of Christ; If thou wilt, let us make tabernacles. Note, Whatever tabernacles we propose to make to ourselves in this world, we must ask it of Christ. Christ is the Master, and the servants must ask the opinions of the Master, Ps. 145. 11, 12.

Now to this which Peter said, there was no reply made; the disappearing of the glory would soon answer it. They that promise themselves great things on this earth, will soon be undeceived by their own experience.

V. The glorious testimony which God the Father gave to our Lord Jesus, in which he received from him honour and glory. (ch. 17. 5.) Note, These things were said in the excellent glory. This was like proclaiming the titles of honour or the royal style of a prince, when, at his coronation, he appears in his robes of state; and be it known, to the comfort of mankind, the royal style of Christ is taken from his mediation. Thus, in vision, he appeared with a rainbow, the seal of the covenant, about his throne; (Rev. 4. 3.) for it is his glory to be our Redeemer.
Now concerning this testimony from heaven to Christ, observe,

1. How it came, and in what manner it was introduced.

(1.) There was a cloud. We find often in the Old Testament, that a cloud was a visible token of God's presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud, (Exod. 19. 9.) and so to Moses, Exod. 34. 5. Num. 11. 23. He took possession of the tabernacle and the temple, with a cloud that went with him, where Christ was in his glory, the temple was, and there God showed himself present. We know not the balancings of the clouds, but we know that much of the intercourse and communication between heaven and earth is maintained by them. By the clouds evaporis ascend, and rains descend; therefore God is said to make the clouds his chariots; so he did here when he descended upon this mount.

(2.) Under the law it was commonly a thick and dark cloud that God made the token of his presence; he came down upon mount Sinai in a thick cloud, (Exod. 19. 16.) and said he would dwell in thick darkness; see 1 Kings 8. 12. But we are now come, not to the mount that was covered with blackness and darkness, (Heb. 12. 18.) but to the mount that is crowned with a bright cloud. This was given to us, not to see, but to know. This dispensation had tokens of God's presence; but that was a dispensation of darkness, and terror, and bondage; this, of light, love, and liberty.

(3.) It overshadowed them. This cloud was intended to break the force of that great light which otherwise would have overcome the disciples, and have been intolerable; it was like the veil which Moses put upon his face when it shone. God, in manifesting himself to his people, considers their frame. This cloud was to their eyes as parables to their understandings, to convey spiritual things by things sensible, as they were able to bear them.

(4.) There came a voice out of the cloud, and it was the voice of God, who now, as of old, spake in the cloudy pillar, Ps. 99. 7. Here was no thunder, or lightning, or voice of a trumpet, as there was when the law was given by Moses; but only a voice, a still small voice, as in the former, 1 Kings 19. 11, 12. Moses then and Elias were witnesses, that in these last days God hath spoken to us by his Son, in another way than he spake formerly to them. This voice came from the excellent glory, (2 Pet. 1. 17.) the glory which excelleth, in comparison of which the former had no glory; though the excellent glory was clouded, yet they came a bright, for faith cometh by hearing.

2. What testimony from heaven was; This is my beloved Son, hear ye him. Here we have,

(1.) The great gospel-mystery revealed; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This was the very same that was spoken from heaven at his baptism; (Luke 3. 22.) and it was the best news that ever came from heaven to earth since man sinned. This is the same with the voice given to the disciples in the garden; (2 Cor. 5. 15.) That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto itself. Moses and Elias were great men, and favorites of Heaven, yet they were but servants, and servants that God was not always well pleased in; for Moses spake unadvisedly, and Elias was a man subject to passions; but Christ is a Son, and in him God was always well pleased. Moses and Elias were sometimes instruments of reconciliation between God and Israel; Moses was a great intercessor, and Elias a great reformer; but in Christ God is reconciling the world; his intercession is more prevalent than that of Moses, and his reformation more effectual than that of Elias. This repetition of the same voice that came from heaven at his baptism was no vain repetition; but, like the doubting of Pharaoh's dream, was to show the thing was established. What God hath this spoken once, yea, twice, no doubt he will stand to, and he expects we should take notice of it. It was spoken at his baptism, because then he was entering upon his temptation, and his public ministry; and now it was repeated, because he was entering upon his great work, which are to be dated from hence; for now, and not before, he began to foretell them, and display them. Hearken, says it, and hearken immediately; (Luke 9. 51.) that the time was come, that he should be received up; this therefore was then repeated, to arm him against the terror, and his disciples against the offence of the cross. When sufferings begin to abound, consolations are given in more abundantly, 2 Cor. 1. 3. 

(2.) The great gospel-duty required, and it is the condition of our benefit by Christ. Hear ye him. God is well pleased with none in Christ but him that hear him. It is not enough to give him the hearing, (what will that avail us?) but we must hear him and believe him, as the great Prophet and Teacher; hear him, and be ruled by him, as the great Prince and Lawgiver; hear him, and heed him. Whoever would know the mind of God, must hearken to Jesus Christ; for by him God has in these last days spake, who is spoken of by all the prophets from Moses and his gospel-duty. ""The sayings of Christ as authentic as if they had been thus spoken out of a cloud. God does here, as it were, turn us over to Christ for all the revelations of his mind; and it refers to that prediction concerning the Prophet God would raise up like unto Moses; (Deut. 18. 15.) him shall ye hear.

Christ now appeared in glory; and the more we see of Christ's glory, the more cause we shall see to hearken to him; and the disciples were gazing on that glory of which they saw; they are therefore bid not to look at him but to hear him. Their sight of his glory was soon intercepted by the cloud, but their business was to hear him. We walk by faith, which comes by hearing, not by sight, 2 Cor. 5. 7. 

Moses and Elias were now with him, the law and the prophets; hitherto it was said, Hear them; Luke 16. 29. The disciples were ready to equal them in Christ, when they might have the credentials for them as well as for him. They had been talking with Christ, and probably the disciples were very desirous to know what they said, and to hear something more from them; No, saith God, hear him, and that is enough; him, and not Moses and Elias, who were present, and whose silence gave consent to this voice; they had nothing to say to the contrary; whatever interest they had in the world as prophets, they were willing to see it all transferred to Christ, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Be not troubled that Moses and Elias make so short a stay with you; hear Christ, and you will not want them.

VI. The fright which the disciples were put into by this voice, and the encouragement Christ gave them.

1. The disciples fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. The greatness of the light, and the surprise of it might have a natural influence upon them, to dispirit them. But that was not all, ever since man sinned, and heard God's voice in the garden, extraordinary appearances of God have ever been terrible to man, who, knowing he has no reason to expect any good, has been afraid to hear anything immediately from God. Note, Even then when fair weather comes out of the secret place, yet with God is terrible majesty, Job 37. 22. See what dreadful work the voice of the Lord makes, Ps. 29. 4. It is well for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid.

2. Christ graciously raised them up, with abundance of tenderness. Note, The glories and ad-
vancements of our Lord Jesus do not at all lessen his regard to, and concern for, his people that are compassed about with infirmity. It is comfortable to think, that now, in his exalted state, he has a compassion for all conducent to, the meanest true believer. Observe here, (1.) What he did; he came, and touched them. His approaches banished their fears; and when they apprehended that they were apprehended of Christ, there needed no more to make them easy. Christ laid his right hand upon John in a like case, and upon Daniel, Rev. 1. 17. Dan. 9. 18.—10. 18. Christ's touches were often healing, and when they were strengthening and comforting; (2.) What he said; Arise, and be not afraid. Though a fear of reverence in our converse with Heaven is pleasing to Christ, yet a fear of amazement is not so, but must be strown against. Christ said, Arise. Note, It is by his word, and the power of his grace going along with it, that raises up good men from their dejections, and silences their fears; and none but Christ can do it; Arise, be not afraid. Note, Causeless fears would soon vanish, if we would not yield to them, and lie down under them, but get up, and do what we can against them. Considering what they had seen and heard, they had more reason to rejoice than to fear, and yet, it seems, they needed this caution. Note, Through the infirmity of the flesh, we often frighten ourselves with that wherewith we should encourage ourselves. Observe, He had a new dispensation to give—heaven to hear Christ, the first word they had from him, was, Be not afraid, hear that. Note, Christ's errand into the world, was to give comfort to good people, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might serve God without fear, Luke 1. 74, 75.

VII. The disappearing of the vision; (v. 8.) They lift themselves, and then lift up their eyes, and saw no man, save Jesus only. Moses and Elias were gone, the rays of Christ's glory were laid aside, or vailed again. They hoped this had been the day of Christ's entrance into his kingdom, and his public appearance in that external splendour which they dreamed of; but see how they are disappointed. Note, It is not wisdom to raise our expectations high in this world, for the most valuable of our glories and joys have been long since vanishing even from the communion with God are not a continual feast, but a running banquet. If sometimes we are favoured with special manifestations of divine grace, glimpses and pledges of future glory, yet they are withdrawn presently; two heavens are too much for those to expect, that never deserve one. Now they saw no man, save Jesus only. Note, Christ will tarry with us when Moses and Elias are gone. The prophets do not live for ever, (Zech. 1. 3.) and we see the period of our ministers' conversation; but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. 13. 7, 8.

VIII. The discourse between Christ and his disciples as they came down from the mountain, v. 9, 13.

Observe, 1. They came down from the mountain. Note, We must come down from the holy mountains, where we have communion with God, and continual communion, and of which we are saying, It is good to be here; even there we have no continuing city. Blessed be God, there is a mountain of glory and joy before us, whence we shall never come down. But observe, When the disciples came down, Jesus came with them. Note, When we return to the world again after an ordinance, it must be our care to take Christ with us, and then it may be said, Our Lord Jesus is with us. 2. As they came down, they talked of Christ. Note, When we are returning from holy ordinances, it is good to entertain ourselves and one another with discourse suitable to the work we have been about. That communication which is good to the use of edifying, is then in a special manner seasonable; as, on the contrary, that which is, corrupt, is worse than that at another time.

Here is, (1.) The charge that Christ gave the disciples to keep the vision very private for the present; (v. 9.) Tell it to no man till the Son of man is risen. If they had proclaimed it, the credulity of it would have been shocked by his sufferings, which were now hastening on. But let the publication of it be adjourned till after his resurrection, and then and his subsequent glory will be a great confirmation of it. Note, Christ observed a method in the manifestation of himself; would have his works put in harmony with his words, and he would illustrate each other, that they might appear in their full strength and convincing evidence. Everything is beautiful in its season. Christ's resurrection was properly the beginning of the gospel-state and kingdom, to which all before was but preparatory and by way of preface; and therefore, though this was transacted before, It must not be produced as evidence till then, and then it appears to have been much insisted on by 2 Pet. 1. 16—18.) when the religion it was designed for the confirmation of was brought to its full consistence and maturity. Christ's time is the best and fittest for the manifesting of himself, and must be attended to by us.

(2.) An objection which the disciples made against something Christ had said; (v. 10.) Where then is the sign of thy coming? If Elias make so short a stay, and is gone so suddenly, and we must say nothing of him; why have we been taught out of the law to expect his public appearance in the world immediately before the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom? Must the coming of Elias be a secret, which every body looks for? Or thus; If the resurrection of the Messiah, and with it the beginning of his kingdom, be at hand, why did not we hear of that glorious preface and introduction to it, which we expect in the coming of Elias? The scribes, who were the public expositors of the law, said this according to the scripture; (Mal. 4. 5.) Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet. The disciples spake the common language of the Jews, who made that the saying of the scribes, which was the saying of the scripture; whereas of that which ministers speak to men, it must ever be, "God speaks it to us, not the ministers;" for we must not receive it as the word of men, 1 Thess. 2. 13. Observe, When the disciples could not reconcile what Christ said with what they had heard out of the Old Testament, they desired him to explain it to them. Note, When we are puzzled with scripture-difficulties, we must apply ourselves to Christ by prayer for his Spirit to open our understandings; and to lead us into all truth.

(3.) The solving of this objection, Ask, and it shall be given; ask instruction, and it shall be given.

1. Christ allows the prediction; (v. 11.) "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things; so far you are in the right." Christ did not come to alter or invalidate any thing foretold in the Old Testament. Note, Corrupt and mistaken guesses may be sufficiently repelled and exploded, without diminishing or derogating from the authority or dignity of the sacred text. New-Testament prophecies are true and good, and are to be received and improved, though some hot foolish men may have misinterpreted them, and drawn wrong inferences from them. He shall come, and restore all things; not restore them to their former state, (John Baptist went not to do that;) but the kingdom of heaven (so it may be read,) all things that were written of him, all the predictions of the coming of Elias. John Baptist came to restore things spiritually, to revive the decays of religion, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; which means the same with
This he shall restore all things. John preached repentance, and that restores all things.

[2.] He asserts the accomplishment. The scriptures say true, that Elias shall come; but I say unto you, what the scriptures could not say, that Elias is come, v. 12. Note, God's promises are often fulfilled, and men perceive it not, but inquire, Where is the promise? when it is already performed. Elias is come, and they knew him not; they knew him not to be the Elias promised, the forerunner of the Messiah. The scriptures busied themselves in criticising upon the scripture, but understood not by the signs of the times the fulfilling of the scripture. Note, It is easier to explain the word of God than to apply it and make a right use of it. But it is no wonder that the morning star was not observed, when he who is the Sun itself, was in the world, and the world knew him not.

Because they knew him not, they have done to him whatsoever they listed; if they had known, they would not have crucified Christ, or beheaded John, 1 Cor. 2. 8. They ridiculed John, persecuted him, and at last put him to death; which was Herod's doing, but is here charged upon the whole generation of unbelieving Jews, and particularly the scriptures, who, though they could not prosecute John themselves, yet charge it upon them. Hence, Likewise also shall the Son of man suffer of them. Marvel not that Elias should be abused and killed by those who pretended, with a great deal of reverence, to expect him, when the Messias himself will be in like manner treated. Note, The sufferings of Christ took off the strangeness of all other sufferings; (John 15. 18.) when they had imbrued their hands in the blood of John Baptist, they were ready to do the like to Christ. Note, As men deal with Christ's servants, so they would deal with him himself: and they that are drunk with the blood of the martyrs, still cry, Give, give, Acts 12. 1-3.

(4.) The disciples' satisfaction in Christ's reply to their objection; (v. 13.) They understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist. He did not name John, but gives them such a description of him as would put them in mind of what he had said to them formerly concerning him; This is Elias. This is a profitable way of teaching; it engages the learners' own thoughts, and makes them, if not their own teachers, yet their own remembrancers; and thus knowledge becomes easy to him that understands. When we diligently use the means of knowledge, how strangely are misfits scattered and mistakes rectified!

14. And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, 15. Lord, have mercy on my son; for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oft-times he fell into the fire, and oft into the water. 16. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. 17. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. 18. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. 19. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20. And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21. Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by prayer and fasting.

We have here the miraculous cure of a child that was lunatic and vexed with a devil. Observe, 1. A melancholy representation of the case of this child, while he lay under the power and malice of Satan. This was immediately upon his coming down from the mountain where he was transfigured. Note, Christ's glories do not make him mindful of us and of our wants and miseries. Christ, when he came down from the mount, where he had conversation with Moses and Elias, did not take state upon him, but was as easy of access, as ready to poor beggars, and as familiar with the multitude, as ever he used to be. This poor man's address was very important; he came kneeling to Christ. Note, Sense of misery will bring people to their knees. Those who see their need of Christ, will be earnest, will be in good earnest, in their applications to him; and he delights to be thus wrested with.

Two things the father of the child complains of. I. The distress of his child; (v. 15.) Lord, have mercy on my son. The affliction of the children cannot but affect the tender parents, for they are pieces of themselves. And the case of afflicted children should be presented to God by faithful and fervent prayer. This child's distemper, probably, disabled him to pray for himself. Note, Parents are doubly concerned to pray for their children, not only that are weak and cannot, but much more that are wicked and will not, pray for them. Note, (1.) The nature of this child's disease was very sad; He is lunatic and sore vexed. A lunatic is properly one whose distemper lies in the brain, and returns with the change of the moon. The devil, by the divine permission, either caused this distemper, or at least concurred with it, to heighten and aggravate it. The child had the falling-sickness, and the hand of Satan was in it; by it he tormented them, and made it much more grievous than ordinarily it is. These whom Satan got possession of, he afflicted by those diseases of the body which do most affect the mind; for it is the soul that he aims to do mischief to. The father, in his complaint, saith, He is lunatic, taking notice of the effect; but Christ, in the cure, rebuked the devil, and so struck at the cause. Thus he dealt in spiritual cures. (2.) The effects of the disease were very deplorable; He falls into the fire, and into the water. If the force of the disease made him fall, the malice of the devil made him fall into the fire or water; so mischievous is he where he gains possession and power in any soul. He seeks to devour, 1 Pet. 5. 8.

2. The disappointment of his expectation from the disciples; (v. 16.) I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain

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failures of instruments shall not hinder the operations of his grace, which will work, if not by them, yet without them.

II. God in his kindness to his Church, chose the means that Christ gave to the people first, and then to the devil.

1. He chid those about him; (v. 17.) 0 faithless and perseverance! This is not spoken to the disciples, but to the people, and perhaps especially to the scribes, who are mentioned in Mark 9. 14. and who, as it should seem, insulted over the disciples, because they had now met with a case that was too hard for them. Christ has not the less cause to do not make mighty works among a people in whom unbelief reigned. It was here owing to the faithlessness of this generation, that they could not obtain those blessings from God, which otherwise they might have had; as it was owing to the weakness of the disciples' faith, that they could not do those works for God, which otherwise they might have done. Those were faithless and perseverance. Note, Those that are faithless, will be perverse; and perseverance is sin in its worst colours. Faith is compliance with God, unbelief is opposition and contradiction to God. Israel of old was perverse, because faithless, (Ps. 95. 9.) froward, for in them is no faith, Deut. 32. 20.

Two things he upbraids them with. (1.) His presence with them so long; "How long shall I be with you, and bear with you? " (v. 21.) His patience with them so long; "How long shall I suffer you? " Note, [1.] The faithlessness and perseverance of those who enjoy the means of grace are a great grief to the Lord Jesus. Thus did he suffer the manners of Israel of old, Acts 13. 18. [2.] The longer Christ has borne with a perverse and faithless people, the more he is displeased with their perseverance and unbelief; and he is God, and not man, else he would not suffer so long, nor bear so much as he doth.

2. He cured the child, and set him to rights again. He was chid, and him hitter to me. Though the people were perverse, and Christ was provoked, yet care was taken of the child. Note, Though Christ may be angry, he is never unkind, nor doth he, in the greatest of his displeasure, shut up the bowels of his compassion from the miserable; Bring him to me. Note, When all other helps and succours fail, we are welcome to Christ, and may be confident in him and his power and goodness.

See by these an emblem of Christ's undertaking as our Redeemer.

1. He breaks the power of Satan; (v. 18.) Jesus rebuked the devil, as one having authority, who could back with force his word of command. Note, Christ's victories over Satan are obtained by the power of his word, the sword that comes out of his mouth, Rev. 19. 21. Satan cannot stand before the rebukes of his Jesus; they have been so long. It is comfortable to think he is wrestling with principalities and powers, that Christ hath spoiled them, Coloss. 2. 15. The Lion of the tribe of Judah will be too hard for the roaring lion that seeks to devour.

2. He redresses the grievances of the children of men; The child was cured from that very hour. It with you? Will you take care, and a perfect one. This is an encouragement to parents to bring their children to Christ, whose souls are under Satan's power; he is able to heal them, and as willing as he is able. Not only bring them to Christ by prayer, but bring them to the word of Christ, the ordinary means by which Satan's strong holds are demolished in the soul. Christ's rebukes, brought home to the heart, will ruin Satan's power.

III. Christ's discourse with his disciples hereupon.

1. The reason why they could not cast out the devil at this time; (v. 19.) They came to Jesus afar. Note, Ministers, who are to deal for Christ in public, have need to keep up a private communion with him, that they may in secret, where no eye sees, baffle their weaknecess and straitness, their foibles and infirmities, in their public performances, and inquire into the cause of them. We could not be more careful of success with Jesus afar, where we may be free and particular with him. Such questions as the disciples put to Christ, we should put to ourselves, in communicating with our own hearts upon our beds; Why were we so dull and careless at such a time? Why came we so much short in such a duty? That which is amiss, may, when found out, be amended.

2. Christ gives them two reasons why they failed. (1.) It was because of their unbelief; v. 20. When he spake to the father of the child and to the people, he charged it upon their unbelief; when he spake to his disciples, he charged it upon theirs; for the truth was, there were faults on both sides; but we are more concerned to hear of our own faults than of other people's, and to impute what is amiss to ourselves than to others. When the preaching of the word was not in season, sometimes it has been, the people are apt to lay all the fault upon the ministers, and the ministers upon the people; whereas, it is more becoming for each to own his own faultiness, and so say, "It is owing to me." Ministers, in reproving, must learn thus to give to each his portion of the word; and to take people off from judging others, by teaching all to judge themselves; It is because of your unbelief. Though they had not done a thing to deserve it, yet that fault seems the more a reason, and so it is, because it is ineffectual. Note, [1.] As far as faith falls short of its due strength, vigour, and activity, it may truly be said, "There is unbelief." Many are chargeable with unbelief, who yet are not to be called unbelievers. [2.] It is because of our unbelief, that we bring so little to pass in religion, and so often miscarry, and come short, in that which is good.

Our Lord Jesus takes this for a general reason, that people are faithless, that they might not be defective in that, another time, as they were now; If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall do wonders, v. 20. Some make the comparison to refer to the quality of the mustard seed, which is, when bruised, sharp and penetrating; "If you have an active, growing faith, not dead, flat, or insipid, you will not be baffled thus." But it rather refers to the quantity, though you had but a grain of true faith, though so little, that it were like that which is the least of all seeds, you would do wonders. Faith in general is a firm assent to, a compliance with, and a confidence in, all divine revelation. The faith here required, is that which had for its object that particular revelation by which Christ gave his disciples power to work miracles in his name, for the confirmation of the doctrine they preached. It refers to his miracles, and not to individual instances, in either doubting the validity of their commission, or fearing that it was expired with their first mission, and was not to continue when they were returning to their Master; or that it was some way or other forfeited or withdrawn. Perhaps their Master's absence with the three chief of his disciples, with a charge to the rest not to follow them, might occasion some doubts concerning their power, or rather the power of the Lord with them, to do this; however, there were not at present, such a strong actual dependence upon, and confidence in, the promise of Christ's presence with them, as there should have been. It is good for us to be diffident of ourselves
and of our own strength; but it is displeasing to Christ, when we distract any power derived from him or granted by him.

If ye have ever so little of this faith in sincerity, if ye truly rely upon the powers committed to you, shall I tell you, it were. An active proverbial expression, denoting that which follows, and no more. Nothing shall be impossible to you. They had a full commission, among other things, to cast out devils without exception; but, this devil being more than ordinarily malicious and inveterate, they distrusted the power they had received, and so failed. To convince them of this, Christ shows them what they might have done. Note, A man without a sense of及 as the virtue of a divine power engaged by a divine promise, both which faith fastens upon.

(2.) Because there was something in the kind of the malady, which rendered the cure more than ordinarily difficult; (v. 21.) "This kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting." This possession, which works by a falling sickness, or this kind of devil's that are thus furious, is not cast out ordinarily, but by great acts of devotion, and therein ye were defective." Note, [1.] Though the adversaries we wrestle with, be all principalities and powers, yet some are stronger than others, and their power more hardly broken. [2.] The extraordinary power of Satan must not discourage our faith, but quicken us to a greater intenseness in the acting of it, and more earnestness in praying to God for it. The producing of a cure more extraordinary, does not make it more miraculous, nor does it restrain it here; "This kind of faith (which removeth mountains) doth not proceed, is not obtained, from God, nor is it carried up to its full growth, nor drawn out into act and exercise, but by earnest prayer." [3.] Fasting and prayer are proper means for the bringing down of Satan's power against us, and the fetching in of divine power to our assistance. Fasting is of use to prepare the body, and prayer, to prepare the mind, both for the reception of grace, and for the exercise of faith: and is an evidence and instance of humiliation, which is necessary in prayer, and is a means of mortifying some corrupt habits, and of disposing the body to serve the soul in prayer. When the devil's interest in the soul is confirmed by the temper and constitution of the body, fasting must be joined with prayer, to keep under the body.

22. And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men; 23. And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.

Christ here foretells his own sufferings; he began to do it before; (ch. 16. 21.) and, finding that it was to his disciples a hard saying, he saw it necessary to keep them from this evil, and therefore he added some things which God spakeeth once, even, twice, and yet man perceiveth it not. Observe here.

1. What he foretold concerning himself—that he should be betrayed and killed. He perfectly knew, before, all things that should come to him, and yet undertook the work of our redemption, which greatly commends his love; nay, his clear foresight of them was a kind of antetype, had not his love to man made him all this to come to pass.

(1.) He tells them that he should be betrayed into the hands of men. He shall be delivered up; (so it might be read, and understood of his Father's delivering him up by his determined counsel and foreknowledge, Acts 2. 23. Rom. 8. 32.) but as we render it, it refers to Judas's betraying him into the hands of the priests, and their betraying him into the hands of the Romans. He was betrayed into the hands of men; men, to whom he was allied by nature, and from whom therefore he might expect pity and tenderness; men, whom he had undertaken to save, and from whom therefore he might expect honour and gratitude; yet these are his persecutors and murderers.

(2.) That they should kill him; nothing less than that would satisfy their rage; it was his blood, his precious blood, that they thirsted after. This is the heir, come, let us kill him. Nothing less would satisfy God's justice, and answer his undertaking; if he be a Sacrifice of atonement, he must be killed; without blood no remission.

(3.) That he shall be raised again the third day. Still, when he spoke of his death, he gave a hint of his resurrection, the joy set before him, in the prospect of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. This was an encouragement, not only to him, but to his disciples; for if he rise the third day, his absence from them will not be long, and his return to them will be glorious.

2. How the disciples received this; They were exceeding sorry. Herein appeared their love to their Master's person, but with all their ignorance and mistake concerning his undertaking. Peter indeed durst not say anything against it, as he had done before, (ch. 16. 22.) having then been severely chidden for it; but he, and the rest of them, greatly lamented it, as it would be their own loss, their Master's grief, and the sin and ruin of them that did it.

24. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter, and said, Dost not thy master pay tribute? 25. He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. 27. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

We have here an account of Christ's paying tribute.

I. Observe how it was demanded, v. 24. Christ was now at Capernaum, his head-quarters, where he mostly resided; he did not keep from thence, to decline being called upon for his dues, but the rather readiness to pay them.

1. The tribute demanded was not any civil payment to the Roman powers, that was strictly exacted by the publicans, but the church-duties, the half shekel, about fifteen pence, which was required from every person for the service of the temple, and the detracting of the expenses of the worship there; it is called a ransom for the soul, Exod. 30. 12, &c. This was not so strictly exacted now as sometimes it had been, especially not in Galilee.

2. The demand was very modest; the collectors stood in such awe of Christ, because of his mighty works, that they durst not speak to him about it, but applied themselves to Peter, whose house was in Capernaum, and probably in his house Christ lodged, he therefore was fittest to be spoken to as the housekeeper, and they presumed he knew his Master's mind. Their question is, Dost not thy master pay tribute? Some think that they sought
an occasion against him, design, if he refused, to represent him as disaffected to the temple-service, and his followers as lawless people, that would pay neither toll, tribute, nor custom, Ezra 4. 13. It should rather seem, they asked this with respect, intimation of their object and view in demanding from this payment, they would not insist upon it.

Peter presently passed his word, for his Master: "Yes, certainly; my Master pays tribute; it is his principle and practice; you need not fear moving it to him." (1.) He was made under the law; (Gal. 4. 4.) therefore under this law he was paid for at forty days old, (Luke 2. 22.) and now he paid for himself, it being with his own money, taken upon him the form of a servant, Phil. 2. 7, 8. (2.) He was made sin for us, and was sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8. 3. Now this tax paid to the temple, is called an atonement for the soul, Exod. 30. 15. Christ, that in every thing he might appear in the likeness of sinners, paid it, though he had no sin to atone for. (3.) This it became him to fulfill all righteousness, ch. 4. 15. He did this, to set us an example, [1.] Of rendering to all their due; tribute to whom tribute is due, Rom. 13. 7. The kingdom of Christ not being of this world, the favourites and officers of it are so far from having a power granted them, as such, to tax other people's purses, that theirs are made liable to the powers that are. [2.] Of contributing to the support of the church and its ministry, and the poor where they are. If we reap spiritual things, it is fit that we should return carnal things. The temple was now made a den of thieves, and the temple-worship a pretence for the opposition which the chief priests gave to Christ and his doctrine; and yet Christ paid this tribute.

Note, Church-duties, legally imposed, are to be paid, notwithstanding church-corruptions. We must take care not to use our liberties as a cloak of covetousness or malice, Jas. 5. 16. If Christ pay tribute, who can pretend an exemption?

II. How it was disputed, (v. 25.) not with the collectors themselves, lest they should be irritated, but with Peter, that he might be satisfied in the reason why Christ paid tribute, and might not mistake about it. He brought the collectors into the house; but Christ anticipated him, to give him a proof of his premillennial, and that no part might be withheld from him. The disciples of Christ are never attacked without his knowledge.

Now, 1. He appeals to the way of the kings of the earth, which is, to take tribute of strangers, of the subjects of their kingdom, or foreigners that deal with them, but not of their own children that are of their families; there is such a community of goods between parents and children, and a joint interest in what they have, that it would be absurd for the parents to levy taxes upon the children, or demand any thing from them; it is like one hand taxing the other.

2. He applies this to himself; Then are the children free. Christ is the Son of God, and heir of all things; the temple is his house. (Mal. 3. 1.) his Father's house, (John 2. 16.) in it he is faithful as a Son through his house; (Heb. 3. 6.) and therefore not obliged to pay this tax for the service of the temple. This Christ asserts his right, lest his paying this tribute should be misapplied to the weakening of his title as the Son of God, and the King of Israel, and should have looked like a disowning of it himself. These immunities of the children are to be extended no further than our Lord Jesus himself.

God's children are freed by grace and adoption, frequently and expressly, from all law of life; from subjectation to civil magistrates in civil things; here the law of Christ is express; Let every soul (sanctified souls not excepted) be subject to the higher powers. Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.

III. How it was paid, notwithstanding, (v. 27.)

1. For what reason Christ waked his privilege, and paid this tribute, though he was entitled to an exemption—Let us stand alone. Few knew, as Peter did, that he was the Son of God; and it should have been a diminution to the honour of that great name. Christ might be very ready to surprise the tax-gatherer, and be sorry to disturb him, though he were the son of God, we live but from hand to mouth. Christ made the fish his cashkeeper; and why may not we make God's providence our storeroom and treasury? If we have a competency for to-day, let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Christ paid for himself and

2. What course he took for the payment of this tax; he furnished himself with money for it out of the mouth of a fish, (v. 27.) wherein appears,

(1.) The poverty of Christ; he had not fifteen pence at command to pay his tax with, though he cured so many that were diseased; it seems, he did all gratis; for our sakes he became poor, 2 Cor. 8. 9. In his ordinary expenses, he lived upon alms, (Luke 8. 3.) and in extraordinary ones he lived by a miracle. He did not drain out of the bag which he carried; that was for subsistence, and he would not order that for his particular use, which was intended for the benefit of the community.

(2.) The power of Christ, in fetching money out of a fish's mouth for this purpose. Whether his omnipotence put it there, or his omniscience knew that it was there, it comes all to one; no such evidence of his divinity, and that he is Lord of hosts. Those creatures that are most remote from man, are at the command of Christ, even the fishes of the sea are under his feet; (Ps. 8. 5.) and to evidence his dominion in this lower world, and to accommodate himself to his present state of humiliation, he chose to take it out of a fish's mouth, when he could have taken it out of any other bag. 

[1.] Peter must catch the fish by angling. Even in miracles he would use means to encourage industry and endeavour. Peter has something to do, and it is in the way of his old calling too; to teach us diligence in the employment we are called to, and called in. Do we expect that Christ should give to us? Let us be ready to work for him.

[2.] The fish came up, with money in the mouth of it; which represents to us the reward of obedience in obedience. What work do we at Christ's command, brings its own pay along with it: In keeping God's commands, as well as after keeping them, there is great reward, Ps. 19. 11. Peter was made a fisher of men, and those that he caught thus, came up; where the heart is opened to entertain Christ's word, the hand is open to encourage his ministers.
Peter, because it is probable that here he only was assessed, and of him it was at this time demanded; perhaps the rest had paid already, or were to pay elsewhere. The papists made a great mystery of Christ's paying for Peter, as if this made him the head and representative of the whole church; whereas the payment of tribute for him, was rather a sign of subjection than of superiority. His pretended successors pay no tribute, but exact it. Peter fished for his money, and therefore part of it went for his use. Those that are workers together with Christ in winning the world, shall shine with him in his glory, and shall shine with him. Give it to thee and me. What Christ paid for himself was looked upon as a debt; what he paid for Peter, was a courtesy to him.

Note, It is a desirable thing, if God so please, to have wherewith of this world's goods, not only to be just, but to be kind; not only to be charitable to the poor, but obliging to our friends. What is a great estate good for, but that it enables a man to do so much the more good?

Lastly, Observe, The evangelist records here the orders Christ gave to Peter, the warrant; the effect is not particularly mentioned, but taken for granted, and justly; for with Christ, saying and doing are the same thing.

CHAP. XVIII.

The gospels are, in short, a record of what Jesus began both to do and to teach. In them, therefore, we have an account of his doings, in this of his teachings; probably, not all at the same time, in a continued discourse, but at several times, upon divers occasions, here put together, as not souls, shall be sharers with Christ in his glory. v. 1. 6. II. Concerning offences in general, (v. 7.) particularly offences given. 1. By us to ourselves, v. 8, 9. 2. By us to others, v. 10., 14. 3. By others to us; which are to be reproved, v. 15., 20. (2.) Personal wrongs, which are to be forgiven, v. 21., 35. See how practical Christ's preaching was; he could have revealed mysteries, but he pressed plain duties, especially those that are most displeasing to flesh and blood.

1. At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2. And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them. 3. And said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. 6. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones among you, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

As there never was a greater pattern of humility, so there never was a greater preacher of it, than Christ; he took all occasions to command it, to commend it, to his disciples and followers.

1. The occasion of this discourse concerning humility was, an unbecoming contest among the disciples for preeminence; they came to him, saying, among themselves, (Mark xiii. 34.) Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? They mean not, who by character, (then the question had been good, that they might know what graces and duties to excel in,) but who by name. They had heard much, and preached much, of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, his church in this world; but as yet they were little aware of the pure spiritual and heavenly nature of that kingdom, and of the dreamt of a temporal kingdom, and the external pomp and power of it. Christ had lately foretold his sufferings, and the glory that should follow, that he should rise again, from whence they expected his kingdom would commence; and now they thought it was time to put in for their places in it; it is good, in such cases, to speak early. Upon other discourses of Christ to that purpose, debates of this kind arose; (ch. 20. 19, 20.) afterwards he spake many words of his sufferings, but only one of his glory; yet they fasten upon that, and overlook the other; and, instead of asking how they might have strength and grace to suffer with him, they ask him, Who shall be highest in reigning with him? Note, Many love to hear and speak of privileges and glory, who are willing to pass by the thoughts of work and trouble. They look so much at the crown, that they forget the yoke and the cross. So the disciples here did, when they asked, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

1. They suppose that all who have a place in that kingdom, are great, for it is a kingdom of priests. Note, Those are truly great, who are truly good; and they will appear so at last, when Christ shall own them as his, though ever so mean and poor in the world.

2. They suppose that there are degrees in this greatness. All the saints are honourable, but not all alike so; one star differs from another star in glory. All David's officers were not worthies, nor all his worthies of the first three.

3. They suppose it must be some of them, that must be prime ministers of state. To whom should King Jesus delight to do honour, but to them who had left all for him? and were now his companions in reverence and tribulation?

4. They strive who it should be, each having some pretence or other to it. Peter was always the chief speaker, and already had the keys given him; he expects to be lord chancellor, or lord chamberlain of the household, and so to be the greatest. Judas had the bag, and therefore he expects to be lord treasurer, which, though now he come last, he still will have; he will be sharers with him, and Judas are nearly related to Christ, and they hope to take place of all the great officers of state, as princes of the blood. John is the beloved disciple, the favourite of the Prince, and therefore hopes to be the greatest. Andrew was first called, and why should not he be first preferred? Note, We are very apt to amuse and humour ourselves with foolish fancies of things that will never be.

II. The discourse itself, which is a just refutation to the question, Who shall be greatest? We have abundant reason to think, that if Christ ever intended that Peter and his successors at Rome should be heads of the church, and his chief vicars on earth, having so far an occasion given him, he would now have let his disciples know it; but so far is he from this, that his answer disallows and condemns the thing itself. Christ will not lodge such an authority or supremacy any where in his church; whoever pretend to it, are usurpers; instead of settling any of the discourses in this dignity, he warns them all not to put in for it.

Christ here teacheth them to be humble.

1. By a sign; (v. 2.) He called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them. Christ often taught by signs or sensible representations, (comparisons to the eye,) as the prophets of old. Note, how much we have less learned, that we are taught by all ways and means to be taught. When we look upon a little child, we should be put in mind of the use Christ made of this child. Sensible things must
be improved to spiritual purposes. He set him in the midst of them; not that they might play with him that they might learn by him. Great men, and great men, should not disdain the company of little children, or think it below them to take notice of them. They may either speak to them, and give instruction to them; or look upon them, and receive instruction from them. Christ himself, when a Child, was in the midst of the doctors, Luke 2. 46.

2. By a sermon upon this sign, in which he shows the necessity of humility.

(1.) The necessity of humility, v. 3. His preface is solemn, and commands both attention and assent: 

Verily I say unto you, I, the Amen, the faithful Witness, say it. Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Here observe, 

[1.] What it is that he requires and intends. First, You must be converted, you must be of another mind, and in another frame and temper, must have other thoughts, both of yourselves, and of the kingdom of heaven, before you be fit for a place in it. The pride, ambition, and affectation of honour and dominion, which appear in you, must be repented of, mortified, and reformed, and you must come to yourselves. Note, Beside the first conversion of faith from a state of nature to a state of grace, there is an after-conversion to a particular path of backsliding, which are equally necessary to salvation. Every step out of the way by sin, must be a step into it again by repentance. When Peter repented of his denying his Master, he was converted. Secondly, You must become as little children. Note, Converting grace makes us like little children, not foolish as children, (1 Cor. 14. 20.) nor fickle, (Eph. 4. 14.) nor playful, (ch. 11. 16.) but, as children, we must desire the sincere milk of the word; (1 Pet. 2. 2.) as children, we must be careful for nothing, but leave it to our heavenly Father to care for us; (ch. 6. 31.) we must, as children, be harmless and inoffensive, and void of malice, (1 Cor. 14. 20.) governable, and under command; (Gal. 4. 2.) and (which is here chiefly intended) we must be humble as little children, who do not take state upon them, nor stand upon the punctilios of honour; the child of a gentleman will play with the child of a beggar, (Rom. 12. 16.) the child in rags, if it have the breast, is well enough pleased with, and envies not, the gruity of the child in silk; little children have no great aims at great places, or projects to raise themselves in the world; they exercise not themselves in things too high for their state; childlike manner behave, and quiet ourselves, Ps. 131. 1, 2. As children are little in body and low in stature, so we must be little and low in spirit, and in our thoughts of ourselves. This is a temper which leads to other good dispositions; the age of childhood is the learning age.

[2.] What stress he lays upon this; Without this you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Note, Disciples of Christ have need to be kept in awe of their Lord, that they may not be bold, that they may seem to come short, Heb. 4. 1. The disciples, when they put that question, (v. 1.) thought themselves sure of the kingdom of heaven; but Christ awakens them to be jealous of themselves. They were ambitious of being greatest in the kingdom of heaven; Christ tells them, that, except they came to a better temper, they should never come thither. Note, Many things set up for great things, which are little. Not only little, but nothing, and are found to have no part or lot in the matter. Our Lord designs here to show the great danger of pride and ambition; whatever profession men make, if they allow themselves in this sin, they will be rejected both from God's tabernacle and from his holy hill. Pride threw the angels that sinned, out of heaven, and will keep us out, if we be not converted from it. They that are lifted up with pride, fall into the condemnation of the devil; to prevent this, we must become as little children, or we shall never enter into the kingdom of heaven. We must put on the new man, must be like the holy child Jesus; so he is called even after his ascension, Acts 4. 27.

(2.) He shows the honour and advancement that attend humility, (v. 4.) thus furnishing a direct but surprising answer to their question; He that humbles himself as a little child, though he may fear he will remain among men of timid minds, who thereby throw themselves out of the way of preferment, yet the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Note, The humblest christians are the best christians, and most like to Christ, and highest in his favour; are best disposed for the communications of divine grace, and fittest to serve God in this world, and enjoy him in another. They are great, for God overlooks heaven and earth, to look on such; and certainly those are to be most respected and honoured in the church, that are most humble and self-denying; for though they least seek it, they best deserve it.

(3.) The special care Christ takes for those that are humble; he espouses their cause, protects them, interests himself in their concerns, and will see that they are not wronged, without being righted. Those that thus humble themselves, will be afraid.

[1.] That nobody will receive them; but, (v. 5.) Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. Whatever kindesses are done to such, Christ takes as done to himself. Whoso entertains a meek and humble christian, keeps him in consequence, will not let him lose by his modesty, takes him into his love and friendship, and society and care, and studies to do him a kindeness; and doth this in Christ's name, for his sake, because he bears the image of Christ, serves Christ, and because Christ has received him; this shall be accepted, and recompensed as an acceptable piece of respect to Christ. Observe, though it be but one such little child that is received in Christ's name, it shall be accepted. Note, The tender regard Christ has to his church, extends itself to every particular member, even the meanest; not only to the whole family, but to every child of the family; the less they are in themselves, to whom we show kindeness, the more there is of good will in it to Christ; the less it is for their sakes, the more it is for his; and he takes it accordingly. If Christ were personally among us, we think we should be welcome to him; the poor, the poor in spirit, we have always with us, and they are his receivers. See ch. 25. 35-40.

[2.] They will be afraid that every body will abuse them; the basest men delight to trample upon the humble; Verax census columbas—censura pounces on doves. This objection he obviates, (v. 6.) where he says, When the son of man shall come in his kingdom, then shall ye receive the hidden treasures in heaven, Matt. 6. 19. But most peril, not to offer any injury to one of Christ's little ones. This word makes a wall of fire about them; he that touches them, touches the apple of God's eye.

Observe, First, The crime supposed; offending one of these little ones that believe in Christ. Their believing in Christ, though they be little ones, unites them to him, so that, as they partake of the benefit of his grace, they partake of his concern for theirs, and interests him in their cause. Even the little ones that believe, have the same privileges with the great ones, for they have all obtained like precious faith. There are those that offend these little ones, by drawing them to sin, (1 Cor. 8. 10. 11.) grieving and vexing their righteous souls, dis couraging them, taking occasion from their mild ness to make a prey of them in their persons, fami-
lies, goods, or good name. Thus the best men have often met with the worst treatment in this world.

Secondly, The punishment of this crime; intimated in that word, Better for him that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. The sin is so heinous, and the ruin proportionably so great, that he had better undergo the sorest punishments inflicted on the worst of manufacturers, which can only kill the body. Note, 1. Hell is worse than the depth of the sea; for it is a bottomless pit, and it is a burning lake. The depth of the sea is only killing, but hell is tormenting. We meet with one that had comfort in the depth of the sea, it was Jonah; (ch. 2. 2. 4.) but never any had the least grain or glimpse of comfort in hell, nor will have to eternity. 2. The irreparable, irrevocable doom of the great Judge, will sink sooner and surer, and bind faster, than a millstone hanged about the neck. It fixes a great gulf, which can never be broken through, Luke 16. 26. Offending Christ's little ones, though by omission, is ascribed as the reason of that dreadful sentence, Go ye cursed, which will at last be the doom of proud persecutors.

7. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! 3. Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life hale or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. 9. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire. 10. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. 11. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. 12. How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seek that which is gone astray? 13. And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, He rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. 14. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

Our Saviour here speaks of offences, or scandals, I. In general, v. 7. Having mentioned the offending of little ones, he takes occasion to speak more generally of offences. That is an offence, 1. Which occasions guilt, which by enticement or affrightment tends to draw men from that which is good to that which is evil. 2. Which occasions grief, which makes the heart of the righteous sad. Now, concerning offences, Christ here tells thee the only thing that is found there, it is morally impossible but that there should be offences; and God has determined to permit them for wise and holy ends, that both they which are perfect, and they which are not, may be made manifest. See 1 Cor. 11. 19. Dan. 11. 35. Being told, before, that there will be seducers, tempters, persecutors, and many bad examples, let us stand upon our guard.

(2.) That they would be woful things, and the consequence of them fatal. Here is a double woe annexed to offences:

[1.] A woe to the careless and ungodly, to whom the offence is given; Woe to the world because of offences. The obstructions and oppositions given to faith and holiness in all places, are the bane and plague of mankind, and the ruin of thousands. This present world is an evil world, it is so full of offences, of sins, and snares, and sorrows; a dangerous road we travel, full of stumbling-blocks, precipices, and false guides. Woe to the world. As for those whom God hath chosen and called out of the world, and delivered from it, they are preserved by the power of God from the prejudice of these offences, are helped over all these stones of stumbling. They that hear God's law in great peace, and nothing shall offend them, Ps. 119. 166. 167.

[2.] A woe to the wicked, who wilfully give the offence; But woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. Though it must needs be, that the offence will come, that will be no excuse for the offenders. Note, Though God makes the sins of sinners to serve his purposes, that will not secure them from his wrath: and the guilt will be laid at the door of those who give the offence, though they also fall under a judgment, who take it. Note, They who any way hinder the salvation of others will find their own condemnation the more intolerable, like Jeroboam, who sinned and made Israel to sin. This woe is the moral of that judicial law, (Exod. 21. 33. 34.—22. 6.) that he who opened the pit, and kindled the fire, was accountable for all the damage that ensued. The antichristian generation, by whom came the great offence, will fall under this woe, for their delusion of sinners, (2 Thess. 2. 11. 12.) and their persecutions of saints, (Rev. 17. 1. 2. 6.) for the righteous God will reckon with those who ruin the eternal interests of precious souls, and the temporal interests of precious saints; for precious in the sight of the Lord is the blood of souls and the blood of saints; and men will be reckoned with, not only for their doings, but for the fruit of their doings, the mischief done by their example.

II. In particular, Christ here speaks of offences given.

1. By us to ourselves, which is expressed by our hand or foot offending us; in such a case, it must be cut off, v. 8. 9. This Christ had said before, (ch. 5. 29. 30.) where it especially refers to seventh-commandments; here it is taken more generally. Note, Those hard savings of Christ, which are displeasing to carnal minds, and may be called in contemptuous speeches, are again and again, and all little enough. Now observe,

(1.) What it is that is here enjoined. We must part with an eye, or a hand, or a foot, that is, that, whatever it is, which is dear to us, when it proves unavoidably an occasion of sin to us. Note, [1.] Many prevailing temptations to sin arise from within ourselves; our own eyes and hands offend us; if there were never a devil to tempt us, we should be drawn away, of our own nature, from the good. [2.] What is itself good, and may be used as instruments of good, even those, through the corruptions of our hearts, prove snares to us, incline us to sin, and hinder us in duty. [2.] In such a case, we must, as far as lawfully we may, part with that which we cannot keep without being entangled in sin by it.

First, It is certain, the inward lust must be mortified,
though it be dear to us as an eye, or a hand. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, must be mortified. Gal. 5. 24. As the body of sin must be destroyed; corrupt inclinations and appetites must be checked and crossed; the beloved lust, that has been rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be abandoned with abhorrence. Secondly, The outward occasions of sin must be avoided, though we thereby put as great a violence upon ourselves as it would be to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye. When Christ, as in His body of flesh, was exposed for fear of being ensnared in the idolatry of it, and when Moses quit Pharaoh's court, for fear of being entangled in the sinful pleasures of it, there was a right hand cut off. We must think nothing too dear to part with, for the keeping of a good conscience.

(2.) Upon what inducement this is required; *It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands, to be cast into hell.* The argument is taken from the future state, from heaven and hell; thence are fetched the most cogent dissuasive from sin. The argument is the same with that of the apostle; (Rom. 8. 13.) [*1.] If we live after the flesh, we must die; having two eyes, no breaches made upon the body of sin, inbred corruption, like Adonijah, never displeased, we shall be cast into hell. Through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall not enter into life maimed, that is, the body of sin maimed; and it is but maimed at the best, while we are in this world. If the right hand of the old man be cut off, and its right eye plucked out, its chief policies blasted and powers broken, it is well; but there is still an eye and a hand remaining, with which it will struggle. They that are Christ's, have nailed the flesh to the cross, but it is not yet dead; its life is prolonged, but its dominion taken away, (Dan. 7. 12,) and the deadly wound given it, that shall not be healed.

1. Concerning offences given by us to others, especially Christ's little ones, which we are here charged to take heed of, pursuant to what he had said, v. 6. Observe,

(1.) The caution itself; Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones. This is spoken to the disciples. As Christ will be displeased with the enemies of his church, if they wrong any of the members of it, even the least, so he will be displeased with the great ones of the church, if they despise the little ones of it. "You that are striving who shall be greatest, take heed lest in this contest you perish yourselves; little ones, ye may understand it literally of little children; of them Christ was speaking, v. 2, 4. The infant seed of the faithful belong to the family of Christ, and are not to be despised. Or, figuratively; true but weak believers are these little ones, who in their outward condition, or the frame of their spirits, are like little children, the lambs of Christ's flock.

[*1.] We must not despise them, not think meanly of them, Job 12. 5. We must not make a jest of their infirmities, not look upon them with contempt, not conduct ourselves scornfully or disdainfully toward them, as if we care not what became of them; we must not say, "Though they be offended, and grieved, and stumbled, what is that to us?" Nor should make a slight matter of driving that which will entangle and perplex them. This is frequently the case; we are so largely cautions against, Rom. 14. 3, 10, 15, 20, 21. We must not impose upon the consciences of others, nor bring them into subjection to our humours, as they do who say to men's souls, *Bow down that we may go over.* There is a respect owing to the conscience of every man who appears to be conscientious.

[*2.] We must take heed that we do not despise them; we must be afraid of the sin, and be very cautious what we say and do, lest we should through our words or doings bring Christ's little ones into that we put contempt upon them, without being aware of it. There were those that hated them, and cast them out, and yet said, *Let the Lord be glorified.* And we must be afraid of the punishment; *Take heed of despising them, for it is at your peril if you do.*

(2.) The reasons to enforce the caution. We must not look upon these little ones as contemptible, because really they are considerable. Let not earth despise those whom heaven respects; not let those be looked upon by us with disdain, whom God has put honour upon, and looks upon with respect, as his favourites. To prove that the little ones which believe in Christ are worthy to be respected, consider,

[1.] The ministration of the good angels about them; *In heaven their angels always behave the face of my Father.* This Christ saith to us, and we may take it upon his word, who came from heaven to let us know what is done there by the world of angels. Two things he lets us know concerning them,

First, That they are the little ones' angels. God's angels are theirs; for all his is ours, if we be Christ's, 1 Cor. 3. 22. They are theirs; for they have a charge assigned to them, [Heb. 1. 14.] to pitch their tents about them, and bear them up in their arms. Some have imagined that every particular saint has a guardian angel; but why should we suppose that, when we are sure that every particular saint, when there is occasion, has a guard of angels? This is particularly applied here to the little ones, because they are most despised and most exposed. They have but little that they can call their own, but they can look by faith on the heavenly hosts, and call them theirs. While the great ones of the world have honourable men for their retinue and guards, the little ones of the church are attended with glorious angels; which bespeaks not only their dignity, but the danger those run themselves upon, who despise and abuse them. It is bad being enemies to those who are so guarded; and it is good having God for our God, for then we have his angels for our angels.

Secondly, That they always behold the face of the Father in heaven. This bespeaks, 1. The angels' continual felicity and honour. The happiness of heaven consists in the vision of God, seeing him face to face as he is, beholding his beauty; this the angels have without interruption, from the time when ministering to us on earth, yet even then by contemplation they behold the face of God, for they are full of eyes within. Gabriel, when speaking to Zecharias, yet stands in the presence of God, Rev. 4. 8. Luke 1. 19. The expression intimates, as some think, the special dignity and honour of the little ones' angels; the prime ministers of state are said to see the king's face, (Esth. 1. 14.) and this of the princes, and ministers of the king; upon whom the angel came and said, Behold God's face, 1 Sam. 26. 11. 2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints. As the eyes of the servant are to the hand of his master, ready to go or come upon the least beck, so the eyes of the angels are upon the face of God, waiting for the intimation of his will. It is the face of God, which, as the eye of the master is to his servant, so the eyes of the angels are to the face of God, which is the face of the weakest saints; 2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints.

As the eyes of the servant are to the hand of his master, ready to go or come upon the least beck, so the eyes of the angels are upon the face of God, waiting for the intimation of his will. It is the face of God, which, as the eye of the master is to his servant, so the eyes of the angels are to the face of God, which is the face of the weakest saints; 2. It bespeaks their continual readiness to minister to the saints. They behold the face of God, expecting to receive orders from him what to do for the good of the saints.

[2.] The gracious design of Christ in concerning them; (v. 11.) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. This is a reason, First, Why
the little ones' angels have such a charge concerning them, and attend upon them; it is in pursuance of Christ's design to save them. Note, The ministration of angels is founded in the mediation of Christ; through him angels are reconciled to us, and, when they celebrated God's good will toward men, to it they annexed their own. Secondly, Why they are not to be despised; because Christ came to save them, to save them that are lost, the little ones that are lost in their own eyes, (Isa. 66. 3.) that are at a loss within themselves. Or rather, the children of men. Note, 1. Our souls by nature are lost souls; as a traveller is lost, that is out of his way, as a convicted prisoner is lost. God lost the service of fallen man, lost the honour he should have had from him. 2. Christ's errand into the world was, to save that which was lost; to redeem us to our inheritance, to restore us to our lost rest, to our privileges, and so to put us into the right way that leads to our great end; to save those that are spiritually lost from being eternally so. 3. This is a good reason why the least and weakest believer should not be despised or offended. If Christ put such a value upon them, let us not undervalue them. If he denied himself so much for their salvation, surely, nay, most particularly for their comfort and consolation. See this argument urged, Rom. 14. 15. 1 Cor. 8. 11, 12. Nay, if Christ came into the world to save souls, and his heart is so much upon that work, he will reckon severely with those that obstruct and hinder it, by obstructing the progress of those that are setting their faces heavenward, and so thwart his great design.

[3.] The tender regard which our heavenly Father has to his little ones and his concern for their welfare. This is illustrated by a comparison, v. 12—14. Observe the gradation of the argument; the angels of God are his servants, the Son of God is their Saviour, and, to complete their honour, God himself is their Friend. None shall pluck them out of my Father's hand, John 10. 28. Here is, First, The comparison, v. 12, 13. The owner that had lost one sheep out of a hundred, does not slight it, but diligently inquires after it, is greatly pleased when he has found it, and has in that a sensible and affecting joy, more than in the ninety and nine that wandered not. The fear he was in of losing that one, and the surprise of finding it, add to the joy. Now this is applicable, 1. To the state of fallen man in general; he is strayed like a lost sheep, the angels that stood, were as the ninety-nine that never were astray, Mark 12. 40, 41. 2. To the mountains, which Christ, in great fatigue, traversed in pursuit of him, and he is found; which is matter of joy. Greater joy there is in heaven for returning sinners than for remaining angels. 2. To particular believers, who are offended and put out of their way by the stumbling-blocks that are laid in their way, or the wiles of those who seduce them out of the right way. The woman, though but one of a hundred should hereby be driven off, as should every lamb, or sheep, that belongs to him. Though they are many, yet out of those many he can easily miss one, for he is a good Shepherd, and takes a more particular cognizance of his flock than ever any did; for he calls his own sheep by name, John 10. 3. See a full exposition of this parable, Ezek. 34. 10, 16, 19.

Secondly, The application of this comparison; (v. 14.) It is not the will of your Father, that one of these little ones should perish. More is implied than is expressed. It is not his will, that any should perish, but, 1. It is his will, that these little ones should be saved; it is the will of his design and delight, he has designed it, and set his heart upon it, and he will effect it; it is the will of his precept, that all should do what they can to further it, and nothing to hinder it. 2. This care extends itself to every particular member of the flock, even the meanest. We think if one or two be offended and ensnared, it is no great matter, we need not mind it; but God's thoughts of love and tenderness are above ours. 3. It is intimated that those who do any thing by which any of these little ones are brought into danger of perishing, contradict the will of God, and directly provoke him; and though they cannot prevail in it, yet they will be reckoned with for it by him, who, in his saints, as in other things, is jealous of his honour, and will not bear to have it trampled on. See Isa. 3. 15. What mean ye that ye beat my people? Ps. 76. 8, 9.

Observe, Christ called God, (v. 19.) my Father which is in heaven; he calls him, (v. 14.) our Father which is in heaven; intimating that he is not ashamed to call his poor disciples brethren; for have not he and they one Father? I ascend to my Father and your Father; (John 20. 17.) therefore ours because his. This intimates likewise the ground of the safety of his little ones; that God is their Father, and is therefore inclined to succour them. A father takes care of all his children, but particularly tender of the little ones, Gen. 32. 13. He is their Father in heaven; a place of prospect, and therefore he sees all the indignities offered them; and a place of power, therefore he is able to avenge them. This comforts offended little ones, that their Witness is in heaven, (Job 16. 19.) their Judge is there, Ps. 68. 5.

15. Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. 18. Verily I say unto you, WHATSOEVER YE SHALL BOUND ON EARTH SHALL BE BOUND IN HEAVEN; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

Christ, having cautioned his disciples not to give offence, cometh next to direct them what they must do in case of offences given them; which may be understood either of personal injuries, and then these directions are intended for the preserving the peace of the church; or of public scandals, and then they are intended for the preserving of the purity and beauty of the church. Let us consider it both ways.
I. Let us apply it to the quarrels that happen upon any account, among Christians. If thy brother trespass against thee, by grieving thy soul, (1 Cor. 6. 12.) by affronting thee, or putting contempt or abuse upon thee, if he blenchem thy good name by false reports or tale-bearing, if he encroach on thy rights, or be any way injurious to thee in thy estate; if he be guilty of any of those trespasses that are specified, Lev. 6. 2. 3. If he transgress the laws of justice, charity, and charitable duties; these and trespass among us, and often haply before Christ and his disciples, and sometimes, for want of prudence, are of very mischievous consequence. Now observe what is the rule prescribed in this case.

1. Go, and tell him his fault between him and thee alone. Let this be compared with, and explained by, Lev. 19. 17. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; that is, "If thou hast conceived a displeasure at thy brother for any injury he hath done thee, do not suffer thy resentment to ripen into a secret malice, (like a wound, which is most dangerous when it bleeds inwardly,) but give vent to them in a mild and grave admonition, let them so spend themselves, and they will expire the sooner; do not go and rail against him behind his back, but thou shalt in any wise reprove him. If he has indeed done thee a wrong, (like a wound) it is to make me sensible of it, but let the rebuke be private, between thee and him alone; if thou wouldst convince him, do not expose him, for that will but exasperate him, and make the reproof look like a revenge." This agrees with Prov. 25. 8. 9. "Go not forth hastily to strive, but debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself, argue it calmly and amicably; and if he shall hear thee, well and good, thou hast gained thy brother, there is an end of the controversy, and it is a happy end; let no more be said of it, but let the falling out of friends be the renewing of friendship."

2. If he will not hear thee, if he will not own himself in a fault, nor come to an agreement, yet do not despair, but try what he will say to it, if thou take one or two more, not only to be witnesses of what passes, but to reason the case further with him; he will be the more likely to hearken to them because they are disinterested; and if reason will rule him, the word of reason in the mouth of two or three witnesses will be better spoken to him, (Plus avid us, quam quis—Many eyes see more than one,) "and more regarded by him, and perhaps it will influence him to acknowledge his error the more effectually." 3. If he shall neglect to hear them, and will not refer the matter to their arbitration, then tell it to the church, to the ministers, elders, or other officers, or the most considerable persons in the congregation you belong to, make them the referees to accommodate the matter, and do not presently appeal to the magistrate, or fetch a writ for him." This is fully explained by the apostle, (1 Cor. 6.) when he requires his members to refer and give over the matter, and not before the saints, (v. 1.) he would have the saints to judge those small matters, (v. 2.) that pertain to this life, v. 3. If you ask, "Who is the church that must be told?" The apostle directs there, (v. 5.) Is there not a wise man among you? Those of the church that are presumed to be most capable of determining such matters, and he speaks in the plenitude of laws, (v. 6. 7. 8.) Some of those who are least esteemed in the church; those, if there be no better, those, rather than suffer an irreconcilable breach between two church-members. This rule was then in a special manner requisite, when the civil government was in the hands of such as were not only aliens, but enemies. 4. If he will not hear the church, will not stand to their award, but persists in the wrong he has done there, and proceeds to do thee further wrong, let him be to thee as a heathen man, and a publican; take the benefit of the law against him, but let that always be the last remedy; appeal not to the courts of justice till thou hast first tried all other means to compromise the matter in variance. Or thou mayst, if thou wilt, break off thy friendship and familiarity with him; though thou must by no means study revenge, yet thou mayst choose whether thou wilt have any dealings with him, at least thou mayst stop up the way of doing the like again. Thou wouldst have healed him, wouldst have preserved his friendship, but he would not, and so has forfeited it." If a man cheat and abuse me once, it is his fault; if twice, it is my own.

II. Let us apply it to scandalous sins, which are an offence to the little ones, of bad example to those that are weak and pliable, and of great grief to those that are weak and timorous. "If a brother was taught us to indulge the weakness of our brethren, here cautions us not to indulge their wickedness under pretence of that. Christ, designating to erect a church for himself in the world, here took care for the preservation, 1. Of its purity, that it might have an expulsive faculty, a power to cleanse and clear itself, like a fountain of living waters, which is necessary to a Church, as a cow without its milk is a cow. 2. Of its peace and order, that every member may know his place and duty, and the purity of it may be preserved in a regular way and not tumultuously. Now let us see,

(1.) What is the case supposed? If thy brother trespass against thee. [1.] "The offender is a brother, one that is in christian communion, that is, baptized, that has the word, and prays with thee, Matth. 18. 17. with whom thou hast joined in the worship of God, statedly or occasionally." Note, Church-discipline is for church-members. They are without God's judges, 1 Cor. 5. 12. 13. When any trespass is done against us, it is good to remember that the trespasser is a brother, which furnishes us with a qualifying consideration. [2.] The offence is a trespass against thee; if the brother sin against thee, (so the word is,) if he do any thing which is offensive to thee as a christian. Note, A gross sinner against God is a trespass against his people, who have a true concern for his honour. Christ and believers have twisted interests; what is done against them, Christ takes as done against himself; and what is done against him, they cannot but take as done against themselves. The reproach of them to whom you are related is with you, Ps. 68. 9. (2.) What is to be done in this case. We have here,

[1.] The rules prescribed, v. 15. 17. Proceed in this method: First, Go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone. Do not stay till he comes to thee, but go to him, as the physician visits the patient, and the shepherd goeth after the sheep. [2.] This is too much to take for the covering of a sinner to repentance. Tell him his fault, remind him of what he has done, and of the evil of it, show him his abominations. Note, People are loath to see their faults, and have need to be told of them. Though the fact is plain, and the fault too, yet they must be put together with application. Great sins if not pursued are not discovered, and silence it; and there is need of help to awaken it. David’s own heart smote him, when he had cut off Saul’s skirt, and when he had numbered the people; but (which is very strange) we do not find that it smote him in the matter of Uriah, till Nathan told him, Thou art the man. Tell him his fault, give an argument, and, if (the sin with reason and argument, not with passion.) Where
the fault is plain and great, the person proper for us to deal with, and we have an opportunity for it, and there is no apparent danger of doing more hurt than good, we must with meekness and faithfulness tell people of what is amiss in them. Christian reproof is an ordinance of Christ for the bringing of sinners to repentance, and must be managed with much care. It must be private, between thee and him alone; that it may appear you seek not his reproof, but his repentance. Note, It is a good rule, which should ordinarily be observed among Christians, not to speak of our brethren's faults to others, till we have first spoken of them to ourselves; this would make less reproaching and more reproofing; that is, less sin committed, and more duty done. And if the offender, when he sees his reproof concerned not only for his salvation, in telling him his fault, but for his reputation, in telling him of it privately.

1. If he shall hear thee, that is, heed thee, if he be wrought upon by the reproof, it is well; thou hast gained thy brother; thou hast helped to save him from sin and ruin, and it will be thy credit and comfort," James 5. 19, 20. Note, The converting of sinners to God is the chief aim of all reproofs, and we should covet it, and labour after it, as gain to us; and if the loss of a soul be a great loss, the gain of a soul is sure no small gain. Secondly, If that doth not prevail, then take with thee one or two more, v. 15. Note, We must not be weary of well-doing, though we see not presently the good success of it. “If he will not hear thee, yet do not give him up as in a desperate case; say not, It will be to no purpose to deal with him any further; but go on in the use of other means; even those that harden their necks, must be often reproved, and those that oppose themselves, instructed in meekness.” In work of this kind we must travail in birth again; (Gal. 4. 19,) and it is after many pains and throes that the child is born.

Take with thee one or two more; 1. To assist thee; they may speak some pertinent, convincing word which thou didst not think of, and may manage the matter with more prudence than thou didst.

Note, Christians should see their need of help in doing good, and pray in the aid one of another; as in other things, so in giving reproofs, that the duty may be done, and may be done well. 2. To affect him; he will be the more likely to be humbled for his fault, when he sees it witnessed against by two or three. Deut. 19. 15. Note, Those should think themselves in a good case who are likely to work upon any offender, and are helped in their work, and the work is effectual. Though in such a world as this it is rare to find one good whom all men speak well of, yet it is more rare to find one good whom all men speak ill of.

3. To be witnesses of his conduct, in case the matter should afterward be brought before the church. None should come under the censure of the church as obstinate and contumacious till it be very necessary. Thirlby.

Thirlby, If he neglect to hear them, and will not be humbled, then tell it to the church, v. 17. There are some stubborn spirits to whom the likeliest means of conviction prove ineffectual; yet such must not be given over as irreparable, but let the matter be made more public, and further help called in. Note, 1. Private admonitions must always go before public censures; if gentler methods will do the work, those should be used, and more must not be used, Tit. 3. 10. Those that will be reasoned out of their sins, need not be shamed out of them. Let God's work be done effectually, but with as little noise as may be; his kingdom comes with power, but not with observation. But, 2. Where private admonition does not prevail, there public censure must take place. The church must receive the complaints of the offended, and rebuke the sins of the offenders, and judge between them, after an impartial inquiry made into the merits of the cause.

Tell it to the church. It is a thousand pities that this appointment of Christ, which was designed to end differences, and remove factions, should be the subject of debate, and occasion differences and offences, through the corruption of men's hearts. What church must be told—is the great question; The civil magistrate, say some; The Jewish sanhedrin then in being, say others; but by what follows, (v. 18,) it is plain that he means a Christian church, which, though not yet formed, was now in the embryo. "Tell it the church, that particular church, the church of the place where the offender lives, make the matter known to those of that congregation, who are by consent appointed to receive informations of that kind. Tell it to the guides and governors of the church, the minister or ministers, the elders or deacons, or (if such the constitution of the society be) tell it to the representatives or heads of the congregation, or to all the members of it; let them examine the matter, and if they find the complaint frivolous and groundless, let them rebuke the offender; if they find it just, let them rebuke the offender, and call him to repentance, and this will be likely to put an edge and an efficacy upon the reproof, because given," 1. With greater solemnity; and, 2. With greater authority. It is an awful thing to receive a reproof from a church, from a minister, a reprove by office; and therefore it is the more regarded by such as pay any deference to an institution of Christ and his ambassadors. Fourthly, If he neglect to hear the church, if he slight the admonition, and will neither be ashamed of his faults, nor amend them, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican; let him be cast out of the communion of the church, excluded from special ordinances, degraded from the dignity of a church-member, let him be put under disgrace, and let the members of the society be warned to withdraw from him, that he may be ashamed of his sin, and they may not be infected by it, or made chargeable with it. Those who put contempt upon the orders and rules of a society, and bring reproach upon it, forfeit the honours and privileges of it, and are justly laid aside till they repent and submit, and reconcile themselves to it again. Christ has appointed this method for the vindicating of the church's honour, the preserving of its purity, and the advancement of the gospel. But observe, he doth not say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but, "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be retained in the church, and suffer there the correction and reformation of those that are culpable. But observe, he doth not say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but, "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be retained in the church, and suffer there the correction and reformation of those that are culpable. But observe, he doth not say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but, "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The directions given to the church of Corinth concerning the incestuous person, agree with the rules here; he must be retained in the church, and suffer there the correction and reformation of those that are culpable. But observe, he doth not say, "Let him be to thee as a devil or damned spirit, as one whose case is desperate," but, "as a heathen and a publican, as one in a capacity of being restored and received in again. Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."
and will ratify what they say and do, so that it shall be taken as said and done by himself. He will own
them.

First, In their sentence of suspension; Whatever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven.
If the censures of the church duly follow the insti-
tution of Christ, his judgments will follow the cen-
sures of the church, his spiritual judgments, which
are the sorest of all other, such as the rejected Jews
fell under, (Rom. 11. 8.) a spirit of slumber; for
Christ will not suffer his own ordinances to be tram-
scended. When the church suspends any, it is a
tenent sentences which the church passes on obstinate
offenders. How light soever proud scorner may make of
the censures of the church, let them know that
they are confirmed in the court of heaven; and it is
in vain for them to appeal to that court, for judgment
is there already given against them. They that are
shut out from the congregation of the righteous now,
shall not stand in it in the great day, Ps. 1. 5. Christ
will not own those, as his, nor receive them to
himself, whom the church has duly delivered to
Satan; but if through error or envy the censures of
the church be unjust, Christ will graciously find
those who are so cast out, John 9. 34, 35.

Secondly, In their sentence of absolution; What-
soever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heav-
en. Note 1. No church-censures bind so fast, but
that, upon their suspension and remission of sentence
they may and must be loosed again. Sufficient is
the punishment which has attained its end, and the
offender must then be forgiven and comforted, 2 Cor.
2. 6. There is no unpassable gulf fixed but that
between hell and heaven. 2 Those who, upon
their repentance, are received by the church into
communion again, may take the comfort of their
acquittal of sin with their hearts, and be reconciled with
God. As suspension is for the terror of the obsti-
inate, so absolution is for the encouragement of the
penitent. St. Paul speaks in the person of Christ,
when he saith, To whom ye forgive any thing, I
curse them also, 2 Cor. 2. 10.

Now it is a great honour which Christ here gives
upon the church, that he will condescend not only
to take cognizance of their sentences, but to concur
with them; and in the following verses we have two
things laid down as the ground of this.
(1.) God's readiness to answer the church's pray-
ers; (v. 19.) If two of you shall agree harmoni-
ously, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall
be done for them. Apply this,

[1.] In general, to all the requests of the faithful
praying seed of Jacob; they shall not seek God's face in vain. Many promises we have in scripture of
a gracious answer to the prayers of faith, but
this gives a particular encouragement to joint prayer;
"the requests which two of you agree in, much
more which many agree in." No law of heaven limits the number of petitioners. Note, Christ has
been pleased to put an honour upon, and to allow a
special efficacy in, the joint prayers of the faithful,
and in their unanimity of heart and purpose. If
they join in the same prayer, if they meet by ap-
pointment to come together to the throne of grace
on some special errand, or, though at a distance,
agree in some particular matter of prayer, they
shall speed well. Beside the general regard God
has to the prayers of the saints, he is particularly
pleased with their union and communion in these
prayer-meetings.

[2.] In particular, to those requests that are put
to up to God about binding and loosing; to which this
promise seems more especially to refer. Observe,
First, That the power of church-discipline is not
here lodged in the hand of a single person, but two,
least, are supposed to be concerned in it. When
the incestuous Corinthian was to be cast out, the

church was gathered together, (1 Cor. 5. 4.) and it
was a punishment inflicted on many, 2 Cor. 2. 6. In
an affair of such importance, two are better than
one, and more than two are better, 1 Cor. 12. 3. The
multiplied meetings in behalf of the injured are
safety. Secondly, It is good to see those who have
the management of church-discipline, agreeing in
it. Heats and animosities among those whose work
it is to remove offences, will be the greatest offence
of all. Thirdly, Prayer must evermore go along
with church-discipline. Pass no sentence, which
you cannot in faith ask God to confirm. The bind-
ance and act of church-discipline is confirmed
by preaching, this by praying. Thus the whole
power of gospel-ministers is resolved into the word
and prayer, to which they must wholly give them-
se. He doth not say, "If you shall agree to sentence
and decree a thing, it shall be done;" (as if
ministers were judges and lords;) but, "If you
agree to ask it of God, from him you shall obtain
it." Prayer must go along with all our endeavours
for the conversion of sinners; see James 5. 16.

Fourthly, The unanimous petitions of the church
of God, for the ratification of their just censures,
shall be heard in heaven, and obtain an answer;
"It shall be done, it shall be bound and loosed in
heaven;" God will set his fiat to the appeals and
applications you make to him. If Christ (who here
speaks as one having authority over all,) it shall
be done, then let it be done. That it is done, though
we see not the effect in the way that we look for. It
God doth especially own and accept us, when we
are praying for those that have offended him and us.
The Lord turned the captivity of Job, not when he
prayed for himself, but when he prayed for his
friends who had trespassed against him.

(2.) The presence of Christ in the assemblies of
christians, 1 Cor. 12. 20. Every believer has the presence of
Christ with him; but the promise here refers to
the meetings where two or three are gathered in his
name, not only for discipline, but for religious
worship, or any act of christian communion. Assem-
bles of christians for holy purposes are hereby ap-
pointed, directed, and encouraged.

[1.] They are hereby appointed; the church of
christians in the world exists most visably in religious
assemblies; it is the will of Christ that these
should be set up, and kept up for the honour of God, the
codification of men, and the preserving of a face
of religion upon the world. When God intends
special answers to prayer, he calls for a solemn assem-
bly, Joel 2. 15, 16. If there be no liberty and op-
portunity for large and numerous assemblies, yet
then it is the will of God that two or three should
gather together, to show their good will to the great
ggregation. Note, When we cannot do what we
would in religion, we must do as we can, and God
will accept us.

[2.] They are hereby directed to gather together
in Christ's name. In the exercise of church-disci-
pline, they must come together in the name of Christ,
1 Cor. 1. 4. That name gives to what they do an
the authority of God; and if Christ is there, the
assembly is complete. In meeting for worship, we must have an eye to
Christ; must come together, by virtue of his war-
tant and appointment, in token of our relation to
him, professing faith in him, and in communion with
all that in every place call upon him. When we
come together, to worship God in a dependence
upon the Spirit and grace of Christ as Mediator for
reconciliation, or in union with his merit and righteousness as
Mediator for acceptance, having an actual regard to
him as our Way to the Father, and our Advocate
with the Father, then we are met together in his
name.

[3.] They are hereby encouraged with an assur-
ance of the presence of Christ; There am I in the
midst of them. By his common presence he is in
all places, as God; but this is a promise of his special presence. Where his saints are, his sanctuary is, and there he will dwell; it is his rest, (Ps. 132. 14,) it is his walk; (Rev. 2. 1.) he is in the midst of them, to quicken and strengthen them, to refresh and comfort them, as the sun in the midst of the universe. He is in the midst of them, that is, in his presence, the very force and presence of Christ’s Spirit with their spirits, that is here intended. There am I, not only I will be there, but I am there; as if he came first, is ready before them, they shall find him there; he repeated this promise at parting, (ch. 28. 20.) Lo, I am with you always. Note, The presence of Christ in the assemblies of Christians is promised, and may in faith be prayed for. 2. It is evident, this is equivalent to the Shechinah, or special presence of God in the tabernacle and temple of old, Exod. 40. 24. 2 Chron. 5. 14.

Though but two or three are met together, Christ is among them; this is an encouragement to the meeting of a few, when it is either, First, Of choice. Beside the secret worship performed by particular persons, and the public services of the whole congregation, there may be occasion sometimes for two or three to come together, either for mutual assistance in conference or joint assistance in prayer, not in contempt of public worship, but in concurrence with it; there Christ will be present. Or, Secondly, By constraint; when there are not more than two or three to come together, or, if there be, they dare not, for fear of the Jews, yet Christ will be in the midst of them; for it is not the multitude, but the faith and sincere devotion, of the worshippers, that invites the presence of Christ; and though there be but two or three, the smallest number that can be, yet, if Christ make one among them, who is the principal one, their meeting is as honourable and comfortable as if they were two or three thousand.

21. Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? 22. Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. 23. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. 24. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. 25. But so much as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 27. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. 28. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. 29. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. 30. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the
ren, that is, the church, and the administration of the
gospel-dispensation in it. The church is God's
family, it is his court; there he dwells, there he
rules. God is our Master, his servants we are, at
least, in profession and obligation. In general, the
parable estimates how much presention God has
from his family on earth, and how untoward his
servants are.

There are three things in the parable.
1. The master's wonderful clemency to his ser-
vant who was indebted to him; he gave him ten
thousand talents, out of pure compassion to him; v. 25.

2. Where observe,
(1.) Every sin we commit, is a debt to God; not
like a debt to an equal, contracted by buying or bor-
rowling, but to a superior; like a debt to a prince
when a recognition is forfeited, or a penalty incurred
by a breach of the law or a breach of the peace;
like the debt of a servant to his master, by with-
holding his service, wasting his lord's goods, break-
ing his indentures, and incurring the penalty. We
are all debtors; we owe satisfaction, and are liable
to the process of the law.

(2.) There is an account kept of these debts, and
we must shortly be reckoned with for them. This
king would take account of his servants. God now
reckons with us by our own consciences; conscience is
an auditor for God in the soul, to call us to ac-
count, and to account with us. One of the first ques-
tions the universal Christian asks is, How much o\neth
thou unto my Lord? And unless it be bribed,
it will tell the truth, and not write fifty for a hun-
dred. There is another day of reckoning coming,
when these accounts will be called over, and either
passed or disallowed, and nothing but the blood of
Christ will balance the account.

(3.) The debt of sin is a very great debt; and
some are more in debt, by reason of sin, than others.
When he began to reckon, one of the first defaulters
appeared to owe ten thousand talents. There is no
evading the inquiries of divine justice, your sin will
be sure to find you out. The debt was ten thousand
talents, a vast sum, amounting by computation to one
million, eight hundred, seventy-five thousand pounds
sterling; a king's ransom or a kingdom's subsidy,
more likely, than a servant's debt; see what our sins
are worth. Every one of us knows their nature; they
are talents, the greatest denomination that ever
was used in the account of money or weight. Every
sin is the lead of a talent, a talent of lead, this is
wickedness, Zech. 5. 7, 8. The trusts committed to us,
as stewards of the grace of God, are each of them a
talent, (ch. 23. 15.) a talent of gold, and for every
one of them buried, much more for every one of
them wasted, we are a talent in debt, and this raises
the account. [2.] For the vastness of their number;
they are ten thousand, a myriad, more than the hairs
on our head, Ps. 40. 12. Who can understand the
number of his errors, or tell how oft he offends? Ps.
19. 12.

(4.) The debt of sin is so great, that we are not able
to pay it; He had not to pay. Sinners are in-
spite that debt; it is the scripture, which God says,
under sin, is a statute of bankruptcy against us all.
Silver and gold would not pay our debt, Ps. 49. 6, 7.
Sacrifice and offering would not do it; our good
works are but God's work in us, and cannot make
satisfaction; we are without strength, and cannot
help ourselves.

(5.) If God should deal with us in strict justice,
we should be condemned as insolvent debtors; God
might exact the debt by glorifying himself in
our utter ruin. Justice demands satisfaction, Cur-
rant lex.—Let the sentence of the law be executed.
The servant had contracted this debt by his waster-
fulness and wilfulness, and therefore might justly be
left to lie by it. His lord commanded him to be sold,
as a bond-slave into the galleys, sold to grind in the
prison-house; his wife and children to be sold, and
all that he had, and payment to be made. See here
what every sin deserves; this is the wages of sin.
[1.] To be sold. Those that sell themselves to work
wasterfulness, and disobedience; for the sake of the
Soul and kingdom's purposes. The servants of sin
are captives of wrath. He that is sold for a bond-slave,
is deprived of all his comforts, and has nothing left
but his life, that he may be sen-
sible of his miseries; which is the case of damned
sinners. [2.] Thus he would have payment to be
made, that is, something done towards it; though it
is impossible that the sale of one so worthless should
answer the payment of so great a debt. The damna-
tion of sinners divine justice will be to eternity in
the satisfying, but never satisfied.

(6.) Convinced sinners cannot but humble them-
sehews before God, and pray for mercy. The ser-
vant, under this charge, and this doom, fell down
at the feet of his royal master, and worshipped him;
or, as some copies read it, he brought him; his ad-
dress was very submissive and very importunate.
Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all, v. 26.
The servant knew before that he was so much
in debt, and yet was under no concern about it, till
he was called to an account. Sinners are commonly
careless about the pardon of their sins, till they come
under the arrests of some awakening word, some
startling providence, or approaching death, and then,
their minds are awake, and their consciences are
awakened. How easily, how quickly, can God bring the
proudest sinner to his feet: Ahab to his sackcloth, Ma-
nasseh to his prayers, Pharaoh to his confessions,
Judas to his restitution, Simon Magus to his sup-
hplication, Belshazzar and Felix to their tremblings.
The stoutest heart will fail, when God sets the sins
in order before it. This servant did not deny the
debt, but he could not pay it; but he repented, and
then his master forgave him.

But, [1.] He begs time; Have patience with me.
Patience and forbearance are a great favour, but it
is folly to think that these alone will save us;
replies are not pardons. Many are borne with, who
are not thereby brought to repentance, (Rom. 2. 4.)
and then their being borne with does them no kind-
ness.

But, [2.] He promises payment; Have patience a
while, and I will pay thee all. Note, It is the folly
of many who are under convictions of sin, to imagine
that they can make God satisfaction for the wrong
they have done him; as those who, like a compro-
inding bankrupt, would discharge the debt, by giving
their first-born for their transgression, (Mic. 6. 7.)
who go about to establish their own righteousness,
Rom. 10. 3. He that hath nothing to pay, (v. 25.)
fancied he could pay all. See how close pride sticks,
even to awakened sinners; they are convinced, but
not humbled.

(7.) The God of infinite mercy is very ready, out
of pure compassion, to forgive the sins of those that
humble themselves before him; (v. 27.) The lord
of that servant, when he might justly have ruined
him, mercifully released him; and since he could
not be satisfied by compounding for the debt, he was
to be glorified by the pardon of it. The servant's
prayer was, Have patience with me; the master's
grant is, a discharge in full. Note, [1.] The par-
don of sin is owing to the mercy of God, to his ten-
der mercy; (Luke 1. 77. 78.) He was moved with
compassion. God's reasons of mercy are fetched
from within himself; he has mercy because he will
have mercy. God looked with pity on the wretches
on his account, and showed mercy to his Son to be
a Surety for them; he looks with pity on particular penitents, because sensible of their misery, (their
hearts broken and contrite,) and accepts them in
the Beloved. [2.] There is forgiveness with God
for the greatest sins, if they be repented of. Though
the debt was vastly great, he forgave it all, v. 32. Though our sins be very numerous and very heinous, yet, upon gospel grace, they may be pardoned; 2 Cor. 3:5, 6. For in the debt is the losing of the debtor; he bowed him. The obligation is cancelled, the judgment vacated; we never walk at liberty till our sins are forgiven. But observe, though he discharged him from the penalty as a debtor, he did not discharge him from his duty as a servant. The pardon of sin doth not shackle, but strengthen, our obligations to obedience; and we must reckon it a favour that God is pleased to continue such wasteful liberality as we have been, in such a gainful service as his, and should therefore deliver us, that we might serve him, Luke 1. 74. I am thy servant, for thou hast saved my soul.

2. The servant's unreasonable severity toward his fellow-servant, notwithstanding his lord's clemency toward him, v. 28—30. This represents the sin of those who, though they are not unjust in demanding that which is not their own; yet are rigorous and unmerciful in demanding that which is their own, to the utmost of right, which sometimes proves a real wrong. Summum jus summa injuria. Push a claim to an extremity, and it becomes a wrong. To exact satisfaction for debts of injury, which tend neither to reparation nor to the public good, but purely for revenge, though the law may allow it, in terrorem—in order to strike terror, and for the hardness of heart, and resentment, which is bound to beget bad blood. To sue for money-debts, when the debtor cannot possibly pay them, and so let him perish in prison, argues a greater love of money, and a less love of our neighbour, than we ought to have, Neh. 5. 7.

See here, (1.) How small the debt was, how very small, compared with the ten thousand talents which his lord forgave him: He owed him a hundred, about three pounds and half-a-crown of our money. Note, Offences done to men are nothing to compare with which are committed against God. Dishonours done to a man like ourselves, are but as pence, notes, gruels; but dishonours done to God, are as talents, beams, camels. Not that therefore we may make light of wronging our neighbour, for that is also a sin against God; but therefore we should make light of our neighbour's wronging us, and not aggravate it, or study revenge. David was unconcerned at the theft of his ass, when his servant was robbed, and yet laid much to heart the sins committed against God; for them, rivers of tears ran down his eyes.

(2.) How severe the demand was; He laid hands on him, and took him by the throat. Proud and angry men think, if the matter of their demand be just, that will bear them out, though the manner of it be ever so cruel and unmerciful: but it will not hold. What needed all this violence? The debt might have been demanded without taking the debtor by the throat; without sending for a writ, or setting the bailiff upon him. How hardly is this man's carriage, and yet how base and servile is his spirit! If he had been himself going to prison for his debt to his lord, his occasions would have been so pressing, that he might have had some pretence for going to this extremity in requiring his own; but frequently pride and malice prevail more to make men extreme in other men's debts, than in their own.

(3.) How submissive the debtor was; His fellow-servant, though his equal, yet knowing how much he lay at his mercy, fell down at his feet, and humbled himself to him for this trifling debt, as much as he did to his lord for that great debt; for the borrower is servant to the lender, Prov. 22. 7. Note, Those who cannot pay their debts, ought to be very respectful to their creditors, and not only give them good words, but do them all the good offices they possibly can; they must not be angry at those who claim their own, nor speak ill of them for it, no, not though they do it in a rigorous manner, but in that case leave it to God to plead the cause. The debtor.

How patiently with me; he honestly confesses the debt, and puts not his creditor to the charge of proving it, only begs time. Note, Forbearance, though it be no acquittance, is sometimes a piece of needful and laudable charity. As we must not be hard, so we must not be nasty, in our demands, but think how long God bears with us.

(4.) How implacable and furious the creditor was; (v. 29.) He would not have patience with him, he would not behearken to his fair promise, but without mercy cast him into prison. How insolently did he trample upon one as good as himself, that submitted to him! How cruelly did he use one that had done him no harm, and though it would be no advantage to himself! In this, as in a glass, unmerciful creditors may see their own faces, who take pleasure in nothing more than to swallow up and destroy, (2 Sam. 20. 19.) and gloat over on their poor debtor's bondage.

(5.) How much concerned the rest of the servants were; They were very sorry, (v. 31.) sorry for the creditor's cruelty, and for the debtor's calamity. Note, The sins and sufferings of our fellow-servants should be matter of grief and trouble to us. It is sad that any of our brethren should either make themselves beasts of prey, by cruelty and barbarity; or be made beasts of slavery, by the inhuman usage of those whose service we are engaged in. Is it fit a fellow-servant, either raging like a bear or trampled on like a worm, cannot but occasion great regret to all that have any jealousy for the honour either of their nature or of their religion. See with what eye Solomon looked both upon the tears of the oppressed, and the power of the oppressors, Eccl. 4. 1.

(6.) How notice of it was brought to the master: They came and told their lord. They thrust not their necks into the net of this unreasonable and outrageous creditor. Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than such a fool in his folly; but they went to their lord, and besought him to appear for the oppressed against the oppressor. Note, That which gives us occasion for sorrow, should give us occasion for prayer. Let our complaints both of the wickedness of the wicked and of the afflictions of the afflicted, be brought to God, and left with him.

3. The master's just resentment of the cruelty his servant was guilty of. If the servant took it so ill, much more would the master, whose Compassions are infinitely above ours. Now observe here, (1.) How he reproved his servant's cruelty; (v. 32, 33.) O thou wicked servant. Note, Unmercifulness is wickedness, it is great wickedness. [1.] He upbraids him with the mercy he had found with his master; I forgave thee all that debt. Those that will use God's favours, shall never be upbraided with them, but those that abuse them, may expect it, ch. 11. 20. Consider, It was all that debt, that great debt. Note, The greatness of sin magnifies the riches of pardoning mercy; we should think how much has been forgiven us, Luke 7. 47. [2.] He therefore shows him the obligation he was under to be merciful to his fellow-servant; Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? Note, It is justly expected, that such as have received mercy, should show mercy. Dat ille venenum facile, cui venia est ofuus—He who needs forgiveness, easily bestows it. Serc. Agamenn. He shows him, First, That he should have been more compassionate to the distress of his fellow-servant, because he had himself experienced the same distress. What we have had the feeling of ourselves, we can the better have the feeling of with our brethren. The Israelites knew the heart of a stranger, for they were strangers; and this servant should have better known the heart of
of them, for comfort to those that are sincere, but timorous; that the one may fear, and the other may hope. Those that do not forgive their brother's trespasses, did never truly repent of their own, nor ever truly believe the gospel; and therefore that which is taken away, is only what they seemed to have, Luke 6. 18. (2.) This is intended to teach us, that they shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy, Jam. 2. 13. It is indispensably necessary to pardon and peace, that we not only do justly, but love mercy. It is an essential part of that religion which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father, that wisdom from above, which is gentle, and easy to be entreated. Look how they will answer it another day, who, though they bear the christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer.

CHAP. XIX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ changing his quarters, leaving Galilee, and coming into the coasts of Judea, v. 1, 2. II. His preaching, with the progress of it, v. 3 to 15. His discourse with his disciples upon occasion of it, v. 16., 17. III. The kind entertainment he gave to some little children which were brought to him, v. 13., 14. IV. An account of what passed between Christ and a hopeful young man that applied himself to him, v. 16., 17. V. His discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, concerning the difficulty of the salvation of those that have much in the world, and the certain recompense of those that leave all for Christ, v. 23., 30.

1. And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judea beyond Jordan: 2. And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

We have here an account of Christ's removal. Observe, 1. He left Galilee. There he had been brought up and had spent the greatest part of his life in that remote despitable part of the country; it was only upon occasion of the feasts, that he came up to Jerusalem, and manifested himself there; and, we may suppose, that, having no constant residence there when he did come, his preaching and miracles were the more observable and acceptable. But it was an instance of his humiliation, and in this, as in other things, he appeared in a mean state, that he would go under the character of a Galilean, a north-countryman, the least polite and refined part of the nation. Most of Christ's sermons hitherto had been preached, and most of his miracles wrought, in Galilee; but now, having finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and it was his final farewell; for (unless his passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee was the special occasion of his departure) in which case he was but a visit in transitu—as he passed through the country—never came to Galilee again till after his resurrection, which makes this transition very remarkable. Christ did not take his leave of Galilee till he had done his work there, and then he departed thence. Note, As Christ's faithful ministers are not taken out of the world, they are not removed from any place, till they have finished their testimony in that place, Rev. 11. 7. This is very comfortable to those that follow not their own humour, but God's providence, in their removals, that their sayings shall be finished before they depart. And who would desire to continue any where longer than he has work to do for God there?

2. He came into the coasts of Judea, beyond Jor-
don, that they might have their day of visitation as well as Galilee, for they also belonged to the last sheep of the house of Israel. But still Christ kept to those parts of Canaan that lay towards other nations; Galilee is called Galiel or the Gentiles; and the Syrians dwelt beyond Jordan. Thus Christ insisted, that while he kept within the confines of the Jewish nation, he had his eye upon the Gentiles, and his gospel was aiming and coming toward them.

3. Great multitudes followed him. Where Siber is, there will the gathering of the people be. The redeemed of the Lord are such as follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, Rev. 14. 4. When Christ departs, it is best for us to follow him. It was a piece of respect to Christ, and yet it was a continual trouble, to be thus crowded after, wherever he went; but he sought not his own ease, nor, considering how mean and contemptible this mob was, (as some would call them,) his own honour much, in the eye of the world; he went about doing good; for so it follows, he healed them there. This shows what they followed him for, to have their sick healed; and they found him as able and ready to help here, as he had been in Galilee; for, wherever this Sun of righteousness arose, it was with healing under his wings. He healed them there, because he would not have them follow him to Jerusalem, lest it should give offence. He shall not strive, nor cry.

3. The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? 4. And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female? 5. And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? 6. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. 7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8. He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. 9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. 10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it let him receive it.

We have here the law of Christ in the case of divorce, occasioned, as some other declarations of
union between them; Eve was a rib out of Adam's side, so that he could not put her away, but he must put away a piece of himself, and contradict the manifest indications of her creation. Christ hints briefly at this, but in appealing to what they had read, he refers them to the original record, where it is observable, that, though the rest of the living creatures were made male and female, yet in the case of Eve, two cominging of any of them, but only concerning mankind; because between man and woman the conjunction is rational, and intended for nobler purposes than merely the pleasing of sense and the preserving of a seed; and it is therefore more close and firm than that between male and female among the brutes, who were not capable of being such help-meets for one another as were the males and females of the human family. Hence this expression is somewhat singular, (Gen. 1. 27.) In the image of God created he him, male and female created he them; and him and them are used promiscuously; being one by creation before they were two, when they became one again by marriage-covenant, that oneness could not but be closer and indissoluble.

8. The fundamental law of marriage, which is, that persons are to cleave to his wife, v. 5. The relation between husband and wife is nearer than that between parents and children; now, if the filial relation may not easily be violated, much less may the marriage-union be broken. May a child desert his parents, or may a parent abandon his children, for any cause, for every cause? No, by no means. Much less may a husband put away his wife, but with whom, though not by the express and immediate curse, yet by the prohibition in the institution, and the bond of union stronger, than between parents and children; for that is in a great measure superseded by marriage, when a man must leave his parents, to cleave to his wife. See here the power of a divine institution, that the result of it is a union stronger than that which results from the highest obligations of nature.

9. The nature of the marriage-contract; it is a union of persons; They twain shall be one flesh, so that (v. 6.) they are no more twain, but one flesh. A man's children are pieces of himself, but his wife is himself. As the conjugal union is closer than that between parents and children, so is it in a manner equivalent to that between one member and another in the natural body. As this is a reason why husband and wife must not part company, so it is a reason why they should not put away their wives; for no one ever yet hated his own flesh, or cut it off, but nourishes and cherishes it, and does all he can to preserve it. They two shall be one, therefore there must be but one wife, for God made but one Eve for one Adam, Mal. 2. 15.

From hence he infers, What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. Note, (1.) Husband and wife are of God's joining together, consequently, he hath joined them together, so the word is, and it is very significant. God himself instituted the relation between husband and wife in the state of innocency. Marriage and the sabbath are the most ancient of divine ordinances. Though marriage be not peculiar to the church, but common to the world, yet being stamped with a divine institution, and here ratified by our Lord Jesus, it ought to be continued after a godly sort, and sanctified by the word of God and prayer. A conscientious regard to God in this ordinance, would have a good influence upon the duty, and consequently upon the comfort, of the relation. (2.) Husband and wife being joined together by the ordinance of God, are not to be put asunder by any ordinance of man. Let not man put them asunder; not the husband himself, or any one for him; not the magistrate, God never gave him authority to do it. The God of Israel hath said, that he hateh putting away, Mal. 2. 16. It is a general rule, that man must not go about to put asunder what God hath joined together.

III. An objection started by the Pharisees against this; an objection not destitute of colour and plausibility; (v. 7.) Why did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, in case a man did put away his wife? He urged scripture reason against divorce, that they might not make use of it. The seeming contradictions that are in the word of God, are great stumbling-blocks to men of corrupt minds. It is true, Moses was faithful to him that appointed him, and commanded nothing but what he received from the Lord; but as to the thing itself, what they call a command was only an allowance, (Deut. 24. 1.) and designed rather to restrain the wantonness of men, than to give countenance to the thing itself. The Jewish doctors themselves observe such limitations in that law, that it could not be done without great deliberation. A particular reason must be assigned, the bill of divorce must be written, and, as a judicial act, must have all the solemnities of a deed, executed and enrolled. It must be given into the hands of the wife herself, and (which would oblige men to think, and had any consideration in them, to consider) they were expressly forbidden ever to come together again.

IV. Christ's answer to this objection, in which, 1. He rectifies their mistake concerning the law of Moses; they called it a command, Christ calls it but a permission, a toleration. Carnal hearts will take all ell if but an inch be given them. The law of Moses, in this case, was a political law, which gave them a power of免责, but not an ordnance, or a law, which was for reasons of state, that divorces were tolerated. The strictness of the marriage-union being the result, not of a natural, but of a positive, law, the wisdom of God dispensed with diversities in some cases, without any impeachment of his holiness. But Christ tells them there was a reason for this toleration, not at all for their credit; it was because of the hardness of men's hearts, that you were permitted to put away your wives. Moses complained of the people of Israel in his time, that their hearts were hardened, (Deut. 9. 6.—31. 27.) hardened against God; this is here meant of their being hardened against their relations; they were generally violent and outrageous, which way soever they took, both in their appetites and in their passions; and therefore if the heart was hard, it was right that the heart should be softened. If when they had conceived a dislike of them, they would have used them cruelly, would have beaten and abused them, and perhaps have murdered them. Note, There is not a greater piece of hard-heartedness in the world, than for a man to be harsh and severe with his own wife. The Jews, it seems, were infamous for this, and therefore were allowed to put them away; better divorce them than do worse, than that men should without virtuously owning the hardness of their hearts. Observe, He saith, It is for the hardness of your hearts, not only those who lived then, but all their seed. Note, God not only sees, but foresees, the hardness of men's hearts; he suited both the ordinances and provisions of the Old Testament to the temper of that people, both in terror. Further observe, The law of Moses put them asunder, the gospel Christ cures it; and his grace takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh. By the law was the knowledge of sin, but by the gospel was the conquest of it.
2. He reduces them to the original institution; But from the beginning it was not so. Note, Corruptions that are crept into any ordinance of God, must be purged out by having recourse to the primitive institution. If the copy be vicious, it must be examined and corrected by the original. Thus, when St. Paul reproved the Corinthians for their disorder in the Lord’s supper, he appealed to the appointment, (1 Cor. 11. 23.) So and so I received from the Lord. Truth was from the beginning; we must therefore inquire for the good old way, (Jer. 6. 16.) and must reform, not by latter patterns, but by ancient rules.

3. He settles the point by an express law: I say unto you, (v. 9.) and agrees with what he said before, (v. 5.) There was there said in preaching, here in dispute, but it is the same, for Christ is constant to himself. Now, in both these places,

(1.) He allows divorce, in case of adultery; the reason of the law against divorce being this, They two shall be one flesh. If the wife play the harlot, and make herself one flesh with an adulterer, the reason of the law ceases, and so does the law. By the law of Moses adultery was punished with death, Deut. 22. 22. Now our Saviour mitigates the rigour of that, and appoints divorce to be the penalty. Dr. Whitby understands this, not of adultery, but (because our Saviour uses the word ἐναργεία—fornication) of uncleanness committed before marriage, but discovered afterward; because, if it were committed after, it was a capital crime, and there needed no divorce. (2.) He disallows it in all other cases; Whosoever putteth away his wife, except for fornication, and marrieth another, commits adultery. This is a direct answer to their query, that it is not lawful. In this, as in other things, gospel-times are times of reformation, Heb. 9. 10. The law of Christ tends to reinstate man in his primitive integrity; the law of love, conjugal love, is no new commandment, but was from the beginning. If we consider what mischiefs to families and societies, what confusion and disorder, would follow upon arbitrary divorces, we shall see how much this law of Christ is for our own benefit, and what a friend Christianity is to our secular interests.

The law of Moses allowing divorce for the hardness of men’s hearts, and the law of Christ forbidding it, intimate, that Christians being under a dispensation of love and liberty, tenderness of heart must be their rule, by which they must deal with one another, not be hard-hearted, like Jews, for God has called us to peace. There will be no occasion for divorces, if we forbear one another, and forgive one another, in love, as those that are, and hope to be, forgiven, and have found God not forward to put us away, Isa. 50. 1. No need of divorces, if husbands love their wives, and wives be obedient to their husbands, and they live together as heirs of the grace of life: and these are the laws of Christ, such as we find not in all the law of Moses.

V. Here is a suggestion of the disciples against this law of Christ; (v. 10.) If the case of a man be so with his wife, it is better not to marry. It seems, the disciples themselves were loath to give up the liberty of divorce, thinking it a good expedient for preserving comfort in the married state; and therefore, like sullen children, if they may not have what they would, they will have nothing at all; if they may not be allowed to put away their wives when they please, they will have no wives at all; though, from the beginning, when no divorce was allowed, God said, It is not good for man to be alone, and blessed them, pronounced them blessed, who were thus strictly joined together; yet, unless they may have a liberty of divorce, they think it is good for a man not to marry. Note, 1. Corrupt nature is impatient of restraint, and would fain break Christ’s bonds in sunder, and have a liberty for its own lusts. 2. It is a foolish, peevish thing for men to abandon the comforts of this life, because of the crosses that are commonly woven in with them. As if we must needs go out of the world, because we lose not every thing to our mind in the world; or must enter into no useful calling or condition, because it is made our duty to abide in it. No, whatever our condition is, we must bring our minds to it, be thankful for its comforts, submissive to its crosses, and, as God has done, set the one over against the other, and make the best of that which is, Eccles. 7. 14.

VI. Christ’s answer to this suggestion, (v. 11, 12.) in which,

1. He allows it good for some not to marry; He that is able to receive it, let him receive it. Christ allowed what the disciples said, It is good not to marry; not as an objection against the prohibition of divorce, as they intended it, but as giving them a rule, (perhaps no less unpleasing to them,) that they who have the gift of continence, and are not under any necessity of marrying, do best if they continue single; (1 Cor. 7. 1.) for they that are unmarried have opportunity, if they have but a heart, to care more for the things of God, than they may please the Lord; (1 Cor. 7. 32, 34.) being less encumbered with the cares of this life, and having a greater vacancy of thought and time to mind better things. The increase of grace is better than the increase of the family, and fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, is to be preferred before any other fellowship.

2. He disallows it, as utterly mischievous, to forbid marriage, because all men cannot receive this saying; indeed few can, and therefore the cross of the married state must be borne, rather than that men should run themselves into temptation, to avoid them; better marry than burn.

Christ here speaks of a two-fold unfruitfulness to marriage:

(1.) That which is a calamity by the providence of God; such as those labour under, who are born childless, or that amongst those who, being incapable of answering one great end of marriage, ought not to marry. But to that calamity let them oppose the opportunity that there is in the single state, of serving God better, to balance it.

(2.) That which is a virtue by the grace of God; such is theirs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. This is meant of an unfruitfulness for marriage, not in body, (which some, through ignorance of Scripture, have foolishly thought,) but in mind. Those have thus made themselves eunuchs, who have attained a holy indifference to all the delights of the married state, have a fixed resolution, in the strength of God’s grace, wholly to abstain from them; and by fasting, and other instances of mortification, have subdued all desires toward them. These are they that can receive this saying; and yet those are not to bind themselves by a vow that they will never marry, only that, in the mind they are now in, they purpose not to marry.

Now, [1.] This affection to the single state must be given of God; for none can receive it, save they to whom it is given. Note, Contemplity is a special gift of God to some, and not to others; and when a man, in the single state, finds, by experience, that he has this gift, he may determine with himself, and
(as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 7. 57.) stand steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but having power over his own will, that he will keep himself so. But men, in this case, must take heed lest they boast of a false gift, Prov. 23. 14.

2. The law or grace must be chosen for the kingdom of God's sake; in those who resolve never to marry, only that they may save charges, or may gratify a morose, selfish humour, or have a greater liberty to serve other lusts and pleasures, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is an ill-natured vice; but when it is for religion's sake, not as in itself a meritorious act, (which the papists make it,) but only as a means to keep our minds more, entirely for, and give the more intent upon, the services of religion, and having no families to provide for, we may do the more in works of charity, then it is approved and accepted of God. Note, That condition is best for us, and to be chosen and stuck to accordingly, which is best for our souls, and tends most to the preparing of us for, and the preserving of us to, the kingdom of heaven.

13. Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. 14. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15. And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

We have here the welcome which Christ gave to some little children that were brought to him. Observe, 1. The faith of those that brought them. How many there were, that were brought, we are not told; but they were so little as to be taken up in arms, a year old, it may be, or two at most. The account here given of it, is, that there were brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray, v. 13. Probably they were their parents, guardians, or nurses, that brought them; and herein, 1. They testified their respect to Christ, and the value they had for his favour and blessings. Note, Those who glorify Christ by coming to him themselves, should further glorify him by bringing all they have, or have influence upon, to him likewise. Thus give him the honour of his unspeakable riches of grace, his over-flowing, never-failing fulness. We cannot better honour Christ than by making use of him. 2. They did a kindness to their children, not doubting but they would fare the better, in this world and the other, for the blessing and prayers of the Lord Jesus, whom they looked upon at least as an extraordinary Person, as a Prophet, if not as a Priest and King; and the blessings of such were valued and desired. Others brought their children to Christ, to be healed when they were sick; but these children were under no present malady, only they desired a blessing for them. Note, It is a good thing to bring our children to Christ, or to God, and so lay hold of the promises to our children, before we are driven to him (as we say) by woe-need; not only to visit him when we are in trouble, but to address ourselves to him in a sense of our general dependence on him, and of the benefit we expect by him, this is pleasing to him.

They desired that he would put his hands on them, and pray. Imposition of hands was a ceremony used, especially in paternal blessing. Joseph used it when he blessed and adopted the sons of Joseph, Gen. 48. 14. It intimates something of love and familiarity mixed with power and authority, and bespeaks an efficacy in the blessing. Whom Christ prays for in heaven, he puts his hand upon by his Spirit. Note, (1.) Little children may be brought to Christ as needing, and being capable of receiving, blessings from him, and having an interest in his intercession. (2.) Therefore they should be brought to him. We cannot do better for our children than to commit them to the Lord Jesus, to be brought upon, and prayed for, by his name. If he can do nothing for them, it is Christ only that can command the blessing.

II. The fault of the disciples in rebuking them. They discomfaced the address as vain and frivolous, and reproved them that made it as impertinent and troublesome. Either they thought it below their Master to take notice of little children, except any thing in particular alien them; or they thought he had too long abridged his other works, and would not have diverted him from it; or, they thought if such an address as this were encouraged, all the country would bring their children to him, and they should never see an end of it. Note, It is well for us, that Christ has more love and tenderness in him than the best of his disciples have. And let us learn of him not to discomfaced any willing, well-meaning souls in their inquiries after Christ, though they are but weak. If he do not break the bruised reed, we should not. Those that seek unto Christ, must not think it strange if they meet with opposition and rebuke, even from good men, who think they know the mind of Christ better than they do.

III. The favour of our Lord Jesus. See how he carried it here.

1. He blessed the disciples; (v. 14.) Suffer little children, and forbid them not; and he rectifies the mistake they went upon, Of such is the kingdom of heaven. Note, (1.) The children of believing parents belong to the kingdom of heaven, and are members of the visible church. Of such, not only of such in disposition and affection, (that might have served for a reason why doves or lambs should be brought to Christ,) but of such in age, is the kingdom of heaven; to them pertain the privileges of visible church-membership, as among the Jews of old. The promise is to you, and to your children. I will be a God to thee and thy seed. (2.) That for this reason they are welcome to Christ, who is ready to entertain those who, when they cannot come themselves, are brought to him. And this, [1.] In respect to the little children themselves, whom he has upon him as objects of his special, and especially a child, who has participated of the malignant influences of the first Adam's sin, must needs share in the riches of the second Adam's grace, else what would come of the apostle's parallel, 1 Cor. 15. 22. Rem. 5. 14, 15, &c. Those who are given to Christ, as part of his purchase, he will in no wise cast out. [2.] With an eye to the faith of the parents that brought them, and presented them as living sacrifices. Parents are trustees of their children's wills, are empowered by nature to transact for their benefit; and therefore Christ accepts their dedication of them as their act and deed, and will own these dedicated things in the day he makes up his jewels. [3.] Therefore he takes ill of those who forbid them, and exclude those whom he has received; who cast them out of heaven, and say, Ye are no part in the Lord; (see Jesh. 22. 27.) and who forbid water, that they should be baptized, who, if that promise be fulfilled, (Isa. 44. 3.) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, for aught we know.

2. He received the little children, and did as he was desired; he laid his hands on them, that is, he blessed them. The strongest believer lives not so much for the living Christ as being apprehended of him, (Phil. 3. 12.) not so much by knowing God as by being known of him; (Gal. 4. 9.) and this the least child is capable of. If they cannot stretch out their hands to Christ, yet he can lay his hands on them, and so make them his own, and own them for his own.
do, that I may have eternal life? By this it appears,  
[1.] That he had a firm belief of eternal life; he  
was no Sadducee. He was convinced that there is  
a happiness prepared for those in the other world,  
who are prepared for it in this world. [2.] That  
he was concerned to make it sure to himself that  
he should live and was convinced that he could  
enumerate, or count the delights of that life  
more than of any of the delights of this life. It was  
a rare thing for one of his age and quality to appear  
so much in care about another world. The rich  
are apt to think it below them to make such an  
inquiry as this; and young people think it time enough  
yet; but here was a young man, and a rich man,  
solicitous about his soul and eternity. [3.] That he  
was sensible that he must, for sake, some good  
things, for the attainment of this happiness. It is  
by patient continuance in well-doing, that we seek  
for immortality, Rom. 2. 7. We must be doing, and  
doing that which is good. The blood of Christ is  
the only purchase of eternal life, (he merited it for  
us,) but obedience to Christ is the appointed way to  
it, Heb. 3. 9. [4.] That he was, or at least thought  
himself, willing to do what was to be done for the  
obtaining of this eternal life. Those that know what  
that involves, and what it is to come short of it,  
will be glad to accept of it upon any terms.  
Such a holy violence does the kingdom of heaven  
suffer. Note, While there are many that say,  
Who will show us any good? our great inquiry should be,  
What shall we do, that we may have eternal life?  
What shall we do, to be for ever happy, happy  
in another world? For this world has not that in it,  
that will make us happy.  
[2.] The encouragement that Jesus Christ gave to  
this address. It is not his manner to send any away  
with an answer, that come to him on such an errand,  
for nothing pleases him more, v. 17. In his answer,  
(1.) He tenderly assists his faith; for, doubtless,  
he did not mean it for a reproach, when he said,  
Why callest thou me good? But he would seem to  
find that faith in what he said, when he called him  
good Master, which the gentleman perhaps was not  
conscious to himself of; he intended no more than  
to own and honour him as a good man, but Christ  
would lead him to own and honour him as a good God;  
for there is none good but one, that is God. Note,  
As Christ is graciously ready to make the best that  
he can of what is said or done amiss; so he is ready to  
make the most that can be of what is well said and  
well done. His constructions are often better than  
our intentions, and what we do for the evil,  
where he gives the meat, though you little thought it  
was to me."  
Jesus will have this young man either know  
him to be God, or not call him good; to teach us  
to transfer to God all the praise that is at any time  
given to us. Do any call us good? Let us tell them  
all goodness is from God, and therefore not to us,  
but to him give glory. All crowns must lie before  
his throne. Note, God only is good, and there is  
one name, truly, originally, and necessarily,  
God only. His goodness is of and from himself,  
and all the goodness in the creature is from him;  
he is the Fountain of Goodness, and whatever the  
streams are, all the springs are in him, Jam. 1. 17.  
He is the great Pattern and Sample of goodness,  
by him all goodness is to be measured; that is good,  
which is like him, and agreeable to his mind. We  
in our language call him God, because he is good.  
This, he foretells, would be the title of his  
mission—The Brightness of his glory, (and his goodness is his  
glory,) and the express Image of his person, and  
therefore fitly called good Master.  
(2.) He plainly directs his practice, in answer to  
his question. He started that thought of his being  
good, and therefore God, but did not stay upon it,  
lest he should seem to divert from, and so to drop  
the main question, as many do in needless disputes and  

strifes of words. Now Christ’s answer is, in short, this, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

[1.] The end proposed is, entering into life. The young man, in his question, speaks of eternal life. Christ, in his answer, speaks of life; to teach us, that eternal life is the only true life. The words concerning that are the words of this life, Acts 5. 20. The present life scarcely deserves the name of life, for the present life is a day for day, not a life. Then the spiritual life is the beginning and earnest of eternal life. He desired to know how he might have eternal life; Christ tells him how he might enter into it: we have it by the merit of Christ, a mystery which was not as yet fully revealed, and therefore Christ waves that; but the way of entering into it, is, by obedience, and Christ directs us in that. Previous to this, we have a word (1 Cor. 15. 13), and they only shall then enter into life that do their duty; it is the diligent, faithful servant that shall then enter into the joy of his Lord, and that joy will be his eternal life. There is an entrance into life now; who have believed, do enter into rest, Heb. 4. 3. We have peace, and comfort, and joy, in the believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, and to this also some obedience is indispensably necessary.

[2.] The way prescribed is, keeping the commandments. Note, Keeping the commandments of God, according as they are revealed and made known to us, is the only way to life and salvation; and sincerity herein is accepted through Christ as our gospel-perfection, provision being made of pardon, upon repentance, wherein we come short. Through Christ we are delivered from the condemning power of the law, but the commanding power of it is lodged in the hand of the Mediator, and under that, in that hand, we still are under the law to Christ, (1 Cor. 9. 12.) under it as a rule, though not as a covenant. Keeping the commandments includes faith in Jesus Christ, for that is the great commandment, (John 14. 23.) and it was one of the laws of Moses, that, when the great Prophet should be raised up, they should obey him. Here it is said, that he is here and forever, it is not enough for us to know the commandments of God, but we must keep them, keep in them as our way, keep to them as our rule, keep them as our treasure, and with care, as the apple of our eye.

[3.] At his further instance and request, he mentions some particular commandments which he must keep: (v. 18, 19.) The young man says unto him, Which? Note, Those that would do the commandments of God, must seek them diligently, and enquire after them, what they are. Ezra set himself to seek the law, and to do it, Ezra 7. 10. “There were many commandments in the law of Moses; good Master, let me know which those are, the keeping of which is necessary to salvation.”

To this Christ replies, which concerns our own and our neighbour’s life; Thou shalt do no murder. Secondly, Our own and our neighbour’s chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thirdly, Our own and our neighbour’s wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; Thou shalt not steal. Fourthly, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour’s good name; Thou shalt not bear false witness, neither for thyself nor against thy neighbour; for so it is here left at large. Fifthly, That which concerns the duties of particular relations; Honour thy father and mother. Sixthly, That comprehensive law of love, which is the spring and summary of all these duties, whence they all flow, on which they are all founded, and in which they are all fulfilled; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, (Gal. 5. 14. Rom. 13. 9.) that royal law, Jam. 2. 8. This is that comes in here, not as the sum of the second table, but as the particular import of the tenth commandment; Thou shalt not covet, which, in Mark, is, Defraud not; intimating that it is not lawful for me to design advantage or gain to myself by the diminution or loss of another; for that is to covet, and to love myself better than my neighbour, whom I ought to love as myself, and to treat as I would have him treat me.

Our Saviour here specifies second-table duties only; not as if the first were of less account, but, 1. Because they that now sat in Moses’s seat, either wholly neglected, or greatly corrupted, these precepts in their preaching. While they pressed the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin, judgment, and mercy, and faith, the summary of second-table duties, they neglected the first; Their preaching ran out all in rituals, and nothing in morals; and therefore Christ pressed that most, which they least, insisted on. As one truth, so one duty, must not justly out another, but each must know its place, and be kept in it; but equity requires that that be helped up, which is most in danger of being thrust out. That is the present truth which we are called to hear and to do. Some things are not only as opposed, but which is neglected. 2. Because he would teach him, and us all, that moral honesty is a necessary branch of true christianity, and to be minded accordingly. Though a mere moral man comes short of being a complete christian, yet an immoral man is certainly no true christian; for the grace of God teaches us to live soberly and righteously, as well as godly. Nay, though first-table duties have in them some of the essence of religion, yet second-table duties have in them more of the evidence of it. Our light burns in love to God, but it shines in love to our neighbour.

II. See here how he came short, though he bid thus fair, and wherein he failed; he failed by two things.

1. By pride, and a vain conceit of his own merit and strength; this is the ruin of thousands, who keep themselves miserable by fancying themselves happy. When Christ told him what commandments he must keep, he answered very scornfully, All these things have I kept from my youth up, v. 20.

Now, (1.) According as he understood the law, as prohibiting only the outward acts of sin, I am apt to think that he said true, and Christ knew it, for he was, as is said in Mark, He loved him; so far was very good and pleasing to Christ. St. Paul reckons it a privilege, not contemptible in itself, though it was dress in comparison with Christ, that he was, as touching the righteousness that is in the law, blameless, Phil. 3. 6. His observance of these commandments was universal; All these have I kept; it was early and constant; from my youth up. This is the same as our text, for in the same word, Mat. 19. 21, A. M. he specifies several, especially the commandments of the second table. First, That which concerns our own and our neighbour’s life; Thou shalt do no murder. Secondly, Our own and our neighbour’s chastity, which should be as dear to us as life itself; Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thirdly, Our own and our neighbour’s wealth and outward estate, as hedged about by the law of property; Thou shalt not steal. Fourthly, That which concerns truth, and our own and our neighbour’s good name; Thou shalt not bear false witness,
further what his duty was; *What lack I yet?* He was convinced that he wanted something to fill up his works before God, and was therefore desirous to know it, because, if he was not mistaken, he had all that he was wont to fall. He being now attainted, he thus seemed to press forward. And he applied himself to Christ, whose doctrine was supposed to improve and perfect the Mosaic institution. He desired to know what were the peculiar precepts of his religion, that he might have all that was in them to polish and accomplish him. Who could bid fairer? But (2.) Even in this that he said, he discovered his own failing. *All these have I kept; what lack I yet?* he would have said, with shame and sorrow, *All these have I broken, what shall I do to get my sins pardoned?* 

[2.] Take it how you will, what he said savoured of pride and vainglory, and had in it too much of that boasting which is excluded by the law of faith, (Rom. 3. 27.) and which excludes from justification, Luke 18. 11, 14. He valued himself too much, as the Pharisees did, upon the plausibleness of his profession before men, and was proud of that, which spoiled the acceptableness of it. That word, *What lack I yet?* perhaps was not so much a desire of further perfection, as a demand of the praise of the world. *Sell thou that which is thine own, and wax rich, that thou mayest do good.* Christ waved the mower of his boasted obedience to the law, and let that drop, because this would be a more effectual way of discovering him than a dispute of the extent of the law. *Come,* saith Christ, *if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast.* He bid him divide among the poor, and himself to show him any one instance wherein he was deficient. 

2. He came short by an inordinate love of the world, and his enjoyment in it. This was the fatal rock on which he split. Observe, 

(1.) How he was tried in this matter; (v. 21.) *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.* There was a mixture of what he had said before, expressing the bulk of what he had in the world, as was necessary to as it was to the other disciples to quit their callings; but of it is required that we follow Christ, that we only attend upon his ordinances, strictly conform to his pattern, and cheerfully submit to his disposals, and by upright and universal obedience to observe his statutes, and keep his laws; and all this from a principle of love to him, and dependence on him, and with the power of the Holy Ghost in us, and much more in competition with him. This is to *follow Christ fully.* To sell all, and give to the poor, will not serve, unless we come, and follow Christ. If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love, it profits me nothing. Well, on these terms, and on no lower, is salvation to be had; and they are very easy and reasonable terms, and will appear so to those who are brought to be glad of it upon any terms. 

(2.) See how he was discovered. This touched him in a tender part; (v. 22.) *When he heard that saying, he went away sorrowful,* for he had great possessions. 

[1.] He was a rich man, and loved his riches, and therefore went away. He did not like eternal life upon these terms. Note, First, Those who have much in the world, are in the greatest temptation to love it, and to set their hearts upon it. Such is the heart-settling influence of worldly wealth, that those who want it least, desire it most; when riches increase, then is the danger of setting the heart upon them, Ps. 62. 10. If he had had but two mites in all the world, and had been commanded to give them to the poor, or but one handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, and had been hidden, to make a cake of that for a poor widow, he, one world-think, had been much greater, and yet those trials have been overcome; (Luke 21. 4. and 1 Kings 17. 14.) which shows that the love of the world draws stronger than the most pressing needs.
cies. Secondly, The reigning love of this world keeps many from Christ, who seem to have some good desires toward him. A great estate, as to those who are got above it, is a great furnishing; so to those who are entangled in the love of it, it is a great hinderance, in the way to heaven.

Yet something of honesty there was in it, that when he did not like the terms, he went away, and would not pretend to that which he could not find in his heart to come up to the strictness of; better so, than do as Demas did, who, having known the way of righteousness, afterward turned aside, out of love to this present world, to the greater scandal of profession; since he could not be a complete christian he would not be a hypocrite.

[2.] Yet he was a thinking man, and well inclined, and could, after his way sorrowful. He had a leaning toward Christ, and was loath to part with him. Note, Many a one is ruined by the sin he commits with reluctance; leaves Christ sorrowfully, and yet is never truly sorry for leaving him, for, if he were, he would return to him. Thus this man's wealth was vexation of spirit to him, then when it was his temptation. What then would the sorrow be afterward, when his possessions would be gone, and all hopes of eternal life gone too?

23. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you. That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 25. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? 26. But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. 27. Then answered Peter, and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore? 28. And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. 30. But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon occasion of the rich man's breaking with Christ.

1. Christ took occasion from thence to show the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, v. 23, 26. 1. That it is a very hard thing for a rich man to get to heaven, such a rich man as this here. Note, From the harms and falls of others it is good for us to infer that which will be of caution to us.

Now, (1.) This is vehemently asserted by our Saviour, v. 23, 24. He said this to his disciples, who were all veryends and busy little in the world, to reconcile them to their condition with this, that the less they had of worldly wealth, the less hinderance they had in the way to heaven. Note, It should be an satisfaction to them who are in a low condition, that they are not exposed to the temptations of a high and prosperous condition: if they live more hardly in this world than the rich, yet, if withal they get more easily to a better world, they have no reason to complain. This saying is ratified, v. 23, Verily I say unto you. He that has reason to know what the way to heaven is, for he has laid it open, he tells us that this is one of the greatest difficulties in the way to heaven, which is not expected by those that are from them, and more loath to believe. Thus he speaks, yea, twice, that which man is loath to perceive, and more loath to believe.

[1.] He saith that it is a hard thing for a rich man to be a good christian, and to be saved; to enter into the kingdom of heaven, either here or hereafter. The way to heaven is to all a narrow way; and the gate that leads into it a strait gate; it is only given to those who are strictly observed, are expected from them than from others, which they can hardly do; and more sins do easily beset them, which they can hardly avoid. Rich people have great temptations to resist, and such as are very insinuating; it is hard not to be charmed with a smiling world; very hard, when we are filled with these hid treasures, not to take up with them for a portion. It is very difficult for people to part with their lands, their interest, their time, and their opportunities of doing and getting good, above others. It must be a great measure of divine grace that will enable a man to break through these difficulties.

[2.] He saith that the conversion and salvation of a rich man is so extremely difficult, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, v. 24. This is a proverbial expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the art and power of man; nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty. The difficulty of the salvation of apostates, (Heb. 6. 4.) and of old sinners, (Jer. 13. 25.) is thus represented as an impossibility. The salvation of any is so very difficult, (even the righteous scarcely are saved,) that where there is a peculiar difficulty, it is fitly set forth thus. It is very rare for a man to be rich, and not to set his heart upon his riches; and it is utterly impossible for a man that sets his heart upon his riches to get to heaven; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, I John 2. 15. James 4. 4. First, The way to heaven is very fitly compared to a needle's eye, wherein not a camel can get in through. Secondly, A rich man is fitly compared to a camel, a beast of burden, for he has riches, as a camel has his load; he carries it, but it is another's, he has it from others, spends it for others, and must shortly leave it to others; it is a burden, for men load themselves with thick clay, Hab. 2. 26. A camel is a large creature, but unmindful.

(v. 25.) This is very much wondered at, and scarcely credited by the disciples; v. 25. They were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? Many surprising truths Christ told them, which they were astonished at, and knew not what to make of; this was one, but their weakness was the cause of their wonder. It was not in contradiction to Christ, but for awakening to themselves, that the saying was, Who then can be saved? Note, Considering the many difficulties that are in the way of salvation, it is really strange that any are saved. When we think how good God is, it may seem a wonder that so few are his; but when we think how bad man is, it is more a wonder that so many are, and Christ will be eternally admired in them. Who can then be saved? Since so many are rich, and have great possessions, and so many more would be rich, and are well affected to great possessions; who can be saved? If riches are a hinderance to rich people.
are not pride and luxury incident to those that are not rich, and as dangerous to them; and who then can get to heaven? This is a good reason why rich people should strive against the stream.

2. That, though it be hard, yet it is not impossible, for the rich to be saved; (v. 26.) Jesus beheld them, turned and looked wistfully upon his disciples, to shame them out of their fond conceit of the advantages rich people had in spiritual things. He beheld them in their sin that had a root, in their difficulty, and were in a fair way for heaven, and the more so because poor in this world; and he said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. This is a great truth in general, that God is able to do that which quite exceeds all created power; that nothing is too hard for God, Gen. 18. 14. Numb. 11. 23. When men are at a loss, God is not, for his power is infinite and irresistible; hence it is impossible for any to save any. Who can be saved? say the disciples. None, saith Christ, by any created power. With men this is impossible: the wisdom of man would soon be encompassed in contriving, and the power of man baffled in effecting, the salvation of a soul. No creature can work the change that is necessary to the salvation of a soul, either in itself or in any one else. What? said Peter, is the way that our stream should be turned, so hard a heart softened, so stubborn a will bowed. It is a creation, it is a resurrection, and with men this is impossible; it can never be done by philosophy, medicine, or politics; but with God all things are possible. Note, The beginning, progress, and perfection of the work of salvation, depend entirely upon the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible. Faith is with himself and what he will do, (Phil. 4. 13.) and it is kept by it, 1 Pet. 1. 5. Job's experience of God's convincing, humbling grace, made him acknowledge more than any thing else, I know thou canst do every thing, Job 42. 2. (2.) To the salvation of rich people especially; it is impossible with men that such should be saved, but with God even this is possible; not that rich people should be saved in their worldliness, but that they should be saved from it. Note, The same faith and salvation of Christ has been kept by it, and is kept by it, and it is turned, not only to save those that are poor, but also to save those that are otherwise. Note, When the poor were bemoaned with the temptations of this world are not to be despaired of; it is possible; it may be brought about by the all-sufficiency of the divine grace; and when such are brought to heaven, they will be there everlasting monuments of the power of God. I am willing to think that in this word of Christ there is an intimation of mercy Christ had yet in store for this young gentleman, who was now gone away sorrowfully, but that the power of God will yet recover him, and bring him to a better mind.

II. Peter took occasion from hence to inquire what they should get by it, who had come up to these terms, upon which this young man broke with Christ, and had left all to follow him, v. 27. &c. We have here the disciples' expectations from Christ, and his promises to them.

1. What promises should they get from Christ? Peter, in the name of the rest, signifies that they depended upon him for something considerable in lieu of what they had left for him; Behold, we have forsaken all, and have followed thee; what shall we have therefore? Christ had promised the young man, that, if he would sell all, and come and follow him, he should have treasure in heaven: now Peter desires to know, (1.) Whether they had sufficiently come up to these terms; they had not sold all, (for they had many of them wives and families to provide for,) but they had forsaken all; they had not given it to the poor, but they had renounced it as far as it might be any way a hindrance to them in serving Christ. Note, When we hear what are the characters of those that shall be saved, it concerns us to inquire whether we, through grace, answer these characters. Now Peter hopes that, as to the main scope and intention of the condition, they had come up to it, for God had wrought in them a holy contempt of the world and the things that are seen, in comparison with Christ and the things that are not seen; and how this must be evidenced, no certain rule can be given, but according as we are called. Note, Lord, said Peter, we are not sufficient; Alas! it was but a poor all that they had forsaken; one of them had indeed quitted a place in the custom-house, but Peter and the most of them had only left a few brats and nets, and the appurtenances of a poor fishing-trade; and yet observe how Peter there speaks of it, as if it had been some mighty thing; Behold, we have forsaken all. Note, We are too apt to make the most of our services and sufferings, and to value the externals of Christ, and to think we have made him much our debtor. However, Christ does not upbraid them with this; though it was but little that they had forsaken, yet it was their all, like the widow's two mites, and was as dear to them as if it had been more, and therefore Christ took it kindly that they left it to follow him; for he accepts according to what a man hath.

2. What might they expect that treasure which the young man shall have if he will sell all. "Lord," saith Peter, "shall we have it, who have left all?" All people are for what they can get; and Christ's followers are allowed to consult their own true interest, and to ask, What shall we have? Christ looked at the joy set before him, and Moses at the recompense of reward. For this end it is set before us, that by a patient continuance in the same, Christ would encourage us to ask what we shall gain by leaving all to follow him; that we may see he doth not call us to our prejudice, but unspeakably to our advantage. As it is the language of an obedient faith to ask, "What shall we do?" with an eye to the precepts; so it is of a hoping, trusting faith, to ask, "What shall we have?" with an eye to the promises. But observe, the disciples had long since left all to ensure themselves in Christ's service; and therefore Christ needed not till now asked, What shall we have? Though there was no visible prospect of advantage by it, they were so well assured of his goodness, that they knew they should not lose by him at last, and therefore referred themselves to him, in what way he would make up their losses to them; minded their work, and asked not what should be their wages. Note, It honours Christ, to trust him and serve him, and to get not inordinate respects of him. Now that this young man was gone from Christ to his possessions, it was time for them to think which they should take to, what they should trust to. When we see what others keep by their hypocrisy and apostacy, it is proper for us to consider what we hope, through grace, to gain, not for, but by, our sincerity and constancy, and then we shall see more reason to pity them, who thus enervate their powers.

We have here Christ's promises to them, and to all others that tread in the steps of their faith and obedience. What there was either of vain-glory or of vain hopes in that which Peter said, Christ overlooks, and is not extreme to mark it, but takes this occasion to give the bond of a promise, (1.) To his immediate followers, v. 28. They had signalized their respect to him, as the first that followed him, and to them he promises not only treasure, but honour, in heaven; and here they have a grant or patent for it from him who is the Fountain of honour in that kingdom; Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration shall sit down upon twelve thrones. Observe, [1.] The preamble to the patent, or the certi-
deration of the grant, which, as usual, is a recital of their services; "You have followed me in the regeneration, and therefore this will I do for you." The time of Christ's appearing in this world was a time of regeneration, of reformation, (Heb. 9. 10.) when old things began to pass away, and all things to look new. The disciples had followed Christ when the church was yet in the embryo state, when the privilege of being near his heart was new; now they had more of the work and service of apostles than of the dignity and power that belonged to their office. Now they followed Christ with constant fatigue, when few did; and therefore on them he will put particular marks of honour. Note, Christ hath special favour for those who begin early with him, who trust him further than they can see him, as themselves, who followed him in the regeneration. Observe, Peter spake of their forsaking all, to follow him; Christ only speaks of their following him, which was the main matter.

[2.] The date of their honour, which fixes the time when it should commence; not immediately from the day of the date of these presents, no, they must continue a while in obscurity, as they were. First, That they must stay for their advancement till then. Note, As long as our Master's glory is delayed, it is fit that ours should be so too, and that we should wait for it with an earnest expectation, as of a hope not seen, Rom. 8. 19. We must live, and work, and suffer, in faith, and hope, and patience, which therefore must be tried by these delays. Secondly, That they must share Christ in his advancement; their honour must be a communion with him in his honour. They, having suffered with a suffering Jesus, must reign with a reigning Jesus. The apostles, both here and hereafter Christ will be all in all; we, all in all. So Peter must appear with him; (Col. 3. 4.) and this will be an abundant recompense not only for our loss, but for the delay; and when our Lord comes, we shall receive not only our own, but our own with usury. The longest voyages make the richest returns.

[3.] The honour itself hereby granted; Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It is hard to determine the particular sense of this promise, and whether it was not to have many accomplishments, which I see no harm in admitting. First, When Christ is ascended to the right hand of the Father, and sits on the throne of his glory, there the apostles shall receive power by the Holy Ghost; (Acts 1. 8.) shall be so much advanced above themselves as they are now, that they shall wait for it with an earnest expectation, in promoting the gospel; they shall deliver it with authority, as a judge from the bench; they shall then have their commission enlarged, and shall publish the laws of Christ, by which the church, God's spiritual Israel, (Gal. 6. 16.) shall be governed, and Israel according to the flesh, that continues in infidelity, with all others that do likewise, shall be con- demned. This is, in a manner, the same as is explained by Jer. 1. 10. Say, I have set thee over the nations; and Ezek. 20. 4. Wilt thou judge them? or Dan. 7. 18. The saints shall take the kingdom; and Rev. 12. 11. where the doctrine of Christ is called a crown of twelve stars. Secondly, When Christ appears for the destruction of Jerusalem, (ch. 24. 31.) then shall he send the apostles to judge the Jewish nation, because in that destruction their predictions, according to the word of Christ, would be accomplished. Thirdly, Some think it has reference to the conversion of the Jews, which is yet to come, and to which the apostles, with the last remaining of antichrist; so Dr. Whitby; and that "it respects the apostles' government of the twelve tribes of Israel, not by a resurrection of their persons, but by a reviviscence of that Spirit which resided in them, and of that purity and knowledge which they delivered to the world, and chiefly by admission of their gospel to be the standard of their faith, and the direction of their lives." For in that they have fully accomplished the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints in general shall judge the world, and the twelve apostles especially, as assessors with Christ, in the judgment of the great day, when all the world shall receive their final doom, and they shall ratify and applaud the sentence. But the tribes of Israel are named, partly because there should be an equality between the number of the twelve tribes and the number of the apostles; partly because the apostles were Jews, befriended them most, and yet were most spiritually persecuted by them; and it intimates that the saints will judge their acquaintance and kindness according to the flesh, and will, in the great day, judge those they had a kindness for; will judge their persecutors, who in this world have not so done.

But the general intention of this promise is, to show the glory and dignity reserved for the saints in heaven, which will be an abundant recompense for the disgrace they suffered here in Christ's cause. There are higher degrees of glory for those that have done and suffered most. The apostles in this world were hurried and tossed, there they shall sit down at rest and ease; here bonds and afflictions, and deaths did abide them, but there they shall sit on thrones of glory; here they were dragged to the bar, there they shall be advanced to the bench, here the twelve tribes of Israel trampled upon them, there they shall tremble before them. And will not this be recompense enough to make up all their losses and expenses for Christ? Luke 23. 29. [4.] The ratification of this grant; It is firm, it is irrevocable. Christ, who in the promise, we are told, "Verily I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, who am empowered to make this grant, I have said it, and it cannot be disannulled." (2.) Here is a promise to all others that should in like manner leave all to follow Christ. It was not peculiar to the apostles, to be thus preferred, but this honour have all his saints. Christ will take care they shall none of them lose by him; (v. 29.) Every one that has forsaken anything for Christ, shall receive.

[1.] Losses for Christ are here supposed. Christ had told them that his disciples must deny themselves in all that is done to them in this world; now here he specifies particulars; for it is good to count upon the worst. If they have not forsaken all, as the apostles, they have not followed him. (v. 29.) Every house supposes, and have turned themselves out, to wander in deserts; or dear relations, that would not go with them, to follow Christ; these are particularly mentioned, as hardiest for a tender, gracious spirit to part with; brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children; and lands are added in the close, the profits of which were the support of the family. Now, First, The loss of these things is commonly said to be for Christ's name's sake; else he doth not oblige himself to make it up. Many forsake brethren, and wife, and children, in humour and passion,
ST. MATTHEW, XX.

XX. If the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. 2. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. 3. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place. 4. And said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. 5. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. 6. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? 7. They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. 8. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. 9. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. 10. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. 11. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house. 12. Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. 13. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? 14. Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last even as unto thee. 15. Is it not lawful for me to do to what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil because I am good? 16. So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

This parable of the labourers in the vineyard is intended,

1. To represent to us the kingdom of heaven, (v. 1.) that is, the way and the method of the gospel-dispensation. The laws of this kingdom are not wrapped up in parables, but plainly set down, as in the sermon upon the mount; but the mysteries of that kingdom are delivered in parables, in sacraments, as here and ch. 13. The duties of Christianity are more necessary to be known than the notions of it; and yet the notions of it are more necessary to be illustrated than the duties of it; which is that which parables are designed for.

II. In particular, to represent to us that concerning the kingdom of heaven, which he had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, that many that are first shall be last, and the last first: with which this parable is connected; that truth, having in it a seeming contradiction, needed farther explication.

CHAP. XX.

We have four things in this chapter: 1. The parable of the labourers in the vineyard, v. 1. 16. II. A prediction of Christ’s approaching sufferings, v. 16. 19. III. The petition of two of the disciples, by their mother, reapaid, v. 29. 30. IV. The petition of the two blind men granted, and their eyes opened, v. 29. 31.
Nothing was more a mystery in the gospel-dispensation than the rejection of the Jews and the calling in of the Gentiles; so the apostle speaks of it; (Eph. 3. 3-6.) that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs: nor was anything more provoking to the Jews than the intimation of it. Now this seems to be the principal scope of this parable, to show that the Jews should not look to their own righteousness, but that the Gentiles should come at the call; but, at length, the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and they should receive it, and be admitted to equal privileges and advantages with the Jews; should be fellow-citizens with the saints, which the Jews, even those of them that believed, would be very much disgusted at, but without reason.

We are disposed to believe more generally, and shows us, 1. That God is Deftor to no man; a great truth, which the contents in our Bible give as the scope of this parable. 2. That many who begin last, and promise little in religion, sometimes, by the blessing of God, arrive at greater attainments in knowledge, grace, and usefulness, than others whose entrance was more early, and who promised fairer. Though Christ gets all the credit of conversion, yet it is the choice of the plain, outstaves. Cushi, John is swifter of foot, and comes first to the sepulchre: but Peter has more courage, and goes first into it. Thus many that are last, shall be first. Some make it a caution to the disciples, who had boasted of their timely and zealous embracing of Christ; they had left all to follow him; but let them look to it, that they keep up their zeal; let them pretty that of the prodigal son, where he that returned from his wandering, was as dear to his father as he was, that never went astray; first and last alike. 3. That the recompense of reward will be given to the saints, not according to the time of their conversion, but according to the preparations for it by grace in this world; not according to the seniority, (as Gen. 43. 33.) but according to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. He promised to the apostles, who followed him in the regeneration, the beginning of the gospel-dispensation, great glory; (ch. 19. 28.) but he now tells them that those who are in like manner faithful to him, even in the latter end of the world, shall have the same reward, shall sit with Christ on his throne, as well as the apostles, Rev. 2. 26-3. 21. Sufferers for Christ in the latter days shall have the same reward with the martyrs and confessors of the primitive church, and these are more celebrated; and faithful ministers now, the same with the first fathers.

We have two things in the parable; the agreement with the labourers, and the account with them. (1.) Here is the agreement made with the labourers; (v. 1-7.) and here it will be asked, as usual, who are they? A man that is a householder. God is the great Householder, and the man we are, and whom we serve; as a householder, he has work that he will have to be done, and servants that he will have to be doing; he has a great family in heaven and earth, which is named from Jesus Christ, (Eph. 3. 16.) which he is Owner and Ruler of. God hires labourers, not because he needs them or their services; (some say the righteous, what do we unto him?) but as some chieftains, generous householders keep poor men to work, in kindness to them, to save them from idleness and poverty, and pay them for working for themselves.

[2.] Whence are they hired? Out of the market-place, where, till they are hired into God’s service, they stand idle, v. 3. all the day idle, v. 6. Note, First, The soul of man stands ready to be hired into some service or other; it was (as all the creatures were) created to work, and is either a servant to iniquity, or a servant to righteousness, Rom. 6. 19. Thus he who goes into the field, to feed swine; God, by his gospel, is hiring labourers into his vineyard, to dress it, and keep it, paradise-work. We are put to our choice; for hired we must be; (Jesh. 24. 15.) Choose ye this day whom you will serve. Secondly, Till we are hired into the service of God, we are standing all the day idle; a sinful state, though a state of drudgery; but being thus employed, we are sinners; sinners are doing nothing, nothing to the purpose, nothing of the great work they were sent into the world about, nothing that will pass well in the account. Thirdly, The gospel-call is given to those that stand idle in the market-place. The market-place is a place of concourse, and there stood many idle; (Prov. 1. 20, 21.) it is a place of sport, there the children are playing; (ch. 11. 16.) and does the gospel call us out of the place of business, of noise and hurry; and from that we are called to retire. “Come, come from this marketplace.”

[3.] What are they hired to do? To labour in his vineyard. Note, First, The church is God’s vineyard; it is of his planting, watering, and fencing; and the fruits of it must be to his honour and praise. Secondly, We are called upon; all called upon are shepherds in this vineyard. The work of religion is vineyard-work, pruning, dressing, digging, watering, fencing, weeding. We have each of us our own vineyard to keep, our own soul; and it is God’s, and to be kept and dressed for him. In this work we must not be slothful, nor loiterers, but labourers, working, and working out our own salvation. Work for God will not add to teaching, he may go on till hell; but he that will go to heaven, must be busy.

[4.] What shall be their wages? He promises, First, A penny, v. 2. The Roman penny was, in our money, of the value of sevenpence halfpenny, a day’s wages for a day’s work, and the wages sufficient for the day’s maintenance. This doth not prove that the reward of our obedience to God is of works, or of debt, (so, it is of grace, free grace, Rom. 4, 6.) but there is no proportion between our services and heaven’s glory; no, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but it is to signify that there is a reward set before us, and a sufficient one. Secondly, Whosoever is right, v. 4, 7. Note, God will be sure not to be behindhand with any for the service they do him; never any lost by working for God. The crown set before us is a crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give.

[5.] For what term are they hired? For a day. It is but a day’s work, that is here done. The time of life is the day, in which we must work the works of him that sent us into the world. It is a short time; the reward is for eternity, the work is but for a day; man is said to accomplish, as a hireling, his day, Job 14, 6. This should unstop us to expedi- tion and diligence in our work, that we have but a little time to work in, and the night is hastening on, when no man can work; and if our great work be undone when our day is done, we are undone for ever. It should also encourage us in reference to the hardships and difficulties of our work, that it is but for a day; the approaching shadow, which the servant earnestly dearest, will bring it all into view, not only in the reign, and the reward of our work, Job 7, 2. Hold out, faith and patience, yet a little while.

[6.] Notice is taken of the several hours of th-
day, at which the labourers were hired. The apostles were sent forth at the first; and third hour of the gospel-day; they had a first and a second mission, while Christ was on earth, and their business was to call in the Jews; after Christ's ascension, about the sixth and ninth hour, they were sent out again on the same occasion, for a third time, just as they had done in the gospel to the Jews only, to them in Judea first, and afterward to them of the dispersion; but, at length, as it were about the eleventh hour, they called the Gentiles to the same work and privilege with the Jews, and told them that in Christ Jesus there should be no difference made between Jew and Greek.

But this may be, and commonly is, applied to the several acts of life, in which souls are converted to Christ. The common call is promising, to come work in the vineyard; but the effectual call is particular, and it is then effectual when we come at the call.

First, Some are effectually called, and begin to work in the vineyard when they are very young; and are sent in early in the morning, whose tender years are seasoned with grace, and the remembrance of their Creator. John the Baptist was sanctified from the womb, and therefore great; (Luke 1. 15.) Timothy from a child; (2 Tim. 3. 15.) Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth. Those that have such a journey to go, had need set out betimes, the sooner the better.

Secondly, Others are savingly wrought upon in middle age; Go work in the vineyard, at the third, sixth, or ninth hour. The power of divine grace is magnified in the conversion of some, when they are midway of their pleasures and worldly pursuits, as Paul. God has work for all ages; no time amiss to turn to God; note can say, "it is all in good time," for, whatever hour of the day it is with us, the time past of our life may suffice that we have served sin; Go ye also into the vineyard. God turns away none that are willing to be hired, for yet there is room.

Thirdly, Others are hired into the vineyard in old age, at the eleventh hour, when the day of life is far spent, and there is but one hour of the twelve remaining. None are hired at the twelfth hour; when life is done, opportunity is done; but, "while there is life, there is hope." 1. There is hope for old sinners; for if, in sincerity, they turn to God, they shall doubtless be accepted: true repentance is never too late. And, 2. There is hope of old sinners, that they may be brought to true repentance; nothing is too hard for God to do, it can change the Ethiopian's skin, and the leopards' spots; can set those to work, who have contracted a habit of idleness. Nicodemus may be born again when he is old, and the old man be put off, which is corrupt.

Yet let none upon this presumption, put off their repentance till they are old. These were sent into the vineyard, it is true, at the eleventh hour; but nobody had hired them, or offered to hire them, before; for then, there was a home to go to. It was because the gospel had not been before preached to them. Those that have had gospel-offers made them at the third, or sixth hour, and have resisted and refused them, will not have that to say for themselves at the eleventh hour, that these had; No man has hired us; nor can they be sure that any man will hire them at the ninth or eleventh hour; and therefore not to discourage any, but to assure them all, be it remembered, that now is the accepted time; if we will hear his voice, it must be today.

(2.) Here is the account with the labourers. Observe,

[1.] When the account was taken; when the evening was come, then, as usual, the day-labourers were called and paid. Note, Evening-time is the reckoning time; the particular account must be given up in the evening of our life; for after death cometh the judgment. Faithful labourers shall receive their reward when they die; it is deferred till then, that they may wait with patience for it, but no longer; for God will observe his own rule, The hire of the labourers shall be paid them with the eleventh hour, See Deut. 24. 15. When Paul, that faithful labourer, departs, he is with Christ presently.

The payment shall not be wholly deferred till the morning of the resurrection; but then, in the evening of the world, will be the general account, when every one shall receive according to the things done in the body. When time ends, and with it the world of work and opportunity, then the state of retribution commences; then call the labourers, and give them their hire. Ministers call them into the vineyard, to do their work; death calls them out of the vineyard to receive their penny: and those to whom the call into the vineyard is effectual, the call out of it will be joyful. Observe, They did not come for their pay till they were called; we must with patience wait God's time for our rest and recompense; go by our master's clock. The last trumpet, at the great day, shall call the labourers, 1 Thess. 4. 16. They shall then call, saith the good and faithful servant, and I will answer. In calling the labourers, they must begin from the last, and so to the first. Let not those that come in at the eleventh hour, be put behind the rest, but lest they should be discouraged, call them first. At the great day, though the dead in Christ shall rise first, yet they which are alive and remain, at the coming of the Lord (the eleventh hour of its day) comes, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds; no preference shall be given to seniority, but every man shall stand in his own lot at the end of the days.

[2.] What the account was; and in that observe,

First, The general pay; (v. 9, 10.) They received every man a penny. Note, All that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, shall undoubtedly obtain eternal life; (Rom. 2. 7.) not as wages for the value of their work, but as the gift of God. Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. Those that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of the highways and the hedges, shall sit down with Abra- ham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the same feast, ch. 8. 11. In heaven, every vessel will be full, brim-full, though the vessels be full, and the large, the small, the jars, and the basins, no preferment is made. But it is also, in the distributions of future joys, as it was in the gathering of the manna, he that shall gather much, will have nothing over, and he that shall gather little will have no lack, Exod. 16. 18. Those whom Christ fed miraculously, though of different sizes, men, women, and children, did all eat, and were filled.

The giving of a whole day's wages to those that had not done the tenth part of a day's work, is designed to shew, that God distributes his rewards by the measure of our faithfulness, and sovereignly, and not of debt. The best of the labourers, and those that begin soonest, having so many empty spaces in their time, and their works not being filled up before God, may truly be said to labour in the vineyard scarcely one hour of their twelve; but because we are under grace, and not under the law, even such defective services, done in sincerity, shall not only be accepted, but by free grace richly rewarded. Compare Luke 17. 7, 8, with Luke 12. 37.

Secondly, The particular pleading with those that were offended with this distribution in gavel-kind. The circumstances of this serve to adorn the para- ble; but the general scope is plain, that the last shall be first. We have here,

1. The offence taken; (v. 11, 12.) They murmur

* * A legal custom, according to which all the sons inherit equally. — Ed.
ed at the good man of the house; not that there is, or can be, any discontent or murmuring in heaven, for that is both guilt and grief, and in heaven there is neither; but there may be, and often are, discontent and murmuring concerning heaven and heavenly things, while they, in prospect, and by God's instalments, are the good things. This signifies the jealousy which the Jews were provoked to by the admission of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven. As the elderbrother, in the parable of the prodigal, repined at the reception of his younger brother, and complained of his father's generosity to him; so these labourers quarrelled with their master, and found fault, not because they had not enough, so much as because other servants had more than they had, and the prodigal's elder brother did, of their good services; We have borne the burden and Heat of the day; that was the most they could make of it. Sinners are said to labour in the very fire, (Hab. 2. 13.) whereas God's servants, at the worst, do but labour in the sun; not in the heat of the iron-furnace, but only in the heat of the day. Now these last have worked but one hour, and that too in the cool of the day; and yet thou hast made them equal with us.

The Gentiles, who are newly called in, have as much of the privileges of the kingdom of the Messiah as the Jews have, who have so long been labouring in the vineyard of the Old-Testament church, under the yoke of the ceremonial law, in expectation of that kingdom. Note, There is a great proneness in men, when they are at leisure, and where they have not too much, of the tokens of God's favour; and that we do too much, and others too little, in the work of God. Very apt we all are to undervalue the deserts of others, and to overvalue our own. Perhaps, Christ here gives an intimation to Peter, not to boast too much, as he seemed to do, of his having left all to follow Christ; as if, because he and the rest of them had borne the burden and heat of the day thus, they must have a heaven by themselves. It is hard for those that do or suffer more than ordinary for God, not to be elevated too much with the thought of it, and to expect to merit by it. Blessed Paul guarded against this, when, though the chief of the apostles, he owned himself to be nothing, to be less than the least of all saints.

2. The offence removed. Three things the master of the house urges, in answer to this ill-natured surmise.

(1.) That the complainant had no reason at all to say, he had any wrong done to him, v. 13, 14. Here he asserts his own justice; Friend, I do thee no wrong. He calls him friend, for in reasoning with others we should use soft words and hard arguments; if our inferiors are peevish and provoking, yet we should not thereby be put into a passion, but speak calmly to them. [1.] It is incontrovertible, true, that God can do no wrong. This is the prerogative of the King of kings. Is there unrighteousness with God? The apostle startles at the thought of it; God forbid! Rom. 3. 5, 6. His word should silence all our murmurings, that, whatever God doth to us, or withholds from us, he doth us no wrong. [2.] If God gives that which we others, which he denies to us, it is kindness to them, but no injustice to us, and bounty to another, while it is no injustice to us, we ought not to find fault with. Because it is free grace, that is given to these that have it, boasting is for ever excluded; and because it is free grace that is withheld from those that have it not, murmuring is for ever excluded. Thus shall every mouth be stopped, and all flesh shall confess that God is righteous. 

To convince the murmurer that he did no wrong, he refers him to the bargain, Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? And if thou hast what thou didst agree for, than hast no reason to cry out of wrong; thou shalt have what we agreed for.

Though God is a Debtor to none, yet he is graciously pleased to make himself a Debtor by his own promise, for the benefit of which, through Christ, believers agree with him, and he will stand to his part of the agreement. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we agreed with God for. First, Our worldly blessings, and those that God doth agree with us for, are the best things in the world; they choose their portion in this life; (Ps. 17. 14.) in these things they are willing to have their reward, (ch. 6. 2, 5.) their consolation, (Luke 6. 24.) their good things; (Luke 16. 25.) and with these they shall be put off, shall be cut off from spiritual and eternal blessings; and herein God doth them no wrong; they have what they chose, the penny they parted with, before they entered into the kingdom of heaven, and they themselves have decided it; it is conclusive against them. Secondly, Obdurate believers agree with God for their penny in the other world, and they must remember that they have so agreed. Didst not thou agree to take God's word for it? Thou didst; and wilt thou go and agree with the world? Didst not thou agree to take up with heaven as thy portion, thy all, and to take up with nothing short of it? And wilt thou seek for a happiness in the creature, or think from thence to make up the deficiencies of thy happiness in God?

He therefore, 1. Ties him to his bargain; (v. 14.) Take that thine is, and go thy way. If we understand it of that which is ours by debt or absolute propriety, it would be a dreadful word; we are all undone, if we be content with what we have that was not given us. The highest creature must go away into nothing, if he must go away with that only which is his own but if we understand it of that which is ours by gift, the free gift of God, it teaches us to be content with such things as we have. Instead of repining that we have no more, let us take what we have, and be thankful. If God be better in any respect to others than to us, yet we have no reason to complain while he is so much better to us than we deserve, in giving us our penny, though we are unprofitable servants. 2. He tells him that these he envied should fare as well as he did; I will give unto this last, even as unto thee; I am resolved I will. Note, The unchangeableness of God's pur poses in dispensing his gifts, should silence our murmurings. If he will do it, it is not for us to gainsay. I will be as willing to give, and who can turn him? Neither giveth he an account of any of his matters; nor is it fit he should.

(2.) He had no reason to quarrel with the master; for what he gave, was absolutely his own, v. 15. As before he asserted his justice, so here his sovereignty: Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Note, 1. God is the Owner of all good; his property in it is absolute, sovereign, and unlimited. 2. He may therefore give or withhold his blessings, as he pleases. What we have, is not our own, and therefore it is not lawful for us to do what we will with it; but what God has, is his own; and this will justify him, First, In all the dispensations of his providence; when God takes from us that which was dear to us, and which we could ill spare, we must silence our discontent with this; My hay do not what he will with his own? Abstain, sed et deduce. He hath taken away; but he originally gave. It is not for such depending creatures as we are to quar rel with our Sovereign. Secondly, In all the dispensions of his grace, God gives or withholds the means of grace, and the Spirit of grace, as he pleases. Not but that there is a counsel in every will of God, and what seems to us to be done arbitrarily, will appear to us to have a good end, when we have the holy ends. But this is enough to silence all murmurers and objectors, that God is sovereign Lord of all, and may do what he will with his own. We are in his hand, as clay in the hands of a potter; and
it is not for us to prescribe to him, or strive with him.  
(3.) He had no reason to envy his fellow-servant, or to grudge at him; or to be angry that he came into the vineyard more soberly; for he was not sober called; he had no reason to be angry that the master had given him wages for the whole day, when he had idled away the greatest part of it; for, Is thine eye evil, because I am good? See here,  
[1.] The nature of envy; "It is an evil eye."  
The eye is often both the inlet and the outlet of this sin.  
Saw that he was prospered, and he eyed him, than his gnawing of the flesh, 18, 9, 13.  
It is an evil eye, which is displeased at the good of others, and desires their hurt.  
What can have more evil in it? It is grief to ourselves, anger to God, and ill-will to our neighbour; and it is a sin that has neither pleasure, profit, nor honour, in it; it is an evil, an only evil.  
[2.] The aggravation of it; "It is because I am good."  
Envy is unlikeliness to God, who is good, and doeth good, and delighteth in doing good; nay, it is an opposition and contradiction to God; it is a dislike of his proceedings, and a displeasure at what he doeth, and is pleased with. It is a direct violation of both the two great commandments at once; both that of love to God, in whose will we should acquiesce, and love to our neighbour, in whose welfare we should rejoice. Thus man's badness takes occasion from God's goodness to be more exceeding sin.

Lastly, Here is the application of the parable, (v. 16.) in that observation which occasioned it; (ch. 19. 30.) So the first shall be last, and the last first. There were many that followed Christ now in the regeneration, when the gospel-kingdom was first set up, and these Jewish converts seemed to have got the start of others; but Christ, to obviate and silence their boasting, here tells them, that in the day of Christ's kingdom, many may be overtopped, even as the strongest will be overtopped by their successors in profession, and, though they were before others in profession, might be found inferior to them in knowledge, grace, and holiness. The Gentile church, which was as yet unborn, the Gentile world, which as yet stood idle in the marketplace, would produce greater numbers of eminent, useful christians, than were found among the Jews. More and more excellent shall be the children of the destitute, the poor, of Jerusalem.  

What knows but that the church, in its old age, may be more fat and flourishing than ever, to shew that the Lord is upright? Though primitive christianity had more of the purity and power of that holy religion than is to be found in the degenerate age wherein we live, yet what labourers may be sent into the vineyard in the eleventh hour of the church's day, in the Philadelphia period, and what plentiful effusions of grace may then be, above what has been yet, who can tell?  

2. That they had reason to fear, lest they themselves should be found hypocrites at last; for many are called, but few chosen. This is applied to the Jews; (ch. 22. 14.) it was so then, it is too true still; many are called with a common call, that are not chosen with a saving choice. All that are chosen from eternity, (v. 18.) are called, and chosen, in the fullness of time, (Rom. 8. 30.) so that those who are professionally calling sure, we make sure our election; (2 Pet. 1. 10.) but it is not so as to the outward call; many are called, and yet refuse, (Prov. 1. 24.) nay, as they are called to God, so they go from him, (Hos. 11. 2, 7.) by which it appears that they were not chosen, for the election will obtain, Rom. 11. 7. Notice, There are but few chosen Christians, in comparison with the many that are only called Christians; it therefore highly concerns us to build our hope for heaven upon the rock of an eternal choice, and not upon the sand of an external call; and we should fear lest we be found but seeming Christians, and so should really come short; nay, lest we be found blenished Christians, and so should seem to come short, Heb. 4. 1.  

17. And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, 13. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes, and they shall condemn him to death.  
And shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.

This is the third time that Christ gave his disciples notice of his approaching sufferings; he was now going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, and to offer up himself, the Great Passover; both must be done at Jerusalem, there the passover must be kept, (Deut. 12. 5.) and there a prophet must perish, because there the great Saviour sat, who were judges in that case, Luke 13. 33.  

Observe,  
1. The privacy of this prediction; He took the twelve disciples apart in the way. This was one of those things which were told them in darkness, in which they were afterward to speak in the light, ch. 10. 27. His secret was with them, as his friends, and this particularly. It was a hard saying, and, if any could bear it, they could. They would be more immediately exposed to peril with him, and therefore it was requisite that they should know of it, that being forewarned, they might be fore-armed. It was not fit to be spoken publicly as yet, 1. Because many, that were cool toward him, would hereby be made to be more full of fear, and to turn their backs upon him; the scandal of the cross would have frightened them from following him any longer. 2. Because many, that were hot for him, would hereby be driven to take up arms in his defence, and it might have occasioned an uproar among the people, (ch. 26. 5.) which would have been laid to his charge, if he had told them of it publicly before; and, besides that such methods are utterly disagreeable to the genius of his kingdom, which is not of this world, he never countenanced any thing which had a tendency to prevent his sufferings. This discourse was not in the synagogue, or in the house, but in the way, as they travelled along; which teaches us, in our walks or travels with our friends, to keep up such discourse as is good, and to the use of edifying. See Deut. 16. 7.  

II. The prediction itself, v. 18, 19. Observe,  
1. It is but a repetition of what he had once and again said before, ch. 16. 21.—17. 22, 23. This intimates that he not only saw clearly what troubles lay before him, but that his heart was upon his suffering work; it filled him, not with fear, then he would have studied to avoid it, and could have done it, but with desire and expectation; he spake thus frequently of his sufferings, because through them he was to enter into his glory. Note, It is good for us to be often thinking and speaking of our tribulations and of the sufferings which, it is likely, we may meet with betwixt this and the grave; and thus, by making them more familiar, they would become less formidable. This is one way of dying daily, and of taking up our cross daily, to be daily speaking of the cross, and of dying; which would come neither the sooner nor the surer, but much the better, for our thoughts and discourses of them;  
2. He is more particular here in foretelling his sufferings than any time before. He had said, (ch. 16. 21.) What he should suffer many things, and he
killed; and (ch. 17. 22.) that he should be betrayed into the hands of men, and they should kill him; but here he adds, that he shall be delivered to the Gentiles, that they shall mock him, and scourge him, and crucify him. These are frightful things, and the certain foresight of them was enough to damp an ordinary resolution, yet (as was foretold concerning him, Isa. 42. 4.) he did not fail, nor was discouraged; but the more clearly he foresaw his sufferings, the more cheerfully he went forth to meet them. He was ready when they should fall, by the chief priests and the Scribes; so he had said before, but here he adds, They shall deliver him to the Gentiles, that he might be the better understood; for the chief priests and Scribes had no power to put him to death, nor was crucifying a manner of death in use among the Jews. Christ suffered from the malice both of Jews and Gentiles, because he was to suffer for the salvation both of Jews and Gentiles; both had a hand in his death, because he was to reconcile both by his cross, Eph. 2. 16.

3. Here, as before, he annexes the mention of his resurrection and his glory to that of his death and sufferings; The third day he shall rise again. He still brings this in, (1.) To encourage himself in his sufferings, and to carry him cheerfully through them. He was resolved if they should kill him before he foresaw he should rise again, and rise quickly, the third day. He shall be straightway glorified, John, 13. 32. The reward is not only sure, but very near. (2.) To encourage his disciples, and comfort them, who would be overwhelmed and greatly terrified by his sufferings. (3.) To direct us, under all the sufferings of this present time, to keep up a believing prospect of the glory to be revealed, to look at the things that are not seen, that are eternal, which would enable us to call the present afflictions light, and but for a moment.

20. Then came to him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. 21. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. 22. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. 23. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. 24. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. 25. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 26. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 27. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. 28. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here is, first, the request of the two disciples to Christ, and the rectifying of the mistake upon which that was grounded, v. 26, 27. The sons of Zebedee were James and John, two of the first three of Christ’s disciples; Peter and they were his favourites; John was the disciple whom Jesus loved; yet none were so often reproved as they; whom Christ loved he reproved more than any. I. Here is the ambitious address they made to Christ—that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his kingdom, v. 20, 21. It was a great degree of faith, that they were confident of his kingdom, though now he appeared in meanness; but a great degree of ignorance, that they still expected a temporal kingdom with worldly power and power, when Christ had so often told them of sufferings and self-denial. In this they expected to be grandees. They ask not for employment in this kingdom, but for honour only; and no place would serve them, in this imaginary kingdom, but the highest, next to Christ, and above every body else. It is probable, that the last word in Christ’s foregoing discourse gave occasion to this request. They knew not then that his kingdom was not of this world, and therefore concluded that his resurrection would be his entrance upon his kingdom, and therefore were resolved to put in betimes for the best place; nor would they lose it for want of speaking early. What Christ said to comfort them, they thus abused, and were puffed up with. Some cannot bear comforts, but they turn them to a wrong purpose; as sweetmeats in a feverish man, produce bile. Now observe, 1. There was policy in the management in this address, that they put their mother on to present it, that it might be looked upon as her request, and not theirs. Though proud people think well of themselves, they would not be thought to do so, and therefore affect nothing more than a show of humility, (Col. 2. 18.) and others must be put on to court that honour for them, which they are ashamed to court for themselves. The mother of James and John was Salome, as appears by comparing ch. 27. 61. with Mark 15. 40. Some think she was daughter of Cleophas or Alpheus, and sister or cousin german to Mary the mother of our Lord. She was one of those women that attended Christ, and ministered to him; and they thought she had such an interest in him, that he could deny her nothing, and therefore they asked this of him. Adonijah had an unreasonable request to make to Solomon, he put Bathsheba on to speak for him. It was their mother’s weakness thus to become the tool of their ambition, which she should have given a check to. Those that are wise and good, would not be seen in an ill-favoured thing. In gracious requests, we should learn this wisdom, to desire the more proper persons of those that have an interest at the throne of grace; we should beg of our praying friends to pray for us, and reckon it a real kindness.

It was likewise policy to ask first for a general grant, that he would do a certain thing for them, not in faith, but in presumption, upon that general promise: Ask, and it shall be given you; in which is implied this qualification of our request, that it be according to the call of God, otherwise we ask and have not, if we ask to consume it upon our lusts, Jam. 4. 3.

2. There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition, to strive to excel others in grace and holiness. But it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others
in pomp and grandeur. Seest thou great things for thyself, when thou hast just now heard of the Master's being mocked, and scourged, and crucified? For shame! Seek them not, Jer. 43. 5.

II. Christ's answer to this address, (v. 22, 23.) directed not to the mother, but to the sons that set her up. "You must, therefore, be quiet and be silent. "Tell them, therefore, that it is the Spirit of the Lord which is sent to them by him, as he is in the heart of the "world, and that it is the Lord, who will send them. "They shall be given to you, as you shall stand before me; and it shall be given to you, as you stand before me, in the "world. "They shall be given to you, as you shall stand before me, in the world, as the Spirit of the Lord, which is sent to you, by him, as he is in the heart of the world. "Tell the sons that set her up, that it is the Spirit of the Lord which is sent to them by him, as he is in the heart of the world. "Tell them, therefore, that it is the Spirit of the Lord which is sent to them by him, as he is in the heart of the world."

1. How he reproved the ignorance and error of their petition; Ye know not what ye ask. (1.) They were much in the dark concerning the kingdom they and their eye upon the darkness that is in the world. They knew not what it was to sit on his right hand, and on his left; they talked of it as blind men do of colours. Our apprehensions of that glory which is yet to be revealed, are like the apprehensions which a child has of the preferments of grown men. If at length, through grace, we arrive at perfection, we shall then put away such childish fanciful visionary ideas, and our knowledge and intuition be as clear as the world. The disciples thought, when they had fasted, till they had for Christ, and had gone about the country a while preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and suffering were over, and it was now time to ask, What shall we have? As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined they were on parade, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note, [1.] We are all apt, when we are but girding on the harness, to boast as though we had put it off. [2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in that stead.

2. How he repressed the vanity and ambition of their request. They were pleasing themselves with the fancy of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in great state; now, to check this, he leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, and leaves them in the dark about their glory.

(1.) He leads them to the thoughts of their sufferings, which they were not so mindful of as they ought to be; when we come to see face to face, we shall know what we enjoy; but now, alas, we know not what we ask; we can but ask for the good as it lies in the promise, Tit. 1. 2. What it will be in the performance, eye has not seen, nor ear heard. (2.) They were much in the dark concerning the way to that kingdom. They know not what they ask, who ask for the end, but overlook the means, and so put asunder what God has joined together. The disciples thought, when they had fasted, till they had for Christ, and had gone about the country a while preaching the gospel of the kingdom, all their service and suffering were over, and it was now time to ask, What shall we have? As if nothing were now to be looked for but crowns and garlands; whereas there were far greater hardships and difficulties before them than they had yet met with. They imagined they were on parade, and they had yet but run with the footmen. They dream of being in Canaan presently, and consider not what they shall do in the swellings of Jordan. Note, [1.] We are all apt, when we are but girding on the harness, to boast as though we had put it off. [2.] We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in that stead.

Observe, [1.] How fairly he puts the matter to them, concerning these difficulties; (v. 22.) You would have had the best part of the honour in the kingdom; but are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? You talk of what great things you must have when you have your work done; but are you able to hold out to the end of it? Put the matter seriously to yourselves. These same two disciples once knew not what manner of spirit they were of, when they were disturbed with anger; (Luke 9. 55.) and now they were not aware what was amiss in their spirits, when they were lifted up with ambition. Christ sees that pride in us, which we discern not in ourselves.

Note. First, That to suffer for Christ, is to drink of a cup, and to be baptized with a baptism. In this description of sufferings, 1. It is true, that affliction doth absorb thespirits of the saints, and is drunk of, wornwood and gall, these waters of a full cup, that are wrung out to God's people; (Ps. 73. 10.) a cup of trembling indeed, but not of fire and brimstone, the portion of the cup of the wicked men, Ps. 11. 6. It is supposed to be a baptism, a washing with the waters of affliction; some are dipped in them, the waters compass them about even to the soul; (Jonah 2. 5.) others have but a sprinkling of them, but both are baptized, some are overwhelmed in them, as in a deluge, others ill wet, as in a sharp shower. But, 2. Even in this, consolation doth more abound. It is but a cup, not an ocean; it is but a draught, bitter perhaps, but we shall see the bottom of it: it is a cup in the hand of a Father; (John 18. 11.) and it is full of mixture, Ps. 75. 8. It is but a baptism; if dipped, that is the worst of it, not drowned; perplexed, but not in despair. Baptism is an ordinance by which we join ourselves to the Lord in covenant and communion; and so is suffering for Christ, Ezek. 20. 37. Isa. 48. 10. Baptism is "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace;" and so is suffering for Christ, for unto us it is given, Phil. 1. 29.

Secondly, It is to drink of the same cup that Christ drank of, and to be baptized with the same baptism that he was baptized with. It is supposed to be a bitter cup, and an unclean malefactor. But in all this he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was made sin for us. 2. It bespeaks the consolations of suffering Christians, that they do but pledge Christ in the bitter cup, are partakers of his sufferings, and fill up that which is behind of them; we must therefore arm ourselves with the same mind, and go to him without the camp. Thirdly, It is supposed to be often putting it to ourselves, whether we are able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with this baptism. We must expect suffering, and look upon it as a hard thing to suffer well, and as becomes us. Are we able to suffer cheerfully, and in the worst of times still to hold fast our integrity? What can we afford to part with for Christ? How far will we give him credit? Could I find in my heart to drink of a bitter cup, rather than let go my hold of Christ? The truth is, Religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing; but it is worth little, if it be not worth suffering for. Now let us sit down, and count the cost of dying for Christ, rather than denying him, and ask, Can we take him upon these terms?

[2.] See how boldly they engage for themselves, they said, in the midst of the assembly, of sitting on his right hand, and on his left; but at the same time they fondly hoped that they should never be tried. As before they knew not what they asked, so now they knew not what they answered. We are able; they would have done well to put in, "Lord, by thy strength, and in thy grace, we are able, otherwise we are not." But the same that was Peter's temptation, to be confident of his own sufficiency, and presume upon his own strength, was here the temptation of James and John; and it is a sin we are al-
prone to. They knew not what Christ's cup was, nor what his baptism, and therefore they were thus bold in promising for themselves. But these are commonly most confident, that are least acquainted with the case.

[3] See how plainly and positively their sufferings are here foretold; (v. 23) Ye shall drink of my cup. Sufferings foreseen will be more easily borne, especially if looked upon under a right notion, as drinking of his cup, and being baptized with his baptism. Christ began in suffering for us, and expects we should pledge him, in suffering for him. Christ knew how the first, that we must make the best of our way to heaven, which is, that ye shall suffer. James drank the bloody cup, first of all the apostles, Acts 12. 2. John, though at last he died in his bed, if we may credit the ecclesiastical historians, yet often drank of this bitter cup, as when he was banished into the isle of Patmos, (Rev. 1. 9.) and when (as they say) at Ephesus he was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but was miraculously preserved. He was, as the rest of the apostles, in deaths often. He took the cup, offered himself to the baptism, and it was accepted.

(2.) He leaves them in the dark about the degrees of their glory. To carry them cheerfully through their sufferings, it was enough to be assured that they should have a place in his kingdom. The lowest seat in heaven is an abundant recompence for all the labours of their calling in earth; and if they had understood, as they did not, the groves and preferences there, it was not fit there should be any intimation given for whom they were intended; for the immensity of their present state could not bear such a discovery with any evenness; "To sit on my right hand and on my left, is not mine to give, and therefore it is not for you to ask it or to know it; but it shall be given to them of whom it is prepared of my Father." Note, [1.] It is very probable that there are degrees of glory in heaven; for our Saviour seems to allow that there are some that shall sit on his right hand and on his left, in the highest places. [2.] As the future glory itself, so the degrees of it, are purposed and prepared in the eternal counsel of God; as the common salvation, so the more peculiar honours, are appointed, the whole affair is long since settled, and there is a certain measure of the stature, both in the place and person, Eph. 4. 13. [3.] Christ, in dispensing the fruits of his purchase, grants them exactly by the measures of his Father's purpose. It is not mine to give, save to them (so it may be read) for whom it is prepared. Christ has the sole power of giving eternal life, but then it is to as many as were given him, John 17. 2. It is not mine to give, that is, to promise now; that matter is already settled and concerted, and the Father and Son understand one another perfectly well in this matter. "It is not mine to give to those that seek and are ambitious of it, but to those that by great humility and self-denial are prepared for it." 111. Here are the reproof and instruction which Christ gave to the other ten disciples for their displeasure at the request of James and John. He had much to bear with in them all, they were so weak in judgment and grace, yet the more from sinners.

1. The fact that the ten disciples were in for it. 24.) They were moved with indignation against the two brethren; not because they were desirous to be preferred, which was their sin, and for which Christ was dispensed with them, but because they were desirous to be preferred before them, which was a reflection upon them. Many seem to have indignation at a man's sin; but it is not the sin, but because it touches them. They will inform against a man that swears; but it is only if he swear at them, and affront them, not because he dishonours God. Those disciples were angry at their brethren's ambition, though they themselves, may because they themselves, were as ambitious. Note, It is common for people to be angry at those sins in others, which they allow of and indulge in themselves. Those that are proud and covetous themselves do not care so much to others so. Nothing shakes the comfort among brethren, nor is the cause of more indignation and contention, than ambition, and desire of greatness. We never find Christ's disciples quarrelling, but something of this was at the bottom of it.

2. The check that Christ gave them, which was very gentle, rather by way of instruction what they should be, than by way of reprehension for what they were. He had reproved this very sin before, (Ch. 18. 3.) and said that they must be humble as little children; yet they relapsed into it, and yet he reproved them for it thus mildly.

He called them unto him, which intimates great tenderness and familiarity. He did not, in anger, bid them get out of his presence, but called them, in love, to come into his presence; for therefore he is fit to teach, and we are invited to learn of him, because he is meek and lowly in heart. What he had to say concerned both the two disciples and the ten, and therefore he will have them all together. And he tells them, that, whereas they were asking which of them should have dominion in a temporal kingdom, there was really no such dominion reserved for any of them. For,

[1.] They must not be like the princes of the Gentiles. Christ contrives that the Gentiles should be like the Gentiles, nor yet like princes of the Gentiles. Principality doth no more become ministers than Gentilism doth Christians.

Observe, [1.] What is the way of the princes of the Gentiles; (v. 25.) to exercise dominion and authority over their subjects, and (if they can but win the upper hand with a strong hand) over the another too. That which bears them up in it, is, that they are great and mighty, and great men think they may do any thing. Dominion and authority are the great things which the princes of the Gentiles pursue, and pride themselves in; they would bear sway, would carry all before them, have every body to truckle to them, and every sheaf bow to their's. They would have it cried before them, Bow the knee; like Nebuchadnezzar, who slew, and kept alive, at pleasure.

[2.] What is the will of Christ concerning his ministers and, in this matter.

First, It shall not be so among you. The constitution of the spiritual kingdom is quite different from this. You are to teach the subjects of this kingdom, to instruct and beseech them, to counsel and comfort them, to take pains with them, and suffer with them, not to exercise dominion or authority over them; you are not to lord it over God's heritage, (1 Pet. 5. 3.) but to labour in it. This forbids not only tyranny, and abuse of power, but the claim or use of any such secular authority as the princes of the Gentiles lawfully exercise. So hard it is for vain men, even good men, to have such authority, and not to be puffed up with it, and do more hurt than good with it, that our Lord Jesus saw fit wholly to banish it out of his church. Paul himself disallowed dominion over the church, 1 Cor. 1. 12. The pomp and grandeur of the princes of the Gentiles ill become Christ's disciples. Now, if there were no such power and honour intended to be in the church, it was nonsense for them to be striving who should have it. They knew not what they asked.

Secondly, How then shall it be among the disciples of Christ? Something of greatness among them Christ himself had intimated, and here he explains it; "He that will be great among you, that will be chief, that would really be so, and would be found to be so at last, let him be your minister, your ser
Here observe, 1. That the title of Christ's disciples to serve one another, for mutual edification. This includes both humility and usefulness. The followers of Christ must be ready to stoop to the meanest offices of love for the good one of another, must submit one to another, (1 Pet. 5. 5. Eph. 5. 21.) and edify one another, (Rom. 14. 19.) please one another for good, Rom. 15. 2. The great apostle made himself every one's servant; see 1 Cor. 9. 19. 2. It is the dignity of Christ's disciples faithfully to discharge this duty. The way to be great and chief is to be humble and serviceable. Those are to be best accounted of, and most respected, in the church, and will be so by all that understand things aright; not those that are dignified with high and mighty names, like the names of the great ones of the earth, that appear in pomp, and assume to themselves a power proportional, for he was that meek and humble and self-denying, and lay out themselves most to do good, though to the diminishing of themselves. These honour God most, and those will he honour. As he must become a fool, that would be wise, so he must become a servant, that would be chief. St. Paul was a great example of this; he laboured more abundantly than they all, made himself (as some would call it) a drudge to his work; and is not he chief? Do not call him an apostle, though he called himself less than the least? And perhaps our Lord Jesus had an eye to him, when he said, There were lost, that should be first; for Paul was one born out of due time; (1 Cor. 15. 8.) not only the youngest child of the family of the apostles, but a posthumous one, yet he became greatest. And perhaps he was for whom the first post of an apostle in Christ's kingdom was reserved, and prepared of his Father, not for James who sought it; and therefore, just before Paul began to be famous as an apostle, Providence ordered it so that James was cut off. (Acts 12. 1.) that in the college of the twelve Paul might be substituted in his room. 10. Never was there such an example of beneficence and usefulness as there was in the death of Christ, who gave his life a ransom for many. He lived as a servant, and went about doing good; but he died as a sacrifice, and in that he did the greatest good of all. He came into the world on purpose to give his life a ransom; it was first in his intention. The aspiring princes of the Gentiles make the lives of many a ransom for their own honour, and perhaps even for their preservation. Christ doth not do so; his subjects' blood is precious to him, and he is not prodigal of it; (Ps. 72. 14.) but, on the contrary, he gives his honour, and life too, a ransom for his subjects. Note, First, Jesus Christ laid down his life for a ransom. Our lives were forfeited into the hands of divine justice by sin. Christ, by parting with his life, made atonement for sin, and so rescued us; he was made Sin and a Curse for us, and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, Acts 20. 28. 1 Peter 1. 18. 19. Secondly, It was a ransom for many, sufficient for all, effectual for many; and, if for many, then, saith the poor doubting soul, "Why not for me?" It was for many, that by him many may be made righteous. These many were his seed, for which his soul travelled; (Isa. 53. 10. 11.) for many, so they will be when they come all together, though now they appear but a little flock. Now this is a good reason why we should not strive for predeency, because the cross is our banner, and our Master's death is our life. It is a good reason why we should study to do good, and, in consideration of the love of Christ in dying for us, not hesitate to lay down our lives for the brethren, 1 John 3. 16. Ministers should be more forward than others to serve and suffer for the good of souls, as blessed Paul was, Acts 20. 24. Phil. 2. 17. The nearer we are all concerned in, and the more we are advantaged by, the humility and humiliation of Christ, the more ready and careful we should be to imitate it. 11. And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. 30. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way-side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 31. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. 32. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? 33. They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. 34. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.

We have here an account of the cure of two poor blind beggars; in which we may observe, 1. Their address to Christ, v. 29, 30. And in this, 1. The circumstances of it are observable. It was as Christ and his disciples departed from Jericho; of that devoted place, which was rebuilt under a curse, Christ took his leave with this blessing, for they received it in haste; for the manner of it, the presence of a great multitude that followed him; Christ had a numerous, though not a pompous, attendance, and did good to them, though he did not take state to himself. This multitude that followed Christ was a mixed multitude. Some followed him.
for loaves, and some for love, some for curiosity, and
some in expectation of his temporal reign, which
the disciples themselves dreamed of, very few with
desire to be taught their duty; yet, for the sake of
those few, he confirmed his doctrine by miracles
wrought in the presence of great multitudes; who,
if they were not convinced by the inspired word, be
more inexcusable. Two blind men concurcd in the
request; for joint-prayer is pleasing to Christ,
ch. 18. 19. These joint-sufferers were joint-sinners;
being companions in the same tribulation, they were
partners in the same supplication. Note, It is good
for those that are labouring under the same calamity,
or infirmity of body or mind, to join together in the
same prayer to God for relief, that they may quicken
one another's faith, and encourage one another's
hope.
There is mercy enough in Christ for all the
petitioners. These blind men were sitting by the
way-side, as blind beggars used to do. Note, Those
that would receive mercy from Christ, must place
themselves there where his out-goings are; where
he manifests himself to those that seek him. It is
good thus to way-lay Christ, to be in his road.
These poor men were in need of Christ's grace: for
they were blind, they were not deaf. Seeing and hear-
ing are the learning senses. It is a great calamity
to want either; but the defect of one may be, and
often is, made up in the acuteness of the other; and
therefore it has been observed by some, as an in-
stance of the goodness of Providence, that none were
ever known to be born both blind and deaf; but
that, one way or other, all are in a majority of re-
cent generations, if not in the same generation, had
heard of Christ by the hearing of the ear, but they desired
that their eyes might see him. When they heard
that Jesus passed by, they asked no further ques-
tions, who were with him, or whether he was in
haste, but immediately cried out. Note, it is good to
improve the present opportunity, to make the best of
the price now in the hand, because, if once let slip, it
can never return, these blind men did so, and did wisely; for we do not find that Christ
ever came to Jericho again. Now is the accepted
time.
2. The address itself is more observable; Have
mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David, repeated
again, v. 31. Four things are recommended to us
for an example in this address; for, though the eye
of God is on them, the ingratitude of men was en-
lighted concerning truth, duty, and interest.
(1.) Here is an example of importunity in prayer.
They cried out as men in earnest; men in want are
earnest, of course. Cold desires do but beg denials.
Those that would prevail in prayer, must stir up
themselves to take hold on God in the duty. When
they were discontented in it, they cried the more.
The stream of fervency, if it be stopped, will rise and swell the higher. This is what the
Lord's mercy, in what way he pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy,
mercy. This is that which our hearts must be
upon, when we come to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, Heb. 4. 16. Ps. 130. 7.
(2.) Of humility in prayer; in that word, Have
mercy on us, not specifying the favour, or prescrb-
ing what, much less pleading merit, but casting
themselves upon him, and referring themselves cheer-
fully to, the Mediator's mercy, in what way he
pleases; "Only have mercy." They ask not for
silver and gold, though they were poor, but mercy,
mercy. This is that which our hearts must be
upon, when we come to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy, Heb. 4. 16. Ps. 130. 7.
(3.) Of faith in prayer; in the title they gave to
Christ, "the Son of David," not only to please, O Lord,
thou Son of David; they confess the title "Son of
David," and therefore had authority to command deliverance for them. Surely it was by the Holy
Ghost that they called Christ Lord, 1 Cor. 12. 3.

Thus they take their encouragement in prayer from
his power, as, in calling him the son of David, they
take encouragement from his goodness, as Messiah,
of whom so many kind and tender things had been
foretold, particularly his compassion to the poor and
needy, Ps. 72. 12, 13. It is of excellent use, in prayer,
to prescribe the name of Messiah; to remember that he is the Son of
David, whose office it is to help, and save, and to
p lead it with him.

(4.) Of perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding
discouragement. The multitude rebuked them, as
noisy, clamorous, and importent, and bid them
hold their peace, and not disturb the Master, who
perch shadow of himself, and was eager to know,
seeing Christ with our prayers, we must ex-
pect to meet with hinderances and manifold dis-
couragements from within and from without, some-
thing or other that bids us hold our peace. Such
rebukes are permitted, that faith and fervency,
patience and perseverance, may be tried. These
poor blind men were rebuked by the multitude that
followed Christ. Note, The sincere and serious
prayer of Christ's friends commonly meet with the
worst rebukes from those that follow him but in
pretence and hypocrisy. But they would not be
beaten off so; when they were in pursuit of such a
mercy, it was no time to compliment, or to practise
a timid delicacy; no, they cried the more. Note,
Men ought always to pray, and not to faint; to pray
with all perseverance; (Luke 18. 1.) to continue in
prayer with resolution, and not to yield to opposi-
tion's, to be the true down, and put out of countenance.

1. He stood still, and called them, v. 32. He was
now going up to Jerusalem, and was straitened till
his work there was accomplished; and yet he stood
still to cure these blind men. Note, When we are
ever so much in haste about any business, yet we
should be willing to stand still, to do good. He
called them, not because he could not have done
at a distance, but that he might do it in the most
obliging and instructing way, and would countenance
weak but willing patients and petitioners. Christ
not only enjoins us to pray, but invites us; holds
out the golden sceptre to us, and bids us come touch
the top of it.

2. He inquired further into their case; What will
you that I shall do unto you? This implies (1.) A
very fair offer; "Here I am; let me know what
you would have, and you shall have it. What
would we more? He is able to do for us, and as
willing as he is able; Ask, and it shall be given you.
(2.) A condition annexed to this offer, which is a
very easy and reasonable one—that they should tell
him what they would have him do for them. One
would think this a strange question, any one might
tell what they would have. What would they
Ask? He would know it from them, whether they begged only for an alms, as from a common
person, or for a cure, as from the Messiah. Note,
It is the will of God that we should in every thing
make our requests known to him by prayer and
supplication; not to inform or move him, but to
qualify ourselves for the mercy. The waterman in
the boat, who with his hook that came out of the
sea, could pull the ship to the boat, but the
boat to the shore. So in prayer we do not draw
the mercy to ourselves, but ourselves to the mercy.
Their story was a common one, and yet such a
distinct and particular one, that it was not
obliged to any particular time or place.
unto me. 3. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. 4. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5. Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. 6. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them. 7. And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon. 8. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. 9. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. 10. And when he had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? 11. And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. 12. The four evangelists take notice of this passage of Christ's rising in triumph into Jerusalem, five days before his death. The passover was on the fourteenth day of the month, and this was the tenth; on which day the law appointed that the paschal lamb should be taken up, (Exod. 12. 3.) and set apart for that purpose, and all the days of our Passover, who was to be sacrificed for us, was publicly shewed. So that this was the prelude to his passion. He had lodged at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, for some time; at a supper there, the night before, Mary had anointed his feet, John 12. 2. But as is usual with ambassadors, he deferred his public entry till some time after his arrival. Our Lord Jesus travelled much, and his customs were to start on foot from Galilee to Jerusalem, sometimes scores of miles, which was both humbling and toilsome; many a dirty weary step he had when he went about doing good. How ill does it become Christians to be inordinately solicitous about their own ease and state, when their Master had so little of either! Yet once in his life he rode in triumph; and it was now when he went into Jerusalem, to suffer and die, as if that were the pleasure and preferment he courted; and then he thought himself begun to be loved. Now here we have, 1. The provision that was made for this solemnity; and it was very poor and ordinary, and such as bespeke his kingdom to be not of this world. Here were no heralds at arms provided, no trumpet sounded before him, no chariots of state, no liveries; such things as these were not aeraeable to his present state of humiliation, but will be far outdone at his second coming, to which his magnificent appearance is reserved, when the last trumpet shall sound, the glorious angels shall be his heralds and attendants, and the clouds his chariots. But in this public appearance, 1. The preparation was sudden and off-hand. For his glory in the other world, and our's with him, preparation was made before the foundation of the world, for that was the glory his heart was upon his glory in this world he was dead to, and therefore, though he had it in prospect, did not forecast for it, but took what came next. They were come
to Bethphage, which was the suburbs of Jerusalem, and was accosted (say the Jewish doctors) in all things as Jerusalem, a long scattering street that lay toward the mount of Olives; when he entered upon that, he sent two of his disciples, some think Peter and John, to fetch him an ass, for he had none ready for him.

2. I was very mean. He sent only for an ass and her colt, v. 2. Asses were much used in that country, as horses, and in war, Christ could have summoned a cherub to carry him; (Ps. 18. 10.) but though by his name Jah, which speaks him God, he rides upon the heavens, yet now by his name Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, in his state of humiliation, he rides upon an ass. Yet some think that he had herein an eye to the custom in Israel for the judges to ride upon white asses: that for or sake, he sent not an ass to a rich, but to a poor, 2 Cor. 8. 9. It is commonly said, "Thy that live on borrowing, live on souring;" in this, therefore, as in other things, Christ was a man of sorrows—that he had nothing of this world's goods but what was given him or lent him. The disciples who were sent to borrow this ass, are directed to say, The Lord has need of him. These that for our sake are sent to him, must come, not to own them their need, nor say, as the unjust steward, To beg I am ashamed, Luke 16. 3. On the other hand, none ought to impose upon the kindness of their friends, by going to beg or borrow, when they have not need. In the borrowing of this ass,

(1.) We have an instance of Christ's knowledge. Though the thing was altogether contingent, yet Christ could tell his disciples where they should find an ass tied, and a colt with her. His omniscience extends itself to the meanest of his creatures; asses and their colts, and their being bound or loosed. Doth God take care for oxen? (1 Cor. 9. 9.) No doubt he doth, and would not have Balaam's ass abused. He knows all the creatures, so as to make them serve his own purpose.

(2.) We have an instance of his power over the creatures. The servants of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are in the hand of the Lord. Christ asserts his right to use the ass, in bidding them bring it to him; the fulness of the earth is the Lord Christ's; but he foresees some hinderance which the disciples might meet with in this service; they must not take them clam et secreto—privily, but in the sight of the owner, much less vi et armis—a violence, but with the consent of the owner, which he undertakes they shall have; If any man say ought to you, ye shall say, The Lord has need of him. Note, What Christ sets us to do, he will bear us out in the doing of, and furnish us with answers to the objections we may be assaulted with, and make them prevalent; as here, Straightway he will send them. Christ, in commanding the ass, 1. He bids him send arms, but with the consent of the owner, which he undertakes they shall have, in inclining the owner to send him without further security, shewed that he is the God of the spirits of all flesh, and can bow men's hearts.

(3.) We have an example of justice and honesty, in not using the ass, though for so small a piece of service as riding the length of a street or two, without the owner's consent. As some read the latter clause, it gives us a further rule of justice; You shall say, The Lord has need of them, and he that is, the Lord "will presently send them back, and

take care that they be safely delivered to the owner, as soon as he has done with them." Note, What we borrow we must restore in due time, and in good order; for the wicked borrow, and pay not again. Care must be taken of borrowed goods, which they be not damaged. Also, Master, for it was borrowed!

II. The prediction that was fulfilled in this, v. 4, 5. Our Lord Jesus, in all he did and suffered, had very much his eye upon the subject of kings might be fulfilled. As the prophets looked forward to him, (to him they all bare witness,) so he looked back upon them, that all things which were written of the Messiah might be punctually accomplished in him. This particularly which was written of him, Zech. 9. 9. where it ushers in a large prediction of the kingdom of the Messiah, Tell the people, say, Behold the King is come to thee, and that the of the earth, must be accomplished. Now observe here,

1. How the coming of Christ is foretold; Tell ye daughter of Zion, the church, the holy mountain, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the church's King, one of our brethren like unto us, according to the law of the kingdom, Deut. 17. 15. He is appointed King over the church; see 1 Cor. 15. 24. The church is God's house, the daughter of Zion swears allegiance to him, Hos. 1. 11. (2.) Christ, the King of his church, came to his church, even in this lower world; he comes to thee, to rule thee, to rule in thee, to rule for thee; he is Head over all things to the church. He came to Son, (Rom. 11. 26.) that out of Sion the law might go forth; for the church is the law, and its influence is to extend to all the world. (3.) Notice was given to the church, beforehand, of the coming of her King; Tell the daughter of Sion, Note, Christ will have his coming looked for, and waited for, and his subjects big with expectation of it; Tell the daughter of Sion, that they may go forth, and behold king Solomon, Cant. 3. 11. Notices of Christ's coming are usually ushered in with a Behold! A note commanding both attention and admiration; Behold, thy King cometh; behold, and wonder at him, behold, and welcome him. Here is a royal progress truly admirable. Pilate, like Caiphas, said he knew not what, in that great word, (John 19. 14.) Behold your King.

2. How his coming is described. When a king comes, something great and magnificent is expected, especially when he comes to take possession of his kingdom. The Lord, the Lord of hosts, was seen upon a throne, high, and lifted up; ( Isa. 6. 1.) but there is nothing of that here; Behold, he cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass. When Christ would appear in his glory, it is in his meekness, not in his majesty.

(1.) His temper is very mild. He comes not in wrath to take vengeance, but in mercy to work salvation. He is meek to suffer the greatest injuries and indignities for Sion's cause, meek to bear with the follies and unkindness of Sion's own children. He is easy of access, easy to be entreated. He is meek not only as a Teacher, but as a Ruler; he rules by love. His government is mild and gentle, and his laws not written in the blood of his subjects, but in his own. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. But from this, his appearance is very mean, sitting upon an ass, a creature made not for state, but service, not for battles, but for burdens; slow in its motions, but sure, and safe, and constant. The foretelling of this so long before, and the care taken that it should be exactly fulfilled, intimate it to have a peculiar signification, for the encouragement of poor souls to apply themselves to Christ. Sion's King comes riding, not on an magnificent horse, which the timorous petitioner dares not come near, or a running horse, which the slow-foot
ed petitioner cannot keep pace with, but on a quiet ass, that the poorest of his subjects may not be discouraged in their access to him. Mention is made in the text of the "garment of an ass;" and therefore Christ sent for the colt with the ass, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

111. The procession itself, which was answerable to the preparation, both being destitute of worldly pomp, and yet both accompanied with a spiritual power.

Observe, 1. His equipage; The disciples did as Jesus commanded them; (v. 6.) they went to fetch the ass and his colt, had been considered and provided for; and would find the owner willing to lend them. Note, Christ's commands must not be disputed, but obeyed; and those that sincerely obey them shall not be balked or baffled in it; They brought the ass, and the colt. The meanness and contemptibleness of the beast Christ rode on might have been made up with the richness of the trappings; but those were, like all the rest, such as came next to hand; they had not so much as a saddle for the ass, but the disciples threw some of their clothes upon it, and that must serve for want of better accommodations. Note, We ought not to be nice or curious, or to affect exactness, in outward conveniences. A holy indifference and neglect well becomes us in these things: it will evidence that our heart is not upon them; and that we have learned the apostle's rule, (Col. 2. 16.) Let no man pass with thee, and after the flesh, and things. Any thing will serve travellers; and there is a beauty in some sort of carelessness, a noble negligence; yet the disciples furnished him with the best they had, and did not object the spoiling of their clothes when the Lord hath need of them. Note, We must not think the clothes on our backs too dear to part with for the service of Christ, for the clothing of his poor destitute and afflicted members. I was naked, and you clothed me, ch. 25. 36. Christstriped himself for us.

2. His retinue; there was nothing in this stately or magnificent. Sion's King comes to Sion, and the daughter of Sion was told of his coming long before; yet he is not attended by the gentlemen of the country, nor met by the magistrates of the city in their formalities, as one might have expected; he should have had the keys of the city presented to him, and such a show made as became a king; he might have had the most possible convenience to the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David; but here is nothing of all this; yet he has his attendants, a very great multitude; they were only the common people, the mob, (the rabble we should have been apt to call them,) that graced the solemnity of Christ's triumph, and none but such. The chief priests and the elders afterward herded themselves with the multitude that abused him upon his entry; but we find none of them here joining with the multitude that did him honour. Ye see here your calling, brethren, not many mighty, or noble, attend on Christ, but the foolish things of this world, and base things, which are despised, 1 Cor. 1. 26. 28. Note, Christ is honoured by the multitude, more than by the magnificence, of his followers; for he values men by their souls, not by their preferments, names, or titles of honour.

Now, concerning this great multitude, we are here told,

1. What they did; according to the best of their capacity, they studied to do honour to Christ. [1.] They spread their garments in the way, that he might ride upon them. When Jehu was proclaimed king, the captains put their garments under him, in token of their subjection to him. Note, Those that take Christ for their King, must lay their all under his feet; the clothes, in token of their heart; for when Christ comes, though not when any one else comes, it must be said to the soul, How down, that he may go over. Some think that these garments were spread, not upon the ground, but on the back of the ass or colt; which was a way to beautify a cavalcade, the balconies are hung with tapestry. This was but a poor piece of state, yet Christ accepted their good-will; and we are hereby taught to construe how to make Christ welcome, Christ and his grace, Christ and his gospel, into our hearts and houses. How shall we express our respects to Christ? What honor and what dignity shall be done unto him? [2.] Others cut down branches from the trees, and surrounded them in the way, as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles, in token of liberty, victory, and joy; for the mystery of that feast is particularly spoken of as belonging to gospel-times, Zech. 14. 16.

(2.) What they said; They that went before, and they that followed, were in the same time; both those that gave notice of his coming, and those that attended him with their appliances, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, v. 9. When they carried branches about at the feast of tabernacles, they were wont to cry Hosanna, and from thence to call their bundles of branches their Hosannas. Hosanna signifies, Save we now, we beseech thee; referring to Ps. 118. 25. 26, where the Messiah is prophesied of as the Head-stone of the corner, though the builders refused him; and all his loyalatories and attendants at his passion are described as Hosannas to him, wishing him with hearty good wishes to the prosperity of all his enterprizes. Hosanna to the Son of David is, "This we do in honour of the Son of David."

The hosannas with which Christ was attended, bespeak two things,

1. Their welcoming his kingdom. Hosanna bespeaks the same with, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; he is sanctified, and sent into the world, as Mediator; him hath God the Father sealed. Secondly, The coming of Christ, in the name of the Lord, is every way of the kingdom; Blessed is he that cometh to praise him, and be pleased in him. Let his coming in the name of the Lord be mentioned with strong affections, to our comfort, and joyful acclamations, to his glory. Well may we say, Blessed is he; for it is in him that we are blessed. Well may we follow him with our blessings, who meets us with his.

2. Their wishing well to his kingdom; intended in their Hosannas; earnestly desiring that prosperity and success may attend it, and that it might be a victorious kingdom; "Send now prosperity to that kingdom." If they understood it of a temporal kingdom, and had their hearts carried out thus toward that, it was their mistake, which a little time would rectify; however, their goodwill was accepted. Note, It is our duty earnestly to desire and pray for the prosperity and success of his kingdom in the world. This it is the duty of them that are made for him here, (Ps. 72. 15.) that all happiness may attend his interest in the world, and that, though he may ride upon an ass, yet in his majesty he may ride prosperously, because of that meekness, Ps. 45. 4. This we mean, when we pray, Thy kingdom come. They add, Hosanna in the highest; Let prosperity in the highest degree attend him, let him have a name above every name, a throne above every throne; or, Let us raise him in the best manner with exalted affections; or, Let our prayers for his church ascend to heaven, u t the
3. We have here his entertainment in Jerusalem; (v. 10.) When he came into Jerusalem, all the city was moved; every one took notice of him, some were moved with wonder at the novelty of the thing, others with laughter at the meaness of it; some perhaps were moved with joy, who waited for the Consolation of Israel: others, of the pharisical class, were moved with envy and indignation. So various are the motions in the minds of men upon the approach of Christ's kingdom!

Upon this commotion, we are further told,

(1.) What the citizens said; Who is this? [1] They were, it seems, ignorant concerning Christ. Though he was the Glory of his people Israel; yet Israel knew him not; though he had distinguished himself by the many miracles he wrought among them, yet the daughters of Jerusalem knew him not from another beloved, Cant. 5. 9. The Holy One unknown in the holy city! In places where the clearest light shines, and the greatest profession of religion is made, there is more ignorance than we are aware of. [2] Yet they were inquisitive concerning him. Who is this that is thus cried up, and comes with so much observation? Who is this King of glory, that demands admission into our hearts? Ps. 24. 8. Isa. 63. 1.

(2) How the multitude answered them; This is Jesus, v. 11. The multitude were better acquainted with Christ than the great ones. Vce populi—The voice of the peoples, is sometimes vice Dei—the voice of God. Now, in the account they give of him, [1.] They were right in calling him the Prophet, that great Prophet. Hitherto he had been known as a Prophet, teaching and working miracles; now they attend him as a King; Christ's priestly office was, of all the three, last discover'd. [2.] Yet they missed it, in saying he was of Nazareth; and it helped to confirm some in their prejudices against him. Note, Some, that are willing to honour Christ, and hear their testimony to him, yet labour under mistakes concerning him, which would be rectified, if they would take pains to inform themselves.

12. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, 13. And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. 14. And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15. And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the son of David; they were sore displeased, 16. And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? 17. And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.

When Christ came into Jerusalem, he did not go up to the court or the palace, though he came in as a King, but into the temple; for his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; it is in holy things that he rules, in the temple of God that he exercises authority. Now, what did he do there?

1. Thence he drove the buyers and sellers. Abuses must first be purged out, and the plants not of God's planting be plucked up, before that which is right can be established. The great Redeemer appears as a great Reformer, that turns away ungodliness, Rom. 11. 26. Here they are told,

1. What he did; (v. 12.) He cast out all them that sold and bought; he had done this once before, (John 2. 14, 15.) but there was occasion to do it again. Note, Buyers and sellers, driven out of the temple, will return and nestle there again, if there be not a continual care and oversight to prevent it, and if the blow be not followed, and often repeated.

(1.) The abuse was, buying and selling, and changing money, in the temple. Note, Lawful things, ill timed and ill placed, may become sinful things. That which was decent enough in another place, and not only lawful, but laudable, in another day, defiles the sanctuary, and profanes the sabbath. This buying and selling, and changing money, though sold under pretence of being in order ad spiritualia—for spiritual purposes. They sold beasts for sacrifice, for the convenience of those that could more easily bring their money with them than their beast; and they changed money for those that wanted the half shekel, which was their yearly poll, or redemption-money; or, upon the hills of return; so that this might pass for the outward business of the house of God; and yet Christ's kingdom, that allows of it. Note, Great corruptions and abuses come into the church by the practices of those whose gain is godliness, that is, who make worldly gain the end of their godliness, and counterfeit godliness their way to worldly gain; (1 Tim. 6. 5.) from such turn away.

(2.) The purging out of this abuse. Christ cast them out that sold. He did it before with a scowrege of small cords; (John 2. 13.) now he did it with a look, with a frown, with a word of command. Some reckon this none of the least of Christ's miracles, that he should himself thus clear the temple, and not be opposed in it by them who by this craft got their living, and were backed in it by the priests and elders. It is an instance of his power over the spirits of men, and the hold he has of them by their own consciences. This was the holy act of regular authority, according to the office of Christ as the second Adam. Christ, in the days of his flesh; he began with it, John 2. and here ended with it. Tradition says, that his face shone, and beams of light darted from his blessed eyes, which astonished these market-people, and compelled them to yield to his command; if so, the scripture was fulfilled, Prov. 8. 20. The King that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattered among all theWeb of this earth,Ps. 115. 1. he began with the tables of the money-changers; he did not take the money to himself, but scattered it, threw it to the ground, the fittest place for it. The Jews, in Esther's time, on the spool laid not their hand, Esther 9. 10.

(2.) What he said, to justify himself, and to convict them; (v. 13.) It is written. Note, In the reformation of the church, the eye must be upon the scripture, and that must be adhered to as the rule, changing the outward forms of worship, and of the outward structure of the buildings, rather than we can justify ourselves with, It is written. Reformation is then right, when corrupted ordinances are reduced to their primitive institution.

(1.) He shews, from a scripture prophecy, what the temple should be, and was designed to be; My house shall be called the house of prayer; which is quoted from Isa. 56. 7. Note, All the ceremonial institutions were intended to be subservient to moral
duties; the house of sacrifices was to be a house of prayer, for that was the soul and soul of all the sacrifices. The temple was in a special manner sanctified to be a house of prayer, for it was not only the place of that worship, but the medium of it, so that the prayers made in or toward that house had a particular promise of acceptance, (2 Chron. 6. 21.) as it was a type of Christ: therefore Daniel looked that way in prayer; and in this sense, no house or place is now, or can be, a house of prayer for us. But Christ, in some sense, the apportioned places of our religious assemblies may be so called, as places where prayer is wont to be made, Acts 16. 13.

(2.) II 1 shews, from a scripture reproof, how they had abused the temple, and perverted the intention of it: Ye have made it a den of thieves. This is quoted from Jer. 7. 11. Is this house become a den of thieves? and, as if the house of prayer is turned into something profane, such as the temple was, so I think it may be said that the house of prayer is become a den of thieves, in which they lurk, and shelter themselves. Markets are two often dens of thieves, so many are the corrupt and cheating practices in buying and selling; but markets in the temple are certainly so, for they rob God of his honour, the worst of thieves, Mal. 3. 8. The priests lived, and lived plentifully, upon the gains from the temple, and they found other ways and means to squeeze money out of the people; and therefore Christ here calls them thieves, for they exacted, which did not belong to them.

11. There, in the temple, he headed the blind and the lame, v. 14. When he had driven the buyers and sellers out of the temple, he invited the blind and lame within it, and, as a priest, he did recommend these things, but the rich he sends empty away. Christ, in the temple, by his word there preached, and in answer to the prayers there made, heals those that are spiritually blind and lame. It is good coming to the temple, when Christ is there, who, as he shows himself jealous for the honour of his temple, in expelling those who profane it, so he shews himself gracious to those who humbly seek him. The blind and the lame enter in with gladness into the house of the Lord, (Ps. 119. 28.) but were admitted into God's house; for the state and honour of his temple lie not in those things wherein the magnificence of princes' palaces is supposed to consist; from them blind and lame must keep their distance, but from God's temple only the wicked and profane. The temple was profaned and abused when it was made a market-place, but it was graced and honoured when it was made an hospital; and, if the temple be sanctified, it is made more honourable, and better becomes it, than to be getting money there. Christ's healing was a real answer to that question, Who is this? His works testified of him more than the hosannas; and his healing in the temple was the fulfilling of the promise, that the glory of the latter house should be greater than the glory of the former. He was himself in a sense the offence which the chief priests and scribes took at the acclamations with which he was attended, v. 15, 16. They that should have been most forward to give him honour were his worst enemies.

1. They were inwardly vexed at the wonderful things that he did; they could not deny them to be true miracles, and therefore were cut to the heart with indignation at them, as Acts 4. 16.—5. 33. The works that Christ did, fulfilled the prophecies, fulfilled the promises; and by wounds they set free every man's conscience. If they had any sense, they could not but own the miracle of them; and, if any good nature, could not but be in love with the mercy of them; yet, because they were resolved to oppose him, for these they envied him, and bore him a grudge.

(2.) They openly quarrelled at the children's hosannas; they thought that hereby an honour was given him, which did not belong to him, and that it looked like ostentation. Proud men cannot bear that honour should be done to any but to themselves, and are uneasy at nothing more than at the just praises of deserving men. Thus Saul envied David the women's songs; and "Who can stand before envy?" Now Christ is most honoured, his enemies are most displeased.

Just now we had Christ preferring the blind and the lame before the buyers and sellers; now here we have him (v. 16.) taking part with the children against priests and scribes.

Observe, (1.) The children were in the temple, perhaps playing there; no wonder, when the rulers make it a market-place, that the children might have a place but, a place to be heard; to hope that many of them were worshipping there. Note, It is good to bring children betimes to the house of prayer, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Let children be taught to keep up the form of godliness, it will help to lead them to the power of it. Christ has a tenderness for the lambs of his flock. (2.) They were there, crying, Hosanna to the Son of David. This they did to expressly show that those that are the greatest in the kingdom should be the least in the world; little children say and do as they hear others say, and see others do; so easily do they imitate; and therefore great care must be taken to set them good examples, and no bad ones. Maximus debetur puero reverentia— Our intercourse with the young should be conducted with the most scrupulous care. Children will learn of those that are with them, either to curse and sneer, or to pray and praise. The Jews did best to teach their children to cry out in publica places, branches at the fast of tabernacles, and to cry Hosanna; but God taught them here to apply it to Christ. Note, Hosanna to the Son of David well becomes the mouths of little children, who should learn the language of Canaan.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus not only allowed it, but was very well pleased with it, and quoted a scripture which was fulfilled in it, (Ps. 8. 2.) or, at least, may be accommodated to it: Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise; which, some think, refers to the children's joining in the acclamations of the people, and the women's songs with which David was honoured when he returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, and therefore is very fitly applied here to the hosannas with which the Son of David was saluted, now that he was entering upon his conflict with Satan, the power of evil.

Note, [1.] Christ is so far from being ashamed of the services of little children, that he takes particular notice of them, (and children love to be taken notice of,) and is well pleased with them. If God may be honoured by babes and sucklings, who are made to hope at the best, much more by children who are grown up to maturity and some capacity.

[2.] Praise is perfected out of the mouth of such; it has a peculiar tendency to humble the children of God; and, when they join in his praises, the praise would be accounted defective and imperfect, if they had not their share in it; which is an encouragement for children to be good betimes, and to parents to teach them to be so; the labour neither of the one nor of the other shall be in vain. In this psalm it is, Thou hast ordained strength. Note, God perfeceth praise, by ordaining strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. When great things are brought about by weak and unlikely instruments, God is thereby much honoured, for his strength is perfected in weakness, and the infirmities of the babies and sucklings serve for a foil to the divine power. That which follows in the psalm, That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger, was very applicable to the priests and scribes, but
Christ did not apply it to them, but left it to them to apply it.

Lastly, Christ, having thus silenced them, forsook them, v. 17. He left them, in prudence, lest they should now have seized him before his hour was come; in justice, because they had forfeited the favour of his presence. By repining at Christ's praises, we drive him from us. He left them as incorrigible, and he went out of the city to Bethany, which was a very quiet retired place; not so much that he might sleep undisturbed as that he might pray undisturbed. Bethany was but two little miles from Jerusalem; thither he now went on foot, to show that, when he rode, it was only to fulfill the scripture. He was not lifted up with the hosannas of the people; but, as having forgot them, soon returned to his mean and toilsome way of travelling.

18. Now in the morning, as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21. Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22. And whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Observe,
I. Christ returned in the morning to Jerusalem, v. 18. Some think that he went out of the city over night, because none of his friends there durst entertain him, for fear of the great men; yet, having work to do there, he returned. Note, We must never be driven off from our duty, either by the malice of our foes, or the unkindness of our friends. Though he knew that in the city bonds and afflictions did follow him, yet none of these things moved him. Paul followed him when he went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem. Acts 20. 22.

II. As he went he hungered. He was a Man, and submitted to the infirmities of nature; he was an active Man, and was so intent upon his work, that he neglected his food, and came out fasting; for the zeal of God's house did even eat him up, and his ministry and business did so absorb him. He was a poor Man, and had no present supply; he was a Man that pleased not himself, for he would willingly have taken up with green raw figs for his breakfast, when it was fit that he should have had something warm.

Christ therefore hungered, that he might have occasion to work this miracle, in curing, and so with the barren fig tree, and there might give us an instance of his justice and his power, and both instructive.

1. See his justice, v. 19. He went to it, expecting fruit, because it had leaves; but, finding none, he sentenced it to a perpetual barrenness. The miracle had its significance, as well as other his miracles. All Christ's miracles illustrato were wrought for the good of men, and proved the power of his grace and blessing; (the sending of the devils into the herd of swine was but a permission;) all he did was for the benefit and comfort of his friends, none for the terror or punishment of his enemies; but now, at last, to show that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is able not only to save, but to destroy, he would give a specimen of the power to his wrath and curse; yet this not on any man, woman, or child, because the great day of his wrath is not yet come, but on an inanimate tree, that is set forth for a type of the barren fig tree, of the parable of the fig tree, ch. 24. 25. The scope of it is the same with the parable of the fig tree, Luke 13. 6.

(1.) This cursing of the barren fig tree, represents the state of hypocrites in general; and so it teaches us, [1.] That the fruit of fig trees may, justly be expected from those that have the leaves. Christ looks for the power of religion from those that make profession of it; the favour of it from those that have the show of it; grapes from the vineyard that is planted in a fruitful hill: he hungered after it, his soul desires the first ripe fruits. [2.] Christ's just expectations from flourishing professors are often frustrated and disappointed; he comes to many, seeking fruit, and finds leaves only, and he discovers it. Many have a name to live, and are not found in the kingdom of God, doing nothing to merit the power of it. [3.] The sin of barrenness is justly punished with the curse and plague of barrenness; let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. As one of the chiefest blessings, and which was the first, is, Be fruitful; so one of the saddest curses is, Be no more fruitful. Thus the sin of hypocrites is made their punishment: they would not do good, and therefore they shall do none; he that is not faithful to him he be fruitful as 1; and lose his honour and comfort. [4.] A false and hypocritical profession commonly withers in this world, and it is the effect of Christ's curse; the fig tree, that had no fruit, soon lost its leaves. Hypocrites may look plausible for a time, but, having no principle, no root in themselves, their profession will soon come to nothing; the gifts wither, common graces decay, the credit of the profession declines and sinks, and the falseness and folly of the pretender is manifested to all men.

(2.) It represents the state of the nation and people of the Jews in particular; they were a fig tree planted in Christ's way, as a church. Now observe, [1.] The disappointment they gave to our Lord Jesus. He came among them, expecting to find some fruit, something that would be pleasing in the sight of the Lord. And when he found none, he was grieved at it, he needed it not, but fruit that might abound to a good account; but his expectations were frustrated, he found nothing but leaves; they called Abraham their father, but did not do the works of Abraham; they professed themselves expectants of the promised Messiah, but, when he came, they did not receive and entertain him. [2.] The doom he passed upon them, that was inflicted upon them for refusing him. The tree was gathered from them, as a church or as a people, from henceforward for ever. Never any good came from them, (except the particular persons among them that believed,) after they rejected Christ; they became worse and worse; blindness and hardness happened to them, and grew upon them, till they were unchurched, unpeopled, and undone, and their place and nation removed; their butter was taken from them, their wine and ornaments, their temple, and priesthood, and sacrifices, and festivals, and all the glories of their church and state, fell like leaves in autumn. How soon did their fig tree wither away, after they said, The blood be on us, and on our children? And the Lord was righteous in it.

2. See the power of Christ; the former is wrapped up in the figure, but this more fully discoursed.
Christ intending thereby to direct his disciples in the use of their powers.

(1.) The disciples admired the effect of Christ’s cure; (v. 26.) They marvelled; no power could do it but his, who spake and it was done. They marvelled at the suddenness of the thing; How soon is the fig tree withered away! There was not the least cause of the fig tree’s withering, but it was a direct blast, a worm at the root; it was not only the leaves of it that withered, but the body of the tree; it withered away in an instant, and became like a dry stick. Gospel curses are, upon this account, the most dreadful—that they work insensibly and silently, by a fire not blown, but effectually.

(2.) Christ empowered them by faith to do the like; (v. 23, 24.) as it is said, (John 14. 12.) Greater works than these shall ye do. Observe, [1.] The description of this wonder-working faith; If ye have faith, and doubt not, Note, Doubting of the power and promise of God is the greatest thing that spoils the efficacy and success of faith. “If you have faith, and dispute not,” (so some read it.) “dispute not with yourselves, dispute not with the promise of God, if you stagger not at the promise;” (Rom. 4. 20.) for, as far as we do, so our faith is deficient; as certain as the promise is, so confident our faith should be.

[2.] The power and prevalence of it expressed figuratively; If ye shall say to this mountain, (meaning the mount of Olives,) Be thou removed, it shall be done. There might be a particular reason for his saying so of this mountain, for there was a prophecy, that the mount of Olive, and of fine Jerusalem, shall cleave in the midst, and then remove, Zech. 14. 4. Whatever was the intent of that word, the same must be the expectation of faith, how impossible soever it might appear to sense. But this is a proverbial expression; intimating that we are to believe that nothing is impossible with God, and therefore that what he has promised shall certainly be performed, though to us it seem impossible. It was among the Jews a usual commendation of their learned Rabbins, that they were removers of mountains, that is, could solve the greatest difficulties; now this may be done by faith acted on the word of God, which will bring great and strange things to pass.

[3.] The way and means of exercising this faith, and of doing that which is to be done by it; All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. For the soul, prayer is the body; both together make a complete man for any service. Faith, if it be right, will excite prayer; and prayer is not right, if it do not spring from faith. This is the condition of our receiving; we must ask in prayer, believing. The requests of prayer shall not be denied; the expectations of faith shall not be frustrated. We have many promises to this purport from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, and all to encourage both, the one by price, it is the principal duty, of a Christian. It is but ask and have, believe and receive; and what would we more? Observe how comprehensive the promise is—All things whatsoever ye shall ask; this is like all and every the promises in a conveyance. All things, is general; whatsoever, brings it to particulars; though generals include particulars, yet such is the folly of our unbelief, that, though we think we assent to particulars, we live by faith, and when it comes to particulars, and therefore, that we might have strong consolation, it is thus copiously expressed, All things whatsoever.

23. And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority? 24. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. 25. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? 26. But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. 27. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

Our Lord Jesus (like St. Paul after him) preached his gospel with much contention; his first appearance was in a dispute with the doctors in the temple, when he was twelve years old; and here, just before he died, we have him engaged in controversy. In this sense, he was like Jeremiah, a man of contention; not striving, but striving. The great doctors and teachers who were among the chief priests and the elders, the judges of two distinct courts: the chief priests presided in the ecclesiastical court, in all matters of the Lord, as they are called; the elders of the people were judges of the civil courts, in temporal matters. See an idea of both, 2 Chron. 19. 5, 11. These joined to attack Christ, thinking they should find or make him obnoxious either to the one or to the other. See how wofully degenerate that generation were, when the man of righteousness in the land, and state, who should have been the great promoters of the Messiah’s kingdom, were the great opposers of it! Here we have them disturbing him when he was preaching; v. 23. They would receive his instructions themselves, nor let others receive them. Observe, 1. As soon as he came into Jerusalem, he went to the temple, though he had been affrighted there the day before, and there he was in the midst of enemies, and in the mouth of danger; yet thither he went, for there he had a fairer opportunity of doing good to souls than any where else in Jerusalem. Though he came hungry to the city, and was disappointed of a breakfast at the barren fig tree, yet, for aught that appears, he went straight to the temple, as one that esteemed the words of God’s mouth, the preaching of them, more than his necessary food. 2. In the temple he was teaching; he had called it a house of prayer; (v. 13.) and here we have him preaching there. Note, In the solemn assemblies of Christians, praying and preaching must go together, and neither must encroach upon, or justly cut, the other. To make up communion with God, we must not only speak to him in prayer, but hear what he has to say to us by his word; ministers must give the word both to the word and to prayer, Acts 6. Note, That Christ taught in the temple, that scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 2. 3.) Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways. The priests of old often taught there the good knowledge of the Lord; but they never had such a teacher as this.

III. When Christ was teaching the people, the priests and elders came upon him, and challenged him to produce his orders; the hand of Satan in this, to hinder him in his work. Note, It cannot but be a trouble to a faithful minister, to be taken
off, or diverted from, plain and practical preaching, by an unavoidable necessity of engaging in controversies; yet good was brought out of this evil, for hereby occasion was given to Christ to dispel the objections that were advanced against him, to the greater satisfaction of his followers; and, while his adversaries thought by their power to have silenced him, they had only silenced the silent, the most effectual answer to arrogance. 

Now, in this dispute with them, we may observe, 1. How he was assaulted by their insolent demand: 'By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?' Had they duly considered his miracles, and the power by which he wrought them, they needed not to have asked this question; for they must have something to say for the shelter of a obsolete question. This, the most illustrious in triumph into Jerusalem, received the hosannas of the people, controuled in the temple, drivest out such as had licence to be there, from the rulers of the temple, and paid them rent; thou art here preaching a new doctrine; whence hadst thou a commission to do all this? Was it from Caesar, or from the high priest, or from God? Perhaps they were in earnest, or perhaps not; but, aspersed, did he put too much upon thee? Note. It is good for all that take upon them to act with authority, to put this question to themselves, 'Who gave us that authority?' For unless a man be clear in his own conscience concerning that, he cannot act with any comfort or hope of success. They who run before their warrant, run without their blessing, Jer. 23. 21, 22.

Christ, however, did not shrink from this contradiction, and Nicodemus a master in Israel, had owned it, that he was a Teacher sent of God; (John 3. 2.) yet, at this time of day, when that point had been so fully cleared and settled, they come to him with this question. (1.) In the ostentation of their own power, as chief priests and elders, which, they thought, authorised them to call him to an account in this manner. How haughtily do they ask, 'Who gave thee this authority?' Intimating that he could have no authority, because he had none from them, 1 Kings 22. 24. Jer. 20. 1. Note, It is common for the greatest abusers of their power, to be the most rigorous asserters of it, and to take a pride and pleasure in any thing that looks like the exercise of it. (2.) It was to insnare and entangle him. Should he refuse to answer this question, they would enter judgment against him upon his own saying, 'This is my saying thing;' would condemn him as standing mute; and would insinuate to the people, that his silence was a tacit confessing of himself to be a Usurper; should he plead an authority from God, they would, as formerly, demand a sign from heaven, or make his defence his silence, and accuse him of blasphemy for it.

How he answered this demand with another, which would help them to answer themselves: (v. 24, 25.) 'I also will ask you one thing. He declined giving them a direct answer, lest they should take advantage against him; but answers them with a question. Those that are as sheep in the midst of wolves, have need to be wise as serpents: the heart of the wise studieth to answer. We must give a reason of the hope that is in us, not only with meekness, but with fear, (1 Pet. 3. 15.) with prudence, lest truth be damag'd, or ourselves endanger'd.

Now this question is concerning John's baptism, here put for his whole ministry, preaching as well as baptizing: 'Was this from heaven, or of men? One of the two it must be; either what he did was of his own head, or he was sent of God to do it.'

Gamaliel's argument turned upon this hinge; (Acts 5. 38, 39.) Even so scribes and Pharisees nam'd, not this man, but our nation, and the custom of our fathers did this. Though that which is manifestly had not been of God, yet that which is seemingly good may be of men, nay, of Satan, when he transforms himself into an angel of light. This question was not at all shuf

fling, to evade their's; but, (1.) If they answered this question, it would answer their's; should they say, against their consciences, that John's baptism was of men, yet it would be easy to answer, John did no miracles, (John 10. 41.) Christ did many; but, should they say, as they could not but own, that John's baptism was from heaven, (which was supplied as clear evidence by the question answer'd) 'Then their demand was answered, for he bare testimony to Christ. Note, Truths appear in the clearest light when they are taken in their due order; the resolving of the foregoing question will be a key to the main question. (2.) If they refused to answer it, that would be a good reason why they should not offer proofs of his authority; 'We onely know the Son of man, and he will answer for us against the strongest conviction; it was but to cast pearls before swine. Thus he taketh the wise in their own craftiness; (1 Cor. 3. 19.) and those that would not be convinced of the plainest truths shall be convicted of the vilest mafice, against John first, then, against Christ, and in both against God. 3. How they were hereby baffled and run aground, they knew the truth, but would not own it, and so were taken in the snare they laid for our Lord Jesus. Observe. (1.) How they reasoned with themselves, not concerning the merits of the cause, what proofs there were of the divine original of John's baptism; no, their care was, how to make their part good against Christ. Two things they considered and consulted, in this reasoning with themselves, their authority, and their safety; the same things which they principally aim at, who seek their own things. (2.) They consider their own credit, which they would endanger, if they should own John's baptism to be of God; for then Christ would ask them, before all the people, Why did ye not believe him? And to acknowledge that a doctrine is from God, and yet rashly enucle and entertain it, is the greatest absurdity and iniquity that a man can be charged with. Many, that will not be kept by the fear of sin from neglecting and opposing that which they know to be true and good, are kept by the fear of shame from owning that to be true and good which they neglect and oppose. Thus they reject the counsel of God against themselves, in not submitting to John's baptism, and would not own it. (3.) They reason in their own safety, that they would expose themselves to the resentments of the people, if they should say that John's baptism was of men; We fear the people, for all hold John as a prophet. It seems, then, First, That the people had truer sentiments of John than the chief priests and the elders had, or, at least, were more free and faithful in declaring their sentiments. This people, of whom they make mention, and would not own John, that they knew not the law, and were cursed, (John 7. 49.) it seems knew the gospel, and were blessed. Secondly, That the chief priests and elders stood in awe of the common people, which is an evidence that things were in disorder among them, and that mutual jealousies were at a great height; that the government was become obsious to the hatred and scorn of the people, and the scripture was fulfilled, They made you contemptible and base, Mal. 2. 8, 9. If they had kept their integrity, and done their duty, they had kept up their authority, and needed not to fear the people. We find sometimes that the people feared them, and it served them for a reason why they did not confess Christ, John 9. 22.—12. 48. Note, Those could but fear the people, who studied obeying him whose face was set against them, and whose word they had cast down, that they knew not the law, and were cursed. That it is usually the temper even of common people, to be zealous for the honour of that which they account sacred and divine. If they account John as a prophet, they will not endure that it should be said,
In his baptism was of men; hence the holiest contes
have been about holy things. Fourthly, That the
Chief priests and elders were kept from open den-
ial of the truth, even against the conviction of their
own minds, not by the fear of God, but purely by
the fear of the people; as the fear of man may bring
good people into a snare, (Prov. 29, 25.) so some-
times it may keep bad people from being over-much
wicked, lest they should die before their time, Eccl.
7, 17. Many bad people would be a deal worse than
they are, if they must.
(2.) How they replied to their Saviour, and so dropt
the question. They fairly confessed, We cannot
tell; that is, "We will not;" in other words—We never
knew. The more shame for them, while they pre-
tended to be leaders of the people, and by their office
were obliged to take cognizance of such things;
when they would not confess their knowledge, they
were constrained to confess their ignorance. And
observe by the way, when they said, He cannot tell,
they told a lie, for they knew that John's baptism
was of God. Note, There are many who are more
afraid of the shame of lying than of the sin, and there-
fore scruple not to speak that which they know to be
false concerning their own thoughts and apprehen-
sions, their affections and intentions, or their re-
membering or forgetting of things, because in those
things they know nobody can disprove them. They
make shift to answer the question of a man who
sought an answer for himself, and justified himself in refusing to gratify them;
Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.
If they be so wicked and base as either not to believe,
or not to confess, that the baptism of John was from
heaven, (though it obliged to repentance, that great
duty, and sealed the kingdom of God at hand, that
great promise,) they were not fit to be discourse
with concerning Christ's authority: for men of such
disposition could not be convinced of the truth
now, they could not but he provoked by it, and there-
fore he that is thus ignorant, let him be ignorant still.
Note, Those that imprison the truths they know, in
unrighteousness, (either by not professing them, or
by not practising according to them,) are justly
denied the further truths they inquire after, Rom. 1.
18, 19. Take away the talent from him that buried it;
those that will not see, shall not see.
28. But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and
said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He
answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. 30. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. 31. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first, Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. 32. For John came unto you in the
way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might be-
lieve him.
As Christ instructed his disciples by parables, which made the instructions the more easy, so some-
times he convinced his adversaries by parables, which bring reproves more close, and make men,
or ever they are aware, to reprove themselves. Thus Nathan convinced David by a parable, (2
Sam. 12. 1.) and the woman of Tekoa surprised him
in like manner, 2 Sam. 14. 2. Reproving parables
are appeals to the offenders themselves, and judge
them out of their own mouths. This Christ designs
here, as appears by the first words, (v. 28.) But
what think ye?
In these verses, we have the parable of the two sons sent to work in the vineyard, the scope of which is to show that they who knew not John's baptism to be of God, were ashamed even by the publicans and
harlots, who knew and professed. The parable itself, which represents two sorts of persons; some that prove better than they promise, represented by the first of those sons; others
that promise better than they prove, represented by
the second.
1. They had both one and the same father, which
signifies that God is a common Father to all
man.
kind. There are favours which all alike receive from
him, and obligations which all alike lie under
him; Have we not all one Father? Yes, and yet
there is a vast difference between men's characters.
2. They had both the same command given them;
Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. Parents
should not breed up their children in idleness; no-	hing is more pleasing, and yet nothing more perni-
cious, to youth than that, Lam. 3. 27. God sets his
children to work, though they are all heirs. This
command he gave not to the son that was not of us. Note, (1.) The work of religion, which we are called to en-
gage in, is vineyard-work, creditable, profitable, and
pleasant. By the sin of Adam we were turned out
to work upon the common, and to eat the herb of
the field; but by the grace of our Lord Jesus we are
called to work again in the vineyard. (2.) The
gospel-call to work in the vineyard, requires present
obedience; Son, go work to-day, while it is called
to-day, because the night comes when no man can
We were not sent into the world to be idle, nor
had we day-light given us to play by; and there-
fore, if ever we mean to do any thing for God and
our souls, Why not now? Why not to-day? (3.)
The exhortation to go work to-day in the vineyard,
speaketh unto us as unto children; (Heb. 12. 5.)
Son, go work. It is the command of a Father,
which carries with it both authority and affection, a
Father that pities his children, and considers their
frame, and doth not over-task them, (Ps. 103. 13,
14.) a Father that is very tender of his Son that
serves him, Mal. 3. 17. If we work in our Father's
vineyard, we work for ourselves.
3. Their conduct was very different.
(1.) One of the sons did better than he said,
proved better than he promised. His answer was
bad, but his actions were good.
(2.) Here is the untoward answer that he gave
to his father; he said, flat and plain, I will not. See
to what a degree of impudence the corrupt nature of
man rises, to say, I will not, to the command of
a Father; such a command of such a Father; they
are impudent children and stiff-hearted. Those
that will not bend, surely they cannot blush; if they
had any degree of modesty left them, they could
not say, He will not, Jer. 2. 25. Excuses are bad,
but downright denials are worse; yet such peremp-
tory refusals do the calls of the gospel oft en meet
with, First, Some love their ease, and will not
work; they would live in the world, as leviathan in
the waters, to play therein; (Ps. 104. 26.) they do
not love working. Secondly, Their hearts are so
much upon their own fields, that they are not for
working in God's vineyard. They love the busi-
ess of the world better than the business of their
religion. Thus some by the delights of sense, and
others by the employments of the world, are far
from doing that great work which they were sent
into the world about, and so stand all the day idle.
(3.) Here is the happy change of his mind, an
Vol. v.—2 H
of his way, upon second thoughts; Afterward he repented, and went. Note, There are many who in their beginning are wicked and willful, and very unpromising, who afterward repent and mend, and come to something. Some, that God hath chosen, are suffered for a great while to run to a great excess of riot; Such were some of you, 1 Cor. 6. 11. They were not immediately brought to an immediate end. The case is, that God permitted them to run in their evil ways for a long suffering, 1 Tim. 1. 16. Afterward he repented. Repentance is perseverance—an after-will; and perseverance—an after-care. Better late than never. Observe, When he repented, he went; that was the fruit meet for repentance. The only evidence of our repentance for our former resistance, is, immediately to comply, and set to work; and then what is past shall be pardoned, and not reproved, but what is past made good. What can a Father God be; he resents not the affront of our refusals, as justly he might. He that told his father to his face, that he would not as he bid him, deservd to be turned out of doors, and disinherited; but our God waits to be gracious, and, notwithstanding our former follies, if we repent and mend, will favourably accept of us: blessed be God, we are under a covenant that leaves room for such a repentance.

(2.) The other son said better than he did, promised better than he proved; his answer was good, but his actions bad. To him the father said likewise, v. 30. The gospel-call, though very different, is, in effect, the same to all, and is carried on with an even tenor. We have all the same commands, engagements, encouragements, though to some they are a call to everlasting life, to others of death unto death. Observe,

[1.] How fairly this other son promised; He said, I go, sir. He gives his father a title of respect, sir. Note, It becomes children to speak respectfully to their parents. It is one branch of that honour which the fifth commandment requires. He professes a ready obedience, I go; not, "I will go by and by," but, "Ready, sir, you may depend upon it, I go just now." This answer we should give from the heart heartily to all the calls and commands of the word of God. See Jer. 3. 22. Ps. 27. 8.

[2.] How he failed in the performance; He went not. Note, There are many that give good words, and make fair promises, in religion, and those from some good motions in the present, that rest there, and do not go on; and so come to nothing. There are many in the things, and many there are that say, and do not; it is particularly charged upon the Pharisees, ch. 23. 3. Many with their mouth show much love, but their heart goes another way. They had a good mind to be religious, but they met with something to be done, that was too hard, or something to be parted with, that was too dear, and so their purposes are to no purpose. Buds and blossoms are not fruit.

II. A general appeal upon the parable; Whither of them did the will of his father? v. 31. They both had their faults, one was rude, and the other was false; such variety of exercises parents sometimes have in the different humours of their children, and they have need of a great deal of wisdom and grace to know what is the best way of managing them. But the question is, Which was the better of the two, and the less faulty? And it was soon resolved; the first, because his actions were better than his words, and his latter end than his beginning. This they had learned from the common sense of mankind, who would much rather deal with one that will be better than his word, than with one that will be better than his work. And, as the attention of it, they had learned from the accounting God takes of us; the rule of his judgment, (Ezek. 18. 21, 22.) that if the sinner turn from his wickedness, he shall be pardoned; and if the righteous man turn from his righteousness, he shall be rejected. The tenour of the whole scriptures gives us to understand that those are accepted as doing their Father’s will, who, when they have missed it, are sorry for it, and do better.

III. A particular application of it to the matter in hand, v. 31, 32. The primary scope of the parable, is, to shew the difference between the publicans and harlots, who were generally reckoned among the most impious in the Baptist, and the rest of the world. The parable was thus talked of the Messias, the Messiah, his kingdom, yet entertained the doctrine, and submitted to the discipline, of John the Baptist, his forerunner, when the priests and elders, who were big with expectations of the Messiah, and seemed very ready to go into his measures, slighted John the Baptist, and run counter to the designs of his mission. But it has a further reach; the Gentiles were sometimes discoboured by John, as the publicans and harlots were; but they were not like the elder son; (Tit. 3. 3, 4.) yet, when the gospel was preached to them, they became obedient to the faith; whereas the Jews, who said, I go, sir, promised fair, (Exod. 24. 7. Josh. 24. 24.) yet went not; they did but flatter God with their mouth, Ps. 78. 36.

In Christ’s application of this parable, observe,

How he proves that John’s baptism was from heaven, and not of men. "If you cannot tell," saith Christ, "you might tell." (1.) By the scope of his ministry; John came unto you in the way of righteousness. Would you know whether John had his commission from Heaven, remember the rule of trial, By their fruits ye shall know them; the fruits of their doctrines, the fruits of their designs. Observe, to the baptism of John, how Christ thereupon observed; he may trace out both their rise and their tendency. Now it was evident that John came in the way of righteousness. In his ministry, he taught people to repent, and to work the works of righteousness. In his conversation, he was a great example of strictness, and seriousness, and contempt of the world, denying himself, and doing good to every body else. Christ therefore subverted all righteousness, and made it better to become him to fulfil all righteousness. Now, if John thus came in the way of righteousness, could they be ignorant that his baptism was from heaven, or make any doubt of it?

(2.) By the success of his ministry; The publicans and the harlots believed him; he did abundance of good among the worst sort of people. St. Paul proves his apostleship by the seals of his ministry, ch. 12. 3. He was, in the sight of men, a publican and a harlot; he would not have crowned his labours with such wonderful success, nor have made him so instrumental as he was for the conversion of souls. If publicans and harlots believe his report, surely the arm of the Lord is with him. The people’s profiting is the minister’s best testimonial.

2. How he reproves them for their contempt of John’s baptism, which yet, for fear of religion was expected. They promised little good, and those that knew them promised themselves little good from them. Their disposition was generally rude, and their conversation profane and debauched; and yet many of them were wrought upon by the ministry of John, who came in the spirit and power of Elias. See Luke 7. 29. These fidy represented the Gentile world; for, as Dr. Whitby observes, the Jews generally believed the publicans with the heathen; nay, and the heathen were represented by the Jews as harlots, and born of harlots, John 8. 41.

(2.) The Scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests
and elders, and indeed the Jewish nation in general, were like the other son that gave good words; they made a specious profession of religion, and yet, when the kingdom of the Messiah was brought among them by the baptism of John, they slighted it, they turned their back upon it, nay they lifted up the heel against it. A hypocrite is more hardly convinced and converted than a gross sinner; the form of godliness, if that be rested in, becomes one of Satan’s strong-holds, by which he opposes the power of godliness. It was an aggravation of their unbelief.

[1.] That John was such an excellent person, that he came, and came to them, in the way of righteousness. The better the means are, the greater will be the account be, if not improved. [2.] That, when they saw the publicans and harlots go before them into the kingdom of heaven, they did not afterward repent and believe; were not thereby provoked to a holy emulation, Rom. 11. 14. Shall publicans and harlots go away with grace and glory; and shall not we put in for a share? Shall our interiors be more holy and more happy than we? They had not the wit and grace that Esau had, who was moved to take other measures than he had done, by the example of his younger brother, Gen. 28. 6. These proud priests, that set up for leaders, scorned to follow, though it were into the kingdom of heaven, especially to follow publicans; through the pride of their countenance, they would not seek after God, after Christ, Ps. 10. 4.

33. Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: 34. And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. 35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. 37. But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. 39. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40. When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. 42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? 43. Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44. And whosoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 45. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. 46. But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

This parable plainly sets forth the sin and ruin of the Jewish nation; they and their leaders are the husbandmen here; and what is spoken for conviction to them, is spoken for caution to all that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, not to be high-minded, but fear God:

We have here the privileges of the Jewish church, represented by the letting out of a vineyard to the husbandmen; they were as tenants holding by, from, and under, God the great Householder. Observe,

1. How God established a church for himself in the world. The kingdom of God upon earth is here compared to a vineyard, furnished with all things requisite, an active generous management, and the improvement of it. (1.) He planted the vineyard. The church is the planting of the Lord, Isa. 61. 3. The forming of a church is a work by itself, like the planting of a vineyard, which requires a great deal of cost and care. It is the vineyard which his right hand has planted, (Ps. 80. 15.) planted with the chieftest vine, (Isa. 5. 2.) a noble vine, Jer. 2. 21. The earth of itself produces thorns and briars; vines must be planted. The being set up of a church is owing to God’s distinguishing favour, and his manifesting himself to some, and not to others. (2.) He hedged it round about. Note, God’s church in the world is taken under his special protection. It is a hedge round about, like that about Job on every side, (Job 1. 10.) a wall of fire, Zech. 2. 5. Wherever God has a church, it is, and will always be, his peculiar care. The covenant of circumcision and the ceremonial law were a hedge or a wall of partition about the Jewish church, which is taken down by Christ; who yet has appointed a gospel order and discipline to be the hedge of his church. He will not have his vineyard to lie in common, that those who are without may thrust in at pleasure; not to lie at large, that those who are within may lash out at pleasure; but care is taken to set bounds about this holy mountain. (3.) He digged a wine-press, and built a tower. The altar of burnt-offerings was the wine-press, to which all the offerings were brought. God instituted ordinances in his church for the due oversight of it, and for the promoting of its fruitfulness. What could have been done more to make it every way convenient?

2. How he intrusted these visible church privileges with the nation and people of the Jews, especially their chief priests and elders; he let it out to them, and made them, not because he had need of them, as landlords have of their tenants, but because he would try them, and be honoured by them. When in Judah God was known, and his name was great; when they were taken to be God for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; (Jer. 13. 11.) when he revealed his word unto Jacob; (Ps. 147. 19.) when the covenant of life and peace was made with Levi; (Mal. 2. 4, 5.) then this vineyard was of out of the breach, Gen. 41. 12. The Lord of the vineyard was to have a thousand pieces of silver, (compare Isa. 7. 13.) the main profit was to be his; but the keepers were to have two hundred, a competent and comfortable encouragement. And then he went into a far country. When God had in a visible appearance settled the
ST. MATTHEW, XXI.

(1.) Never did grace appear more glorious than in sending the Son. This was done last of all. Note, All the prophets were harbinger and forerunners to Christ. He was sent last; for if nothing else would work upon them, surely this would; it was therefore reserved for the ratio ultima—the last expedient. Surely they will reverence my Son, and therefore reverence me. Note, It might reasonably be expected that the Son of God, when he came to his own, should be revered; and reverence to Christ would be a powerful and effectual principle of fruitfulness and obedience, to the glory of God; if they will but reverence the Son, the point is gained. Surely they will reverence my Son, for he comes with more authority than the servants could; judge therefore, that all men who shall hear of me shall reverence our him. There is greater danger in refusing him than in despising Moses's law.

(2.) Never did sin appear more sinful than in the abusing of him, which was now to be done in two or three days. Observe,

[1.1] How it was plotted; (v. 38.) When they saw the Son: when he came, whom the people owned to be Messiah, and followed him; they could not have had the rent paid, or distrained for it; this touched their coprophyl, and they were resolved to make one bold push for it, and to preserve their wealth and grandeur by taking him out of the way, who was the only hinderer of it, and rival with them. This is the heir; come, let us kill him. Pilate and Herod, the princes of this world, knew not; for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But they knew not; for they were enemies of Christ. They, and therefore Come, let us kill him. Many are killed for what they have. The chief thing they envied him, and for which they hated and feared him, was, his interest in the people, and their hosannas, which, if he was taken off, they hoped to engross securely to themselves. They pretended that he must die, to save the people from the Romans; (John 11. 50.) but really he must die, to save their hypocrisy and tyranny from that reformation which the expected kingdom of the Messiah would certainly bring along with it. He drives the buyers and sellers out of the temple; and therefore let us seize on his inheritance. They thought, if they could ruin this Jesus, they should carry all before them in the church without control, might impose what traditions, and force the people to what submissions, they pleased. Thus they take cannon against the Lord and his anointed; but he that sits in heaven, lunghs to see them out-shot in their own bow; for, while they thought to kill him, and so to seize on his inheritance, he went by his cross to his crown, and they were broken in pieces with a red iron, and their inheritance seized. Ps. 2. 8, 9. [2.] How this plot was executed, v. 39. While they were so set upon killing him, in pursuance of their design to secure their own pomp and power, and while he was so set upon dying, in pursuance of his design to subdue Satan, and save his chosen, no wonder if they soon caught him and slew him, when his hour was come. Though the Roman power exactions, and their inheritance seized. Ps. 2. 8, 9, 10. Ps. 46. 9. Priests and elders; for they were not only the procurers, but the principal agents, and had the greater sin. Ye have taken, Acts 2. 23. Nay, looking upon him to be as unworthy to live, as they were unwilling he should, they cast him out of the vineyard, out of the holy church, which they supposed to have the key or, and out of the holy city, and fed them with the crucified. Acts 13. 12. As if He had been the Shame and Reproach, who was the greatest glory, of his people Israel. Thus they who persecuted the servants, persecuted
the Son; as men treat God's ministers, they would treat Christ himself, if he were with them.

IV. Here is their doom read out of their own mouths, v. 40, 41. He puts it to them, When the Lord of the vineyard had cast them out, what will they do? He puts it to themselves, for their stronger conviction, that, knowing the judgment of God against them which do such things, they might be the more inexcusable. Note, God's proceedings are so unexceptionable, that there needs but an appeal to sinners themselves concerning the equity of them. God will be justified when he speaks. They could readily answer, He will miserably destroy these wicked men. Note, Many can easily prognosticate the dismal consequences of other people's sins, that see not what will be the end of their own.

1. Our Saviour, in his question, supposes that the Lord of the vineyard will come, and reckon with them. God is the Lord of the vineyard; the property is his, and he will make them know it, who now lord it over his heritage, as if it were all their own. The Lord of the vineyard will come. The persecutors say in their hearts, He delays his coming; he doth not see, he will not require; but they shall find, though he hear long with them, he will not hear always. It is comfort to abuses saints and ministers, that the Lord is at hand, the Judge stands before the door. When he comes, what will he do to carnal professors? What will he do to cruel persecutors? They must be called to account, they have their day now; but he sees that his day is coming.

2. They, in their answer, suppose that it will be a terrible reckoning; the crime appearing so very black, you may be sure,

(1.) That he will miserably destroy those wicked men; it is destruction that is their doom. Κατετελεσθήναι τοις ἀδικοῖς.—Malos male perdet. Let men never expect to do ill, and fare well. This was fulfilled upon the Jews, in that miserable destruction which was brought upon them by the Roman sword; and was completed about forty years after this; an unparalleled ruin attended with all the most dismal aggravating circumstances. It will be fulfilled upon all that tread in the steps of their wickedness; hell is everlasting destruction, and it will be the most miserable destruction to them of all others, that have enjoyed the greatest share of church privileges, and have not improved them. The hottest place in hell will be by those of those privileges and persecutors.

(2.) That he will let out his vineyard to other husbandmen. Note, God will have a church in the world, notwithstanding the unworthiness and opposition of many that abuse the privileges of it. The unbelief and forwardness of man shall not make the word of God of no effect. If one will not, another will. The Jews' leavings were the Gentiles' feast. Persecutors may destroy the ministers, but cannot destroy the church. The Jews imagined that, no doubt, they were the people, and wisdom and holiness must die with them; and if they were cut off, what would God do for a church in the world? But when God makes use of any to bear up his name, it is not because he needs them, nor is he at all beholden to them. If we were made a desolation and an astonishment, God could build a flourishing church upon our ruins; for he is never at a loss what to do for his glory, and the advancement of his kingdom, wherever comes of us, and of our place and nation.

V. The further illustration and application of this by Christ himself, telling them, in effect, that they had rightly judged.

1. He illustrates it by referring to a scripture fulfilled in this; (v. 42.) Did ye never read in the scripture? Yes, no doubt, they had often read and sung it, but had not considered it. We lose the benefit of what we read, for want of meditation. The scripture he quotes, is, Ps. 118. 22, 23. the same context out of which the children fetched their hosannas.

The same word yields matter of praise and comfort to Christ's friends and followers, which spiritual enemies shall be sore distinguished. Such a two-edged sword is the word of God. That scripture, the Stone which the builders refused is become the Headstone of the corner, illustrates the preceding parable, especially that part of it which refers to Christ.

(1.) The builders rejecting the stone is the same with the husbandmen's abusing of the son that was sent to them. The chief priests and the elders were the builders, and had the oversight of the Jewish church, which was God's building; and they would not allow Christ a place in their building, would not admit his doctrine or laws into their constitution; they threw him aside as a despised broken Vessel, a Stone that would serve only for a stepping-stone, to be trampled upon.

(2.) The advancing of this stone to be the head of the corner, is the same with letting out the vineyard to other husbandmen. He who was rejected by the Jews, was embraced by the Gentiles; and to that church where there is no difference of circumcision or uncircumcision. Christ is all and in all. His authority over the gospel-church, and influence upon it, his ruling it as the Head of the corner; his right hand and his holy arm brought it about; it was God himself that highly exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, and that marvellous in our eyes. The wickedness of the Jews that rejected him, is marvellous; that men should be so prejudiced against their own interest; See Isa. 29. 9, 10, 14. The honour done him by the Gentile world, notwithstanding the abuses done him by his own people, is marvellous; that he whom men despised and abhorred, should be adored by kings! Isa. 49. 7. But it is the Lord's doing.

2. He applies it to them, and application is the life of preaching.

(1.) He applies the sentence which they had passed, (v. 41.) and turns it upon themselves; not the former part of it, concerning the miserable destruction of the husbandmen, (he could not bear to speak of that,) but the latter part, of letting out the vineyard to others; because, though it looked black upon the Jews, it spoke good to the Gentiles. Know therefore,

[2.] That the kingdom of God shall be taken from you. This turning out of the husbandmen speaks the same doom with that of dismantling the vineyard, and laying it common, Isa. 5. 5. To the Jews had long pertained the adoption and the glory; (Rom. 9. 4.) to them were committed the oracles of God, (Rom. 3. 2.) and the sacred trust of revealed religion, and bearing up of God's name in the world; (Ps. 76. 2.) but now no more; for the Gentiles were not unfruitful in the use of their privileges, but, under pretence of them, opposed the gospel of Christ, and so forfeited them, and it was not long ere the forfeiture was taken. Note, It is a righteous thing with God, to remove church privileges from those that not only sin against them, but sin with them, Rev. 2. 4, 5. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, not only by the temporal judgments that befell them, but by the spiritual judgments they lay under, their kindliness of mind, hardness of heart, and
indignation at the gospel, Rom. 11. 8—10. 1 Thess. 2. 13.

2. That the Gentiles shall be taken in. God needs not ask as leave, whether he shall have a church in the world; though his vine be plucked up in a meadow, and his grape plucked from the earth. He will give it 356—to the Gentile world, that will bring forth the fruit of it. They who had been not a people, and had not obtained mercy, became favourites of Heaven. This is the mystery which blessed Paul was so much affected with, (Rom. 11. 30, 33.) and which the Jews were so much affrighted by, Acts 22. 26. As at the first planting of Israel in Canaan, the fall of the Gentiles was the increase of Israel, (Ps. 110. 10, 11.) so, at their expiration, the fall of Israel was the riches of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 12. It shall go to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Note, Christ knows beforehand who will bring forth gospel-fruits in the use of gospel-means; because our fruitfulness is all the work of his own hands, and (even unto God) are all his works. They shall bring forth the fruits better than the Jews had done; God has had more glory from the New-Testament church than from that of the Old-Testament; for, when he changes, it shall not be to his loss.

2. He applies the scripture which he had quoted, (v. 42.) to their terror, v. 44. This Stone, which the builders refused, is set for the fall of many in Israel; and we have here the doom of two sorts of people. The fall it proves that Christ is set for a

[1.] Some, through ignorance, stumble at Christ, in his estate of humiliation; when this Stone lies on the earth, where the builders throw it, they, through their blindness and carelessness, fall on it, fall over it, and they shall be broken. The offence they take at Christ will not hurt him, any more than he that stumbles hurts the stone he stumbles at; but it will hurt themselves; they will fall, and be broken, and snared, Isa. 8. 14.—1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. The unbelief of sinners will be their ruin.

[2.] Others, through malice, oppose Christ, and bid defiance to him in his estate of exaltation, when this Stone is advanced to the head of the corner; and en them it shall fall, for they pull it on their own heads, as the Jews did by that challenge, His blood be upon your children, and it will grind them to powder. The effect of the sin and sorrows of all unbelievers; this is the greatest and soroser ruin, of persecutors, that kick against the pricks, and persist in it. Christ's kingdom will be a burrethensome stone to all those that attempt to overthrow it, or heave it out of its place; see Zech. 12. 3. This Stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, will break in pieces all opposing power, Dan. 2. 34, 35. Some make this an allusion to the manner of stoning to death among the Jews. The molefactors were first thrown down violently from a high scaffold upon a great stone, which would much bruise them; but then they threw another great stone upon them, which would crush them to pieces: one way or other, Christ will utterly destroy all those that fight against him. He be so stout-hearted, that they are not destroyed by the first stone, yet it shall fall on them, and so destroy them. He will stone through unto kings, he will fill the places with dead bodies, Ps. 110. 5, 6. None ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered.

Lastly, The entertainment which this discourse of Christ met with among the chief priests and elders, that is, their parable. 1. They refused that he shake of them, (v. 45.) and that, in what they said, (v. 41.) they had but read their own doom. Note, A guilty conscience needs no accuser, and sometimes will save a minister the labour of saying, Thou art the man. Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur—Change but the name, the tale is told of thee. So quick and power-

ful is the word of God, and such a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, that it is easy for bad men (if conscience be not quite feared) to perceive that it speaks of them.

2. They sought to lay hands on him. Note, When they who had heard the reproves of the word, perceive that it speaks of them, if it do not do them a great deal of good, it will certainly do them a great deal of hurt. If they be not prickled to the heart with conviction and contrition, as they were, Acts 2. 37. they will be cut to the heart with rage and indignation, as they were, Acts 5. 33.

3. They durst not do it, for fear of the multitude, who took him for a prophet, though not for the Messiah; this served to keep the Pharisees in awe. The fear of the people restrained them from speaking ill of John, (v. 26.) and here from doing ill to Christ. Note, God has many ways of restraining the remaining strays of wrath, as he has of making that which breaks out to redound to his praise, Ps. 76. 10.

CHAP. XXII.

This chapter is a continuation of Christ's discourses in the temple, or two or three days before his death. His discourses then are largely recorded, as being of special weight and consequence. In this chapter, we have, I. Instructio, given, by the parable of the marriage supper, concerning the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, (v. 1. 10.) and, by the doom of the guest that had not the wedding garment, the danger of hypocrisy in the profession of Christianity, v. 11—14. II. Disputes with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes, who opposed Christ, Concerning paying tribute to Caesar, v. 15—22. Concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the future state, v. 25—33. Concerning the great commandment of the law, v. 34—40. 4. Concerning the relation of the Messiah to David, v. 41—46.

1. And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, 2. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son. 3. And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. 4. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. 5. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise. 6. And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. 7. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. 8. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. 9. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. 10. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. 11. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?
And he was speechless. 13. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14. For many are called, but few are chosen.

We have here the parable of the guests invited to the wedding feast. In this it is said, (v. 1.) Jesus answered, not to what his opponents said, (for they were put to silence,) but to what they thought, when they were wishing for an opportunity to lay hands on him, ch. 21. 46. Note, Christ knows how to answer men's thoughts, for he is a Discerner of them. Or, He answered, that is, he continued his discourse to the same purport; for this parable represents the gospel-offer, and the church's reception of it. These guests are of the former, but under another similitude. The parable of the vineyard represents the sin of the rulers, that persecuted the prophets; it shows also the sin of the people, who generally neglected the message, while their great ones were persecuting the messengers.

1. Gospel-preparations are here represented by a feast which a king made at the marriage of his son; such things are a provision made for precious souls, in and by the new covenant. The King is God, a great King, King of kings. Now, 1. Here is a marriage made for his son. Christ is the Bridegroom, the church is the bride; the gospel day is the day of his espousals, Cant. 3. 11. Behold by faith the church of the first born, that are written in heaven, and were given to Christ by him whose they were; and in them you see the bride, the Lamb's wife, as the spotless and victorious marriage covenant betwixt Christ and believers, and it is a marriage of God's making. This branch of the similitude is only mentioned, and not prosecuted here. 2. Here is a dinner prepared for this marriage, v. 4. All the privileges of church membership, and all the blessings of the new covenant, pardon of sin, the favour of God, peace of conscience, the promises of the gospel, and all the riches contained in them, access to the throne of grace, the comfort of the Spirit, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life. These are the preparations for this feast, a heaven upon earth now, and a heaven in heaven shortly. God has prepared it in his counsel, in his covenant. It is a dinner, denoting present privileges in the midst of our day, beside the supper at night in glory. (1.) It is a feast. Gospel-preparations were prophesied of as a feast, (Isa. 66. 1.) a feast of fat things, and were typified by the many festivals of the ceremonial law; (1 Cor. 5. 8.) Let us keep the feast. A feast is a good day; (Esth. 8. 7.) so is the gospel; it is a continual feast. Oxen and fatlings are killed for this feast; no niceties, but substantial food; enough, and enough of the best. The day of a feast is a day of slaughter, or sacrifice, Jam. 5. 5. Gospel-preparations are all founded in the death of Christ, his sacrifice is the feast. A feast was made for love, it is a reconciliation feast, a token of God's good will toward men. It was made for laughter, (Eccle. 10. 19.) it is a rejoicing feast. It was made for fulness; the design of the gospel was to fill every hungry soul with good things. It was made for fellowship, to maintain an intercourse between heaven and earth. We are sent for to the banquet of Zion, that we may tell what is our petition, and what is our request. (2.) It is a wedding. Gospel-preparations are usually rich, free, and joyful. The first miracle Christ wrought, was, to make plentiful provision for a wedding feast; (John 2. 7.) and surely then he will not be wanting in provision for his own wedding feast, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride has made herself ready, a victorious triunphant feast, Rev. 19. 7, 17, 18.

(3.) It is a royal wedding feast; it is the feast of a king, (1 Sam. 25. 36.) at the marriage, not of a servant, but of a son; and then, if ever, he will, like Amasias, show the riches of his glorious kingdom, Esth. 1. 4. The provision made for believers in the covenant of grace, is not such as worthless worms, like us, had any reason to expect; but it becomes the feast of f Engels in grace. He gives him himself, for he gives himself to be to them El-shaddai—A God that is enough, a feast indeed for a soul.

II. Gospel calls and offers are represented by an invitation to this feast. Those that make a feast, will have guests to grace the feast with. God's guests are the children of men. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus dignified! The guests that were first invited were the Jews; where the gospel is preached, this invitation is given; ministers are the servants that are sent to invite, Prov. 9. 4, 5. Now, 1. The guests are called, bidden to the wedding. All that are within hearing of the joyful sound of the gospel, to them is the word of this invitation sent. The servants that bring the invitation do not set down their names in a paper; there is no occasion for that, since none are excluded but those that exclude themselves, who will not come. The former, are bidden to the wedding; for all that partake of gospel privileges, are to give a due and respectful attendance on the Lord Jesus, as the faithful friend and humble servant of the Bridegroom. They are bidden to the wedding, that they may go forth to meet the Bridegroom; for it is the Father's will that all men should honour the Son. 2. The guests are called upon; for in the gospel there are not only gracious persuasions made, but gracious persuasives. We persuade men, we beseech them in Christ's stead, 2 Cor. 5. 11, 28. See how much Christ's heart is set upon the happiness of poor souls! He not only provides for them, in consideration of their want, but sends to them, in consideration of their weakness and forgetfulness. When the invited guests were slack in coming, the king sent forth other servants, v. 4. When the prophets of the Old Testament, and the ministers of the Gospel, and Christ himself, who told them the entertainment was almost ready, (the kingdom of God was at hand,) the apostles and ministers of the gospel were sent, after Christ's resurrection, to tell them it was come, it was quite ready; and to persuade them to accept the offer. One would think it had been enough to give men an intimation that they had leave to come, and should be welcome; that, during the solemnity of the wedding, the king kept the banquet open, but, because the natural man discerns not, and therefore desires not, the things of the Spirit of God, we are pressed to accept the call by the most powerful inducements, drawn with the cords of man, and all the bonds of love. If the repetition of the call will move us, Behold, the Spirit saith, Come; and the bride saith, Come; let him that hears say, Come; let him that is athirst, come, Rev. 22. 17. After the reason of the call will work upon us, Behold, the dinner is prepared, the oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; the Father is ready to accept of us, the Son to intercede for us, the Spirit to sanctify us; pardon is ready, peace is ready, comfort is ready; the promises are ready, as wells of living water for supply; ordinances are ready, as golden pipes for conveyance; angels are ready to attend us, creatures are ready to be in league with us, provided we are ready. But let heaven, at last, be ready to receive us; it is a kingdom prepared, ready to be revealed in the last time. Is all this ready; and shall we be unread? Is all this preparation made for us; and is there any room to doubt of our welcome, if we come in a right man-
ner? Come, therefore, Oh come to the marriage; we beseech you, receive not all this grace of God in vain, 2 Cor. 6.

1. held about treatment which the gospel of Christ, often meets with among the children of men, represented by the cold treatment that this message met with, and the hot treatment that the messengers met with, in both which the king himself and the royal bridgroom are affronted. This reflects primarily upon the Jews, who rejected the counsel of God against their wills; and physicians to the people that would, by many in all ages, be put upon, and the opposition that would be given to, the gospel of Christ.

1. The message was basely slighted; (v. 3.) They would not come. Note, The reason why sinners come not to Christ and salvation by him, is, not because they cannot, but because they will not; (John 5. 46.); or, as this word, will not, signifies, will not come into, this will aggravate the misery of sinners, that they might have had happiness for the coming for, but it was their own act and deed to refuse it. I would, and ye would not. But this was not all; (v. 5.) they made light of it; they thought it not worth coming for; thought the messengers made more ado than needs; let them magnify the preparations ever so much, they could feast as well at home. Note, When taking light of Christ and the gospel, their salvation was wrought out by him, is the damning sin of the world. 

And the reason why they made light of the marriage feast, was, because they had other things that they minded more, and had more mind to; they went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Note, The business and profit of worldly employments prove to many a great hinderance in closing with Christ: none turn their back on the feast, but with some plausible excuse or other, Luke 14. 18. The country people have their farms to look after, about which there is always something or other to do; the town's people must tend their shops, and be constant upon the exchange; they must buy, and sell, and get gain. It is true that both farmers and merchants must be diligent in their business, but not so as to keep them from making religion their main business. Lidds pergium ounes—These lawful things undo us, when they are unlawfully managed; when we are so careful and trust ourselves with the world, as to turn the other thing needful. Observe, Both the city and the country have their temptations, the merchandise in the one, and the farms in the other; so that, whatever we have of the world in our hands, our care must be to keep it out of our hearts, lest it come between us and Christ.

2. The messengers were basely abused: The rectitude of the rest of them, that is, those who had not gone to the marriage, was represented by the husbadminen nor tradesmen, but ecclesiastics, the Scribes, and Pharisees, and Chief priests; these were the persecutors, these took the servants, and treated them spitefully, and slew them. This, in the parable, is unaccountable, never any could be so rude and barbarous as this, to servants that came to invite them to a feast; for the application of the parable, it was matter of fact; when the guests had been beautiful, because they brought the glad tidings of the solemn feasts, ( Nahum 1. 15.) were treated as the offscouring of all things, 1 Cor. 4. 13. The prophets and John the Baptist had been thus abused already, and the apostles and ministers of Christ must count upon the same. The Jews were, either directly or indirectly, agents in most of the persecutions of the first preachers of the gospel; witness the history of the Acts, that is, the sufferings, of the apostles.

V. That this ruin that was coming upon the Jewish church and nation, is here represented by the revenge which the king, in wrath, took on these insolent recusants; (v. 7.) He was wrath. The Jews, who had been the people of God's love and blessing, by rejecting the gospel, became the generation of his wrath and curse. Wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. 2. 16. Now, observe here, 1. When Christ's church is in the greatest want of help, it was their being murderers. He does not say he destroyed those despisers of his call, but those murderers of his servants; as if God were more jealous for the lives of his ministers than for the honour of his gospel; he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye. Note, Persecution of Christ's faithful ministers models the measure of guilt more than any thing. Filling Jerusalem with innocent blood, was that sin of Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings 24. 4. 2. What was the ruin itself, that was coming? He sent forth his armies. The Roman armies were his armies, of his raising, of his sending against the people of his wrath; and he gave them a charge to tread them under foot, Isa. 10. 6. God is the Lord of armies, and makes what he pleases of them, to serve his own purposes, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Mic. 4. 11, 12. His armies destroyed those murdurers, and burnt up their city. This points out very plainly the destruction of the Jews, and the burning of Jerusalem, by the Romans, forty years after this. No age ever saw a greater desolation than that, nor more of the direful effects of fire and sword. Though Jerusalem had been a holy city, the city that God had chosen to put his name there, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth; yet that city being now become a harlot, righteousness being no longer lodged in it, but murderers, the worst of murderers, (as the prophet speaks, Isa. 1. 21.) judgment came upon it, and ruin without remedy; and it is set forth for an example to all that should oppose Christ and his gospel. It was the Lord's doing, to avenge the quarrel of his covenant.

V. The replenishing of the church again, by the bringing in of the Gentiles, is here represented by the furnishing of the feast with guests out of the highways, v. 8, 10.

Here is, 1. The complaint of the master of the feast concerning those that were first bidden; (v. 8.) No man, as the Antichrist of most of the written church, was to be seelched, a church ready to be founded; but they which were bidden, that is, the Jews to whom pertained the covenant and the promises, by which they were of old invited to the feast of fat things, they were not worthy, they were utterly unworthy, and, by their contempt of Christ, had forfeited all the privileges they were invited to. Note, It is not owing to God that sinners perish, but to their own obstinacy. 2. Then Israel of old, in the land of Canaan, the land of promise was ready, the milk and honey ready, but their unbelief and murmuring, and contempt of that pleasant land, shut them out, and their carcasses were left to perish in the wilderness; and these things happened to them for examples. See 1 Cor. 10. 11. Heb. 3. 16—1. 4.

2. The commission he gave to the servants to invite others, that is, to call upon the city, (v. 7.) was refused; Go to the high-ways then; into the ways of the Gentiles, which at first they were to decline, ch. 10. 5. Thus, by the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 11, 12. Eph. 3. 8. Note, Christ will have a kingdom in the world, though many reject the grace, and resist the power, of that kingdom. Though Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious. The offer of Christ
Observe, This hypocrite was never discovered to be without a wedding garment, till the king himself came in to see the guests. Now, the guests that disguises will shortly be struck off, and every man will appear in his own colours; and an encouragement to us in our sincerity, that God is a witness to it.
15. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16. And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou regardest not the person of men. 17. Tell us therefore, What thinketh thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18. But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19. Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21. They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. 22. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

It was not the least grievous of the sufferings of Christ, that he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and had snares laid for him by those that sought how to take him off with some pretence. In these verses, we have him attacked by the Pharisees and Herodians, with a question about paying tribute to Caesar. Observe,

1. What the design was, which they proposed to themselves. They took counsel to entangle him in his talk. Hitherto, his encounters had been mostly with the chief priests and the elders, men in authority, who trusted more to their power than to their policy, and examined him concerning his commission; (ch. 21, 22.) but now he is set upon from another quarter; the Pharisees will try whether they can deal with him by their learning in the law, and in casuistical divinity, and they have a tentamen novum—a new trial for him. Note, It is vanity to think that, by their ingenuity, or interest, or industry, or even by their innocence and integrity, they can escape the hatred and ill-will of bad men, or screen themselves from the strife of tongues. See how unwearyed the enemies of Christ and his kingdom are in their opposition.

1. They took counsel. It was foretold concerning him, that the rulers would take counsel against him; (Ps. 2, 2.) and so persecuted they the prophets. Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. See Jer. 18. 18.—20. 10. Note, The more there is indignation; they will be like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord, Isa. 51. 20.—8, 21, 22. Let us therefore hear and fear.

Lastly, The parable is concluded with that remarkable saying which we had before, (ch. 20, 16.)

Many are called, but few are chosen, v. 14. Of the many that are called, few are chosen; and of the wedding feast, few set aside all those as unchosen, that made light of it, and avowedly prefer other things before it; if then you set aside all that make a profession of religion, but the temper of whose spirits, and the tenor of whose conversation, is a constant contradiction to it; if you set aside all the profane, and all the hypocritical, you will find that they are few, very few, that are chosen; and of those few, chosen by the Lord to the wedding feast, few chosen to the wedding garment, that is, to salvation, by sanctification of the Spirit. This is the strait gate, and narrow way, which few find.

Hitherto, or the like conclusions were drawn from the parable, but even so, how is it possible that they should have been taken up? If men are to be considered, it appears, that the sound of the voice is better than all words, He spake the word of God, and they could not understand it.

Complimented with the grace of the gospel, the heart will be wrought upon by the power of the Holy Spirit, and they will give up their former ways. He that is born of the Spirit, is born of the water and of the Spirit. If they could not understand the word of the Lord, they were blind and astronomy, and not be enlightened; and if they are enlightened by any means, they will not be content with that; but being committed to them, they will be rejected by them. The word of the Lord is a lamp to their feet, and a light to their path, but they will not walk in it. They will have no right or title to the word, if they reject it, they shall be spurned and despised. And if it be couched in a popular form as is the parable here, yet that will be of no avail; they shall be reproved in their own form, and their own language; and in their own reproach, and scorn, and hatred, and persecution, the sentence shall find them.
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of contrivance and consultation about sin, the worse it is. There is a particular woe to them that devise iniquity, Mic. 2. 1. The more there is of the wicked wit in the contrivance of a sin, the more there is of the wicked will in the commission of it.

2. That which they aimed at, was, to entangle him as much as possible. They saw him free and bold in speaking his mind, and hoped by that, if they could bring him to some nice and tender point, to get an advantage against him. It has been the old practice of Satan's agents and emissaries, to make a man an offender for a word, a word misplaced, or mistaken, or misunderstood; a word, though innocently designed, yet perverted by strained invernos; thus they lay a snare for him that reproved in the gate (Isa. 28. 21.) and represent them to their teacher as the greatest troublers of Israel: thus the wicked plotted against the just, Ps. 37. 12, 13.

There are two ways by which the enemies of Christ might be revenged on him, and be rid of him; either by law, or by force. By law they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the civil government; for it was not lawful for them to put any man to death; (John 18. 31.) and the Roman governors were apt to consult the lives and fortunes of men; to ask questions of words, and names, and their laws. Acts 18. 14. By force they could not do it, unless they could make him obnoxious to the people, who were always the hands, whoever were the heads, in such acts of violence, which they called the beating of the rebels; but the people took Christ for a Prophet, and therefore his enemies could not raise the mob against him. Now, (as the serpent way, from the beginning more subtle than any beast of the field,) the design was, to bring him into such a dilemma, that he must make himself liable to the displeasure, either of the Jewish multitude, or of the Roman magistrates; let him take which side of the question he will, he shall run himself into a premunire; and so they will gain their point, and make his own tongue to fall upon him.

II. If the question which they put to him, pursuant to this design, v. 16, 17. Having devised this iniquity in secret, in a close cabal, behind the curtain, when they went abroad, without loss of time, they practised it. Observe,

1. The persons they employed; they did not go themselves, lest the design should be suspected, and Christ should stand the more upon his guard; but they sent their disciples, who would look less like tutors and notoriety than the Pharisees and teachers. Note, Wicked men will never want wicked instruments to be employed in carrying on their wicked counsels. Pharisees have their disciples at their beck, who will go on any errand for them, and say as they say; and they have this in their eye, when they are so industrious to make proscytes.

With them they sent the Herodians, a party among the Jews, who were for a cheerful and easy taxation under the Roman emperor, and to Herod his deputy; and who made it their business to concile people to that government, and pressed all to pay their tribute. Some think that they were the collectors of the land tax, as the publicans were of the customs, and that they went with the Pharisees to Christ, with this blind upon their plot, that, while the Herodians demanded the tax, and the Pharisees denied it, they were both willing to refer it to Christ, as in such a case he was able to decide the quarrel. Herod being obliged, by the usurpers of the sovereignty, to take care of the tribute, these Herodians, by assisting him in that, helped to endear him to his great friends at home. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were zealous for the liberty of the Jews, and did what they could to make them impatient of the Roman yoke. Now, if he should countenance the paying of tribute, the Pharisees would incense the people against him; if he should discontent them or disallow it, the Herodians would incense the government against him. Note, It is common for those that oppose one another, to continue in an opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Samson's foxes looked several ways, that might pass him through his most specious prerogative. See Jer. 3. 5, 7, 8. If they are unanimous in opposing, should not we be so in maintaining, the interests of the gospel?

2. The preface, with which they were plausibly to introduce the question; it was highly complimentary to our Saviour; (v. 16.) Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. Note, It is a common thing for the most spiritful projects to be introduced with a most plausible preface. Had they come to Christ with the most serious and sincere intention, they could not have expressed themselves better. Here is hatred covered with deceit, and a wicked heart with burning lips; (Prov. 26. 23.) as Judas, who kissed, and betrayed, as Joab, who kissed, and killed. Now, (1.) What they said of Christ, was right, and, whether they knew it or no, blessed be God, whom we know.

[1.] That Jesus Christ was a faithful Teacher; Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. For himself, he is true, the Amen, the faithful Witness; he is the Truth itself. As for his doctrine, the matter of his teaching was the way of God, the way that God requires us to walk in, the way of duty, that leads to happiness; that is the way of God. The manner of it was in truth; he showed people that there is a way, the way in which they should go. He was a skilful Teacher, and knew the way of God; and a faithful Teacher, that would be sure to let us know it. See Prov. 8. 6—9. This is the character of a good teacher, to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and not to suppress, pervert, or stretch, any truth, for favour or affection, hatred or good-will, either out of a desire to please, or a fear to offend, any man.

[2.] That he was a held Reformer. In preaching, he cared not for any; he valued no man's frowns or smiles, he did not court, he did not dread, either the great or the many, for he regarded not the person of man. In his evangelical judgment, he did not know faces; that Lion of the tribe of Judah turned not away for any, (Prov. 30. 30.) turned not a step from the truth, nor from his work, for fear of the most formidable. He reproved with equity, (Isa. 11. 4.) and never with partiality.

(2.) Though what they said was true for the matter of it, yet there was nothing but flattery and treachery in the intention of it. They called him Master, when they were contriving to treat him as the worst of malefactors; they pretended respect for him, when they intended mischief against him; and they affronted his wisdom as Man, much more his omniscience as God, of which he had so often given undeniable proofs, which they pretended that he could improve upon him with these pretences, and that he could not see through them. It is the grossest atheism, that is, the greatest folly in the world, to think to put a cheat upon Christ, who searches the heart, Rev. 2. 23. Those that mock God, do but deceive themselves, Gal. 6. 7.

3. The proposal of the case; What thinkest thou? As if they had said, "Many men are of many minds in this matter—many have a variety of opinion, or else let us have thy thoughts freely in the matter. Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" This implies a further question; Has Caesar a right to demand it? The nation of the Jews was lately, about a hundred years before this, conquered by the Roman sword, and so, as other nations, made subject to the Roman yoke, and became a province of the empire; accordingly, toll, tribute, and cus-
tom, were demanded from them, and sometimes poll-money. By this it appeared that the scripture was departed from Judah; (Gen. 49. 16.) and therefore, if they had understood the signs of the times, they might have discerned in their midst either that this was he, or they must find out another more likely to be so.

Now, the question was, Whether it was lawful to pay these taxes voluntarily, or, Whether they should not insist upon the ancient liberty of their nation, and rather suffer themselves to be strained upon? The ground of the doubt was, that they were Abraham's seed, and should not consent be tributary to him, John 8. 33. God had given them a law, that they should not set a stranger over them; Did not that imply that they were not to yield any willing subscription to any prince, state, or potentate, that was not of their own nation and religion? This was an old mistake, arising from that pride, and that haughty spirit, which bring destruction and a fall. Jeremiah, in his time, though he spake in God's name, could not possibly beat them off it, nor persuade them to submit to the King of Babylon; and their obstinacy in that matter was then their ruin: (Jer. 27. 13.) and now again they stumbled at the same stone; and it was the very thing which, in a few years after, brought final destruction upon them by the Romans. They quite mistook the sense both of the precept and of the privilege, and, under colour of it, work out their own ruin, when they should have kissed the rod, and accepted the punishment of their iniquity.

However, by this question they hoped to entangle Christ, and, which way sower he solved it, to expose him to the fury either of the jealous Jews, or of the jealous Romans; they were ready to triumph, as Pharaoh did over Israel, that the wilderness had shut him in, and his doctrine would be concluded either injurious to the rights of the church, or hurtful to kings and provinces.

III. The breaking of this snares by the wisdom of the Lord Jesus.

1. He discovered it; (v. 18.) He perceived their wickedness; for, surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird, Prov. 1. 17. A temptation perceived has conquered, for our greatest danger lies in the sneaks; and avoided it. Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Whatever vizard the hypocrites put on, our Lord Jesus sees through it; he perceives all the wickedness that is in the hearts of pretenders, and can easily convict them of it, and set it in order before them. He cannot be imposed upon, as we often are, by flatteries and fair pretences. He that searches the heart, can call hypocrites by their own name, as Ahab did the wife of Jezebel, (1 Kings 14. 6.) Why feignest thou thyself to be another? Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Note, Hypocrites tempt Jesus Christ; they try his knowledge, whether he can discover them through their disguises; they try his holiness and truth, whether he will allow of them in his church; but if they that of old tempted Christ, when he had not the mystery revealed, were destroyed of serpents, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy, who tempt him now in the midst of gospel-light and love! Those that presume to tempt Christ will certainly find him too hard for them, and that he is of more piercing eyes than not to see, and more pure eyes than not to hate, the disguised wickedness of hypocrites, that dig deep to his secrets, and attempt to ensnare him.

2. He evaded it; his convicting them of hypocrisy might have served for an answer; such captious malicious questions deserve a reproof, not a reply: but our Lord Jesus gave a full answer to their question, and introduced it by an argument sufficient to support it, so as to lay down a rule for his church in this matter, and yet to avoid giving offence, and to break the snare.

(1.) He forced them, ere they were aware, to confess Caesar's authority over them, v. 19, 20. In this they were willing that those that are captious should give our reasons, and, if possible, reasons of confessed cogency, before we give our resolutions. Thus the evidence of truth may silence gain-sayers by surprise, while they only stood upon their guard against the truth itself, not against the reason of it; shew me the tribute money. He had none of his own to convince them by; it should seem he had not said so much money as he had; but as for us, he emptied himself and became a curse; he despised the wealth of this world, and thereby taught us not to overvalue it; silver and gold he had none; why then should we covet to load ourselves with the thick clay? The Romans demanded their tribute in their own money, which was current among the Jews at that time; that, therefore, is called the tribute money; he does not name what piece, but the tribute money, to shew that he did not mind things of that nature, nor concern himself about them; his heart was upon better things, the kingdom of God, and the riches and righteousness thereof, and our's should be too. They presently brought him a penny, a Roman penny in silver, in value about seven pence halfpenny of our money, the most common piece then in use; it was stamped with the emperor's image, and the Roman superscription, which was the warrant of the public faith for the value of the pieces so stamped; a method agreed on by most nations, for the more easy circulation of money with satisfaction. The coining of money has always been looked upon as a branch of the prerogative, a flower of the crown, a royalty belonging to the sovereign powers; and the admitting of that as the good and lawful money of a country, is an implicit submission to those powers, and an owning of them in money matters. How happy is our constitution, and how happy we, who live in a nation where, though the image and superscription be the sovereign's, the property is the subjects, under the protection of the laws, and that what we have we can call our own!

Christ asked them, Whose image is this? They owned it was Caesar's, and thereby convicted those of falsehood, who said, Wc were never in bondage to any; and confirmed what afterwards they said, We have no king but Caesar. It is a rule in the Jewish Talmud, that "he is the king of the country whose coin is current in the country." Some think that the superscription upon this coin, was, a memorandum of the conquest of Judea by the Romans, anno frrorn captain Judah—be year after that event; and that they admitted that too.

(2.) From thence he inferred the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar; (v. 21.) Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; not, Give it him, (as they expressed it, v. 17.) but "Render it;" Return, or, "Restore it;" if Caesar fill the purses, let Caesar command them. It is too late now to dispute about paying the tax; the Jews would have to the province of the empire, and, when once a relation is admitted, the duty of it must be performed. Render to all their due; and, particularly, tribute to whom tribute is due. Now, by this answer, [1.]

[1. No offence was given. It was much to the honour of Christ and his doctrine, that he did not interpose as a Judge or a Divider in matters of this more, but left them as a question for the people. This is not of this world; and in this he hath given an example to his ministers, who deal in sacred things, not to meddle with disputes about things secular, not to wade far into controversies relating to them, but to leave that to those whose proper business it is. Ministers, that would mind their busi-
and yet not precious. They admire his wisdom, but will not be guided by it, his power, but will not submit to it. They went their way, as persons shamed, and made an inglorious retreat. The stratagem being defeated, they quitted the field. Note, There is nothing got by contending with Christ.

23. The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him, 24. Saying, Mas-
ter, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 25. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother. 26. Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. 27. And last of all the woman died also. 28. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven. 31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

We have here Christ's dispute with the Saddu-
cees concerning the resurrection; it was the same day on which he was attacked by the Pharisees about paying tribute. Satan was now more than ever to ruffle and disturb him; it was an hour of temptation, Rev. 3. 10. The truth as it is in Jesus will still meet with contradiction, in some branch or other of it. Observe here, 

I. The opposition which the Sadducees made to a very great truth of religion; they say, There is no resurrection, as there are some fools who say, There is no God. These heretics were called Sadducees, from one Sadoc, a disciple of Antigonus Socheus, who flourished about two hundred and eighty-four years before our Saviour's birth. They lie under heavy censures among the writers of their own na-
tion, as men of base and debauched conversations, which their principles led them to. They were the fewest in number of all the sects among the Jews, but generally persons of some rank. As the Phar-
isees and Essenes seemed to follow Plato and Pytha-
goras, so the Sadducees were much of the genius of the Epicureans, they denied the resurrection, they said, There is no future state, no life after this; that, when the body dies, the soul is annihilated, and dies with it; that there is no state of rewards or punishments in the other world; no judgment to come in heaven or hell. They maintained, that, except God, there is no spirit (Acts 23. 8.) nothing but matter and motion. They would not own the divine inspiration of the prophets, nor any revela-
tion from heaven, but what God himself spake upon mount Sinai. Now, the doctrine of Christ carried
that great truth, of the resurrection and a future state, much farther than it had yet been revealed, and therefore the Sadducees in a particular manner set themselves against it. The Pharisees and Sadducees were contrary to each other, and yet federates against Christ. Christ’s gospel hath always suffered between superstitions ceremonial hypocrisies and bigotries on the one hand, and profane destines and infidelities on the other. The former abusing, the latter despising the form of godliness, but both denying the flower of it.

II. The objection they made against the truth, which was taken from a supposed case of a woman that had seven husbands successively; now, they take it for granted, that, if there be a resurrection, it must be a return to such a state as this we are now in, and to the same circumstances, like the imaginary Platonic year; and if so, it is an invincible absurdity for this woman in the future state to have seven husbands, or else an insuperable difficulty which of them should have her; he whom she had first, or he whom she had last, or he whom she loved best, or he whom she lived longest with.

1. They suggest the law of Moses in this matter, (v. 24.) that the next of kin should marry the widow of him that died childless; (Deut. 25. 5.) we have therefore (Ruth 4. 5.) It was a political law, founded in the particular constitution of the Jewish commonwealth, to preserve the distinction of families and inheritances, of both which there was special care taken in that government.

2. They put a case upon this statute, which, whether it were a case in fact, or only a moot case, is not at all material; if it had not really occurred, yet possibly it might. It was of seven brothers, who married the same woman, v. 25—27. Now, this case supposes,

(1.) The desolations that death sometimes makes in families when it comes with commission; how it often sweeps away a whole fraternity in a little time; seldom (as the case is put) according to seniority, (the land of darkness is without any order,) but heads upon heads; it diminishes families that had multiplied greatly, Ps. 107. 38, 39. When there were seven brothers grown up to man’s estate, there was a family very likely to be built up; yet this numerous family leaves neither son nor heir, nor any remaining in their dwellings, Job 18. 19. Well may we say then, Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Let none be sure of the advancement and perpetuity of their names and posterities, unless they could make a covenant of peace with death, or be at an agreement with the grave.

(2.) The obedience of these seven brothers to the law, though they had a power of refusal under the penalty of a reproach, Deut. 25. 7. Note, Discouraging providences should not keep us from doing our duty; because we must be governed by the rule, not the event. The seventh, who ventured last to marry the widow, as the law says, saith a bold man. I would say, if he did it purely in obedience to God, he was a good man, and one that made conscience of his duty.

But, last of all, the woman died also. Note, Survivorship is but a reprise; they that live long, and bury their relations and neighbours one after another, do thereby acquire an immortality; no, their day will come at last. Death’s bitter cup goes round, and, sooner or later, we must all pledge it in it, Jer. 25. 26.

3. They propose a doubt upon this case; (v. 28.) “In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? You cannot tell whose; and therefore we must conclude there is no resurrection.” The Pharisees, who professed to believe a resurrection, had very gross and carnal notions concerning it, and concurring the future state; expecting to find there, as the Turks in their paradise, the delights and pleasures of the animal life, which perhaps drove the Sadducees to deny the thing itself; for nothing gives greater advantage to atheism and infidelity, than the carnality of those that make religion, either in its professions or in its prospects, a servant to their sensual appetites and secular interests; while those that are erroneous deny the truth, those that are right are not satisfied with it. Now they, in this objection, went upon the Pharisees’ hypothesis. Note, It is not strange that carnal minds have very false notions of spiritual and eternal things. The natural man receiveth not these things, for they are foolishness to him, 1 Cor. 2. 14. Let truth be set in a clear light, and then it appears in its full strength.

III. Christ’s answer to this objection; by reproving their ignorance, and rectifying their mistake, he shows the objection to be fallacious and unconvincing.

1. He reproves their ignorance; (v. 28.) Ye do err. Note, Those do greatly err, in the judgment of Christ, who deny the resurrection and a future state. Here Christ reproves with the meekness of wisdom, and is not so sharp upon them (whatever was the reason) as sometimes he was upon the chief of his accusers; Luke 23. 34. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error; those that are in the dark, miss their way. The patrons of error do, therefore, resist the light, and do what they can to take away the key of knowledge; Ye do err in this matter, not knowing. Note, Ignorance is the cause of error about the resurrection and the future state. What it is in its particular instances, the wisest and best know not; it doth not yet appear what we shall be, it is a mystery that is to be revealed; when we speak of the state of separate souls, the resurrection of the body, and of eternal happiness and misery, we are soon at a loss; we cannot order our speech, by reason of darkness, but that it is, is a thing about which we are not left in the dark; blessed be God, We are not; and those who deny it, are guilty of a willing and affected ignorance. It seems there were some Sadducees, some such monsters, among professing Christians, some among you, that say, There is no resurrection of the dead; 1 Cor. 15. 12.) and some that did in effect deny it, by turning it into an allegory, saying, The resurrection is past already. Now observe,

(1.) They know not the power of God; which would lead men to infer, that there may be a resurrection and a future state. Those who believe, disbelieve, or weak belief, of God’s power, is at the bottom of many errors, particularly their’s who deny the resurrection. When we are told of the soul’s existence and agency in a state of separation from the body, and especially that a dead body, which has lain many ages in the grave, and is turned into common and undistinguished dust, that this shall be raised the same body that it was, and made perfect, how can they, How can these be? Nature allows it for a maxim, Abrege ad habitudinem non clatur regresse—The habits attaching to a state of existence vanish irrecoverably with the state itself. If a man die, shall he live again? And vain men, because they cannot comprehend the way of it, question the truth of it; whereas, if we firmly believe in God the Father Almighty, that nothing is impossible with him, we do not so much as vainly. This, therefore, we must fasten upon, in the first place, that God is omnipotent, and can do what he will; and then no room is left for doubting but that he will do what he has promised; and if so, why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? Acts 26. 8. His power far exceeds the power of nature.

(2.) They know not the scriptures, which de-
cededly affirm that there shall be a resurrection and a future state. The power of God, determined and engaged by his promise, is the foundation for faith to build upon. Now, the scriptures speak plainly, that the soul is immortal, and there is another life after this; it is the scope both of the law and of the prophets, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, and a judgment of the just and the unjust, Acts 24. 14, 15. Job knew it, (Job 19. 26.) Ezekiel foresees it, (Ezek. 37.) and Daniel plainly foretold it, Dan. 12. 2. Christ rose again according to the scriptures; (1 Cor. 15. 3.) and so shall we. Those, therefore, who deny it, either have not conversed with the scriptures, or do not believe them, or do not take the true sense and meaning of them. Note, Ignorance of the scripture is the rise of abundance of mischief.

2. He rectifies his mistake, and (v. 30.) corrects those gross ideas which they had of the resurrection and a future state, and fixes these doctrines upon a true and lasting basis. Concerning that state, observe,

(1.) It is not like the state we are now in upon earth; They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, through the fear of death, (v. 2.) because it was instituted in innocency; whatever intermission or neglect there has been of other institutions, this was never laid aside, nor will be to the end of time. In the old world, they were marrying, and giving in marriage; the Jews in Babylon, when cut off from other ordinances, yet were bid to take them wives, Jer. 29. 6. All civilized nations have had a sense of the obligation of the marriage. The man and woman, and it is requisite for the gratifying of the desires, and recruiting the deficiencies, of the human nature. But, in the resurrection, there is no occasion for marriage; whether in glorified bodies there will be any distinction of sexes some too curiously dispute; (the ancients are divided in their opinions about it;) but whether there will be a distinction or no, it is certain that there will be no conjunction; where God will be all in all, there needs no other meeting; the body will be spiritual, and there will be in it no carnal desires to be gratified: when the mystical body is completed, there will be no further occasion to seek a godly seed, which was one end of the institution of marriage, Mal. 2. 15. In heaven there will be no decree of the individuals, and therefore no eating and drinking; no decree of the species, and therefore no marrying; where there shall be no more births, (Rev. 21. 4.) there needs be no other meeting. The married state is a composition of joys and cares; those that enter upon it, are taught to look upon it as subject to changes, richer and poorer, sickness and health; and therefore it is fit for this mixed, changing world; but, as in hell, where there is no joy, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride shall be heard no more at all, so in heaven, where there is all joy, and no care, or pain, or trouble, or trouble, or care, (Rev. 21. 4.) there needs be no other meeting. The state of death, death shall be swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. 15. 54. The marriage of the Lamb, Rev. 19. 7, will be no other meeting. The body will be spiritual, and arise from the marriage of all of them to the Lamb, not of any of them to one another.

2. It is like the state angels are now in, in heaven; They are as the angels of God in heaven; they are so, that is, undoubtedly they shall be so. They are so already in Christ their Head, who has made them to dwell in holy places, Eph. 2. 6. The spirits of just men already glorified are in the same company with the innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12. 22, 23. Man, in his creation, was made a little lower than the angels; (Ps. 8. 5.) but, in his complete redemption and renovation, will be as the angels; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of the saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompoundvehicles of those pure and holy spirits, (1 Cor. 15. 42, 82.) swift and strong like them. We should therefore desire and eudoe vour to do will the power of God now as the angels do it in heaven, because we hope shortly to be like the angels, who always beheld our Father's face. He saith nothing of the resurrection; but, by consequence, they shall be like the devils, whose lusts they have done.

IV. Christ's argument to confirm this great truth of the resurrection and a future state; the matters being of great concern. he did not think it enough (as in some other disputes) to discover the fallacy and sophistry of the objections, but backed the truth with a solid argument; for Christ brings forth judgmen
to truth; this is proved by what he has said, and enables his followers to give a reason of the hope that is in them. Now observe,

1. Whence he fetched his argument—from the scriptures; that is the great magazine, or armory, whence we may be furnished with spiritual weapons, offensive and defensive. It is written, is Goliath's sword. Have ye not read that which was spoken to you by God? Note, (1.) What the scripture speaks, God speaks. (2.) What was spoken to Moses, was spoken to us; it was spoken and written for our learning. (3.) It concerns us to read and hear what God hath spoken, because it is spoken to us. It was spoken to you Jews, in the first place, for to them were committed the oracles of God. The argument is fetched from the books of Moses, because the Sadducees received them only, as some think, however, them chiefly, for canonical scripture; for Christ therefore fetched his proof from the most indisputable fountain. The latter prophets have more express proofs of a future state than the law of Moses has; for, though the law of Moses supposes the immortality of the soul and a future state, as principles of what is called natural religion, yet no express revelation of it is made by the law of Moses; because so much of that law was peculiar to that people, and was therefore guarded, as municipal laws used to be, with temporal promises and threatenings, and the more express revelation of a future state was reserved for the latter days; but our Saviour finds a very solid argument for the resurrection, even in the writings of Moses. Much scripture-treasure lies under ground, that must be digged for.

2. What his argument was; (v. 32.) I am the God of Abraham. This was not an express proof, totidem verbis—in so many words; and yet it was really a conclusive argument. Consequences from scripture, if rightly deduced, must be received as scripture; for it was written for those that have the use of reason.

Now the drift of the argument is to prove,

(1.) That there is a future state, another life after this, in which the righteous shall be truly and com-

pletely happy, as he has proved it from what God said; I am the God of Abraham.

(2.) For God to be any one's God, supposes some very extraordinary privilege and happiness; unless we know fully what God is, we could not comprehend the riches of that word, I will be to thee a God, that is, a Benefactor like myself. The God of Israel is a God to Israel, (1 Chron. 17. 24.) a spiritual Benefactor; for he is the Father of Faith, and brought them to liberty, and gave them the land that is to be an all-sufficient Benefactor, a God that is enough, a complete Good, and an eternal Benefactor; for he is himself an everlasting God, and will be to those that are in covenant with him an everlasting Good. This great word God had often said to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and it was intended as a recom-
pense for their singular faith and obedience, in quieting their country at God's call. The Jews had a
for themselves. But the multitude were astonished at his doctrine, v. 33. 1. Because it was new to them. See to what a sad pass the exposition of scripture was come among them, when people were astonished at it as a miracle, to hear the fundamental propositions of this great truth; they had never Scribes, or this had been no news to them. 2. Because it had something in it very good and great. Truth often shews the brighter, and is the more admired, for its being opposed. Observe, Many gain-sayers are silenced, and many hearers astonished, without being savorily converted; yet, even in the silence and astonishment of unsanctified souls, God not only gives his word, magnifies his gospel, and makes both honorable.

34. But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. 35. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 36. Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37. Jesus said unto him. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38. This is the first and great commandment. 39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Here is a discourse which Christ had with a Pharisee lawyer, about the great commandment of the law. Observe,

I. The combination of the Pharisees against Christ, v. 34. They heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, had stopped their mouths, though their understandings were not opened; and they were gathered together, not to return him the thanks of their party, as they ought to have done, for his effectual asserting and confirming of the truth against the Sadducees, the common enemies of their religion, but to tempt him, in hopes to get the reputation of puzzling him who had puzzled the Sadducees. Now they were all Pharisees. But Christ was honoured, than pleased that the Sadducees were silenced: being more concerned for their own tyranny and traditions, which Christ opposed, than for the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, which the Sadducees opposed. Note, It is an instance of Pharisaical envy and malice, to be displeased at the maintaining of a confessed truth, when it is done by those we do not like; to sacrifice a public good to private piques and prejudices. Blessed Paul was otherwise minded, Phil. 1. 18.

II. The lawyer's question, which he put to Christ The lawyers were students in, and teachers of, the law of Moses, as the Scribes were; but some think that in this they differed, that they dealt more in practical questions than the Scribes; they studied and reckoned comic. This lawyer asked him a question, tempting him: not with any design to insnare him, as appears by St. Mark's relation of the story, where we find that this was he to whom Christ said, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God, Mark 12. 34, but only to see what he would say, and to draw on discourse with him, to satisfy his own and his friends' curiosity.

1. The question was, Master, which is the great commandment of the law? A needless question, when all the things of God's law are great things, (Hos. 8. 12.) and the wisdom from above is without partiality, partiality in the law, (Mal. 2. 9.) and hath respect to all men. Yet, it is true, there are some
commands that are the principles of the oracles of God, more extensive and inclusive than others. Our Saviour speaks of the weightier matters of the law, ch. 23.

2. The design was to try him, or tempt him; to try, not so much his knowledge as his judgment. It was a question disputed among the critics in the law. Some would have the law of circumcision to be the commandment, others the law of the sabbath, others the law of sacrifices, according as they severally stood affected, and spent their zeal; now they would try what Christ said to this question, hoping to incense the people against him, if he should not answer according to the vulgar opinion; and if he should magnify one commandment, they would reflect on him as vilifying the rest. The question was harmless enough, and it appears, by a short letter and swift reply, and if that be the sub- point among the lawyers, that the law of God and our neighbour is the great commandment, and the sum of all the rest, and Christ had there approved it; so that the putting of it to him, here, seems rather a scornful design to catechise him as a child, than a pitiful design to dispute with him as an adversary.

It was the Christ's answer to this question. It is well for us that such a question was asked him, that we might have his answer. It is no dispensation to great men to answer plain questions. Now, Christ recommends to us those as the great commandments, not which are so exclusive of others, but which are therefore great, because inclusive of others. Observe,

1. Which these great commandments are; (v. 57-59) not the judicial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that the people of the Jews, to whom they pertained, were so little; not the ceremonial laws, those could not be the greatest, now that they were waxen old, and were ready to vanish away; nor any particular moral precept; but the love of God and our neighbour, which are the spring and foundation of all the rest, which (these being supposed) will follow of course.

(1.) All the law is fulfilled in one word, and that is, love. See Rom. 13. 10. All obedience begins in the affections, and nothing in religion is done right, that is not done there first. Love is the leading affection, which gives law, and gives ground, to the rest; and therefore that, as the main fort, is to be first secured and garrisoned for God. Man is a creature cut out for love; thus therefore is the law written in the heart, that it is a law of love. Love is the soul of the law, and fulness of the law, surely the yoke of the command is very easy. Love is the rest and satisfaction of the soul; if we walk in this good old way, we shall find rest.

(2.) The love of God is the first and great commandment of all, and the summary of all the commandments of the first table. The proper act of love being complacency, good is the proper object of it. Now God is every way good; therefore, finally, and essentially, is to be loved in the first place, and nothing loved beside him, but what is loved for him. Love is the first and great thing that God demands from us, and therefore the first and great thing that we should devote to him.

Now here we are directed,

[1.] To love God as our's; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods; which implies, that we must have him for our God, and that will engage our love to him. Those that made the sun and moon their gods, loved them, Jer. 8. 2. Judges 18. 24. To love God as our's, is to love him because he is our's, our Creator, Owner, and Ruler, and to conduct ourselves to him as our's, with obedience to him, and dependence on him. We must love God as reconciled to us, and made our's by covenant; that is the foundation of this, Thy God.

[2.] To love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind. Some make this to signify one and the same thing, to love him with all our powers; others distinguish them; the heart, soul, and mind, are the will, affections, and understanding; the will and affections may run independently, and therefore have their own rules, and their own objects and actions, without the direction, or power of the understanding. Our love of God must be a sincere love, and not in word and tongue only, as their's is, who say they love him, but their hearts are not with him. It must be a strong love, we must love him in the most intense degree; as we must praise him, with all that is within us, Ps. 103. 1. It must be a singular and superlative love, we must love him more than any thing else; in this way the streams of our affections must entirely run. The heart must be united to love God, in opposition to a divided heart. All our love is too little to bestow upon him, and therefore all the powers of the soul must be engaged for him, and carried out toward him. This is the first and great commandment; for obedience to this is the spring of obedience to all the rest; which is then only acceptable, when it flows from these passions.

[3.] To love our neighbour as ourselves is the second great commandment; (v. 39.) It is like unto that first; it is inclusive of all the precepts of the second table, as that is of the first. It is like it, for it is founded upon it, and flows from it; and a right love to our brother, whom we have seen, is both an instance and an evidence of our love to God, whom we have not seen, 1 John 4. 20.

[1.] It is implied, that we do, and should, love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and the root of the greatest sins, and it must be put off and mortified: but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be preserved and sanctified. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard to the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

[3.] It is prescribed, that we love our neighbour as our-selves. We must honour and esteem all men, and must wrong and injure none; must have a good will to all, and good wishes for all, and, as we have opportunity, must do good to all. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances; nay, in many cases we must deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, and must make ourselves servants to the true welfare of others, and be willing to spend and be spent for them, to lay down our lives for the brethren.

2. Observe what the weight and greatness of these commandments is; (v. 40.) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets; that is, This is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion, which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching of the prophets. They are the foundation, and hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonial do no way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel, too, only make the love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ, and our neighbour for his sake. All hangs on these two commandments, as the effect doth both on its efficient and on its final cause; for the fulfilling of the law is love, (Rom. 13. 10.) and the end of the law is love, 1 Tim. 1. 5. The law of love is the nail, is the nail in the sure place, fastened
by the masters of assemblies, (Excl. 12. 11.) on which is hung all the glory of the law and the prophets, (Heb. 11. 1.) and which stands on this nail all the glory of the new Jerusalem shall eternally hang. Love never faileth. Into these two great commandments therefore let our hearts be delivered as into a mould; in the defence and evidence of these let us spend our zeal, and not in notions, names, and striking of words, as if those were the mighty things on which the law and the prophets hang, and to them the love of God and our neighbour must be sacrificed; but to the commanding power of these let every thing else be made to bow.

41. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them. 42. Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. 43. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? 45. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? 46. And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

Many questions the Pharisees had asked Christ, oy which, though they thought to pose him, they did but expose themselves; but now let him ask them a question; and he will do it when they are gathered together, v. 41. He did not take some one of them apart from the rest, (as Hercules contra duos—Hercules himself may be overmatched,) but, to shame them the more, he took them all together, when they were in conference and consultation against him, and yet puzzled them. Note, God delighteth to baffle his enemies when they most strengthen themselves; he gives them all the advantages they can wish for, and yet conquers them. Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces, Isa. 5. 9, 10. Now here,

1. Christ proposes a question to them, which they could easily answer; it was a question in their own catechism; "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? Whose son do you expect the Messiah to be, who was promised to the fathers?" This they could easily answer, The son of David. It was the common personification of the Messiah; they called him the son of David. So the Scribes, who expounded the scripture, had taught them, from Ps. 89. 33, 36. I will not be unto David; his seed shall endure for ever, (Isa. 9. 7.) upon the throne of David. And Isa. 11. 1. A rod out of the stem of Jesse. The covenant of royalty made with David was a figure of the covenant of redemption made with Christ, who, and of whom, in the same line, his kingdom and will be humbled and then advanced. If Christ was the son of David, he was really and truly man. Israel said, We have ten parts in David; and Judah said, He is our bone and our flesh; what part have we then in the Son of David, who took our nature upon him? What think ye of Christ? They had put questions to him, one after another, out of the law; but he consented not to the question put to him. Many are so full of the law, that they forget Christ, as if their duties would save them without his merit and grace. It concerns each of us seriously to ask ourselves, What think we of Christ? Some think not of him at all, he is not in all, not in any of their thoughts; some think meanly, and some think hardly, of him; but, to them that believe he is precious; and he is precious then are the thoughts of him. While the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of another beloved, the spouse thinks of him as the bride of ten thousands.

11. He then brings difficult question to their answer, which they could not so easily solve, v. 43—45. Many can so readily affirm the truth, that they think they have knowledge enough to be proud of, who, when they are called to confirm the truth, and to vindicate and defend it, show they have ignorance enough to be ashamed of. The objection Christ raised was, Is Christ the David's son, how then doth David, in spirit, call him Lord? This was not hereby design to insnare them, as they did him, but to instance in a truth they were loath to believe—that the expected Messiah is God.

1. It is easy to see that David calls Christ Lord, and this in spirit, being divinely inspired, and actuated therein by a spirit of prophecy: for it was the Spirit of the Lord that spake by him, 2 Sam. 23. 1, 2. It is impossible of those holy men that spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, especially in calling Christ Lord; for it was then, as it is still, (1 Cor. 12. 3.) that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now, to prove that David, in spirit, called Christ Lord, he quotes Ps. 110. 1, which psalm the Scribes themselves understood of Christ; of which it is certain, the prophet there speaks of him, and of no other man; and it is a prophetic summary of the doctrine of Christ. It describes him, executing the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, both in his humiliation and also in his exaltation. Christ quotes the whole verse, which shews the Redeemer in his exaltation; (1.) Siting at the right hand of God. His siting denotes both rest and rule; his siting at God's right hand denotes superlative honour and sovereign power. See in what great power it expresses this. (Heb. 1.) He is set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty. See Phil. 2. 9. Eph. 1. 21. He did not take this honour to himself, but was entitled to it by covenant with his Father, and invested in it by commission from him, and here is that commission. (2.) Sustaining his enemies. There he shall sit, till they be all made either his friends or his footstool. The carnal mind, is enmity to Christ; and that is subdued in the conversation of the government of the world's glory, called to his foot, (as the expression is, Isa. 41. 2.) and in the commission of his omnipotent adversaries, who shall be brought under his foot, as the kings of Canaan were under the feet of Joshua.

But that which this verse is quoted for, is, that David calls the Messiah his Lord; The Lord, Jehovah, said unto my Lord. This intimates to us, that, in expounding scripture, we must take notice of, and improve, not only that which is the main scope and sense of a verse, but of the words and phrases, by which the Spirit chooseth to express that sense, which have often a very useful and instructive significance. Here is a good note from that word, My Lord.

2. It is not so easy for those who believe not the Godhead of the Messiah, to clear this from an absurdity, that he must be David's son. It is incongruous for the father to speak of his own son, as his Lord. If David call him Lord, that is laid down, (v. 45.) as the magis notum— the more evident truth; for whatever is said of Christ's humanity, and humiliation, must be construed and understood in consistency with the truth of his divine nature and dominion. We must hold this fast, that David is Christ's Lord, and by that explain his being David's Lord. The seeming differences of scripture, as here, may not only be accommodated, but contribute to the beauty and harmony of the whole.

Anicex scripturarum hies, utinam et nostrae—The differences observable in the scriptures are a friendly kind; would to God that our differences were of the same kind!
III. We have here the success of this gentle trial which Christ made of the Pharisees' knowledge, in two things.
1. It puzzled them; (v. 46.) No man was able to answer him a word. Either it was their ignorance that they did not know, or their impurity that they would not own, the Messiah to be God, which truth was the only key to unlock this difficulty. What those Rabines could not then answer, blessed be God, the plainest Christian, that is led into the understanding of the gospel of Christ, can now account for; that Christ, as God, was David's Lord; and Christ, as man, was David's son. This he did not now himself explain, but reserved it till the proof of it was completed by his resurrection; but we have it expressly declared by him in his glory: (Rev. 22. 16.) I am the root and offspring of David. Christ, as God, was David's root; Christ, as man, was David's offspring.

If we hold not fast this truth, that Jesus Christ is ever all God blessed for ever, we run ourselves into inextricable difficulties. And well might David, his remote ancestor, call him Lord, when Mary, his immediate mother, after she had conceived him, called him, Lord and God, her Saviour, Luke 1. 37.

2. It silenced them, and all others that sought occasion against him: Neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more such captious, tempting, insinuating questions. Note, God will glorify himself in the silencing of many whom he will not glorify himself in the salvation of. Many are convinced, that are not converted, by the word. Had these been converted, they would have asked him more questions, especially that great question, What must we do to be saved? But, since they could not gain their point, they would have no more to do with him. But thus all that strive with their Master shall be convinced, as these Pharisees and lawyers were here of, the inequality of the match.

CHAP. XXIII.

In the foregoing chapter, we had our Saviour's discourses with the Scribes and Pharisees; here we have his discourse concerning them, or rather against them. 1. He allows their office, v. 2, 3. 2. He warns his disciples not to imitate their hypocrisy and pride, v. 4. 12. 3. He exhibits a charge against them for their谬论 and wicked methods, corrupting the law, opposing the gospel, and treacherous dealing both with God and man; and to each article he pronounces a woe, v. 13. 34. 14. He passes sentence upon Jerusalem, and foretells the ruin of the city and temple, especially for the sin of persecution, v. 34., 39.

1. THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, 2. Saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. 4. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders: but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. 5. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments. 6. And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues. 7. And greetings in the market, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 8. But he not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. 9. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. 11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

We find not Christ, in all his preaching, so severe upon any sort of people as upon these Scribes and Pharisees; for the truth is, nothing is more directly opposite to the spirit of the gospel than the former and practice of that generation of men, who were made up of pride, worldliness, and tyranny, under a cloak and pretence of religion; yet these were the idols and darlings of the people, who thought, if but two men went to heaven, one would be a Pharisee. Now Christ directs his discourse, here, to the multitude, and to his disciples, (v. 1.) to rectify their mistakes concerning these Scribes and Pharisees, by pointing them out in the true character, and so to take off the prejudice which some of the multitude had conceived against Christ and his doctrine, because it was opposed by those men of their church that called themselves the people's guides. Note, It is good to know the true characters of men, that we may not be imposed upon by great and mighty names, titles, and pretensions to power. People must be told of the wolves, (Acts 26. 20, 26.) the dragon, (Phil. 3. 2.) and when it is so, the men of God will not suffer the wicked, and the workers of iniquity, and the enemies of all the saints, to be committed to the workmen of darkness, (2 Corinthians 11. 13.) that they may know where to stand upon their guards. And not only the mixed multitude, but even the disciples, need these cautions; for good men are apt to have their eyes dazzled with worldly pomp.

Now, in this discourse, 1. Christ allows their office as expositors of the law; The Scribes and Pharisees, (that is, the whole Sanhedrin, who sat at the feet of Moses, and were the representation of the nation, who were all called Scribes, and were some of them Pharisees,) they sit in Moses' seat, (v. 2.) as public teachers and interpreters of the law; and, the law of Moses being the municipal law of their state, they were as judges, or a bench of justices; teaching and judging seem to be equivalent, comparing 2 Chron. 17. 7, 9, with 2 Chron. 19. 5, 6, 8. They were not the itinerant judges, that rode the circuit, but the standing bench, that determined suits, and corrected the errors of many, by the law; they sat in Moses' seat, not as he was mediator between God and Israel, but only as he was chief justice, Exod. 18. 26. Or, we may apply it, not to the Sanhedrin, but to the other Pharisees and Scribes that expounded the law, and taught the people how to apply it to particular cases. The justice of God, such as was made for Ezra, that readily wrote in the law of God. (Neh. 8. 4.) Here called Moses' seat; because Moses had those in every city, (so the expression is, Acts 15. 21.) who, in those pulpits, preached him; this was their office, and it was just and honourable; it was requisite that there should be some at whose mouth the people might inquire the law, Mal. 2. 7. Note, 1. Many a good place is filled with bad men; it is no new thing for the vilest of men to be exalted even to Moses' seat; (Ps. 12. 8.) and when it is so, the men of God are to much honoured by the seat as the seat is dishonoured by the men. Now they that sat in Moses' seat were so wretchedly degenerated, that it was time for the great Prophet to arise, like unto Moses, to erect another seat. 2. Good and useful offices and powers are not therefore to be condemned and abolished, because they fall sometimes into the hands of bad men, who abuse them. We must not therefore pull down Moses' seat, because Scribes and Pharisees
have got possession of it; rather than so, let them grow together until the harvest, ch. 13. 30.

Hence he infers, (v. 3.) "Whatever they did you observe, that observe and do. As far as they sit in Moses' seat, that is, read and preach the law that was given by Moses," (which, as yet, continued in full force, power, and virtue,) "and judge according to that law, so far you must hearken to them, as rememberers to you of the doctrines of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Pharsile made it their business to study the scripture, and were well acquainted with the language, history, and customs, of it, and its style and phraseology. Now Christ would have the people to make use of the helps they gave them for the understanding of the scripture, and do accordingly. As long as their comments did illustrate the text, and not pervert it; did make plain, and not make worse the things said and done in the scripture; or mislead, this, to prevent the evil which some would be apt to make at his following discourse; as if, by condemning the Scribes and Pharsiles, he designed to bring the law of Moses into contempt, and to draw people off from it; whereas he came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Note, It is wisdom to obviate the exceptions which may be taken at just reproofs, especially when there is occasion to distinguish between officers and their offices, that the ministry be not blamed, when the ministers are.

II. He condemns the man. He had ordered the multitude to do as they taught; but, here, he annexed a caution not to do as they did, to beware of their leaven; Do not ye after their works. Their traditions were their works, were their idols, the works of their fancy. Or, "Do not according to their example." Doctrines and practices are spirits that must be tried, and, where there is occasion, must be carefully separated and distinguished: and, as we must not swallow corrupt doctrines for the sake of any laudable practices of those that teach them, so we must not imitate any bad examples for the sake of the plausible doctrines of those that give them. The Scribes and Pharsiles boasted as much of the law, as the Pharisees did of the pharisaical system of their teaching, and hoped to be justified by them; it was the plea they put in; (Luke 18. 11, 12.) and yet these things, which they valued themselves so much upon, were an abomination in the sight of God.

Our Saviour here, and in the following verses, specifies divers particulars of their works, wherein we must not imitate them. In general, they were charged with hypocrisy, dissimulation, or double dealing, in religion; a crime which cannot be inquired of at men's bar, because we can only judge according to outward appearance; but God, who searcheth the heart, can convict of hypocrisy; and nothing is more displeasing to him, for he desireth truth.

Four things are in these verses charged upon them.

1. Their saying and doing were two things.

Their practice was no way agreeable to their preaching or to their profession; for they say, and do not; they teach out of the law that which is good, but their conversation gives them the lie; and they seem to have found another way to heaven for themselves than what they shew to others. See this illustrated and charged upon them, Rom. 2. 17-24. Those are all sinners most incurable, that allow themselves in the sins they condemn in others, or in worse. This doth especially touch wicked ministers, who will be sure to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites; (ch. 24. 51.) for what greater hypocrisy can there be, than to press that upon others, to be believed and done, which they themselves disbelieve and disobey; pulling down, in their practice, what they build up in their preaching; when in the pulpit, preaching scripture, they made it their business to hold up all the precepts of the law, but, when out of the pulpit, living so ill, that it is pity they should ever come in; like bells, that call others to church, but hang out of it themselves; or mercurial posts, that point the way to others, but stand still themselves. Such will be judged out of their own mouths.

It is applicable to all others that say, and do not; that make a profession of religion, but not live up to that profession; that make fair promises, but do not perform their promises; are full of good discourse, and can lay down the law to all about them, but are empty of good works; great talkers, but little doers; the voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau. "Or, et preterea nihil—mere sound. They speak fair, I go, sir; but there is no trusting them, for there are seven abominations in their heart.

2. They were very severe in imposing upon others those things which they were not themselves willing to submit to the burthen of; (v. 4.) They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne; but only insisting upon the minute circumstances of the law, which is called a voice, (Acts 15. 10.) and pressing the observation of them with more strictness and severity than themselves did, (whereas the meaning of the lawyers is, "Apices juris non sunt juris—Mere points of law are not law," but by adding to his words, and imposing their own inventions and traditions, under the highest penalties. They loved to shew their authority and to exercise their dominant faculty, lording it over God's heritage, and saying to men's souls, "Bene down, that we may go over;" witness their many additions to the law of the fourth commandment, by which they made the sabbath a burthen on men's shoulders, which was designed to be the joy of their hearts. Thus, with force and cruelty, did those shepherds rule the flock, as of old, Ezek. 34. 4.

But see their hypocrisy: They themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. (1.) They would not exercise themselves in these things which they imposed upon others; they would not be binders of men's consciences, and yet would force their people to a strictness in religion, which they themselves would not be bound by; but secretly transgressed their own traditions, which they publicly enforced. They indulged their pride in giving law to others; but consulted their ease in their own practice. Thus it has been said, to the reproach of the popish priests, that they fast with wine and sweetnesses, while they force the people to fast with bread and water; and decline the penances they enjoined the laity. (2.) They would not ease the people in these things, nor put a finger to lighten their burden, when they saw it pinched them. They could find out loose constructions to put upon God's law, and could dispense with that, but would not bate an ace of their own impositions, nor dispense with a failure in the least punctilio, or make any change to relieve the extremity of their common law. How contrary to this was the practice of Christ's apostles, who would allow to others that use of Christian liberty, which, for the peace and edification of the church, they would deny themselves in! They would lay no other burden than necessary things, and those easy, Acts 15. 28. How carefully did Paul spare those to whom he writes! 1 Cor. 7. 28. 12.

3. They were all for show, and nothing for sub-
stance, in religion; (v. 5.) All their works they do to be seen of men. We must do such works, that they who see them may glorify God: but we must not proclaim our good works, with design that others may see them, and glorify us; which our Saviour here chargeth upon the Pharisees in general, as he had before done in the particular instances of prayer and giving of alms. All their end was to be praised of men, and therefore all their endeavours were to be seen of men, to make a fair show in the flesh. In those duties of religion which fall under the eye of men, none were so constant and abundant as they; but in what lies between God and their souls, in the retirement of their closets, and the recesses of their hearts, they desire to be excused. The form of godliness will get them a name to live, which is all they aim at, and therefore they trouble not themselves with the power of it, which is essential to the thing. He that doth all to be seen, doth nothing to the purpose.

He specifies two things which they did, to be seen of men.

(1.) They made broad their phylacteries. Those were little scrols of paper or parchment, wherein were written, with great niceness, these four paragraphs of the law, Exod. 13. 2—11. Exod. 13. 11—16. Deut. 6. 4—9. Deut. 11. 13—21. These were worn about their heads, and pinned upon their foreheads and left arms. It was a tradition of the elders, which had reference to Exod. 13. 9. and Prov. 7. 3. where the expressions seem to be figurative, intimating no more than that we should hear the things of God in our minds as carefully as if we had them bound between our eyes. Now the Pharisees made broad these phylacteries, that they might be thought more holy, and strict, and zealous, for the law, than others. It is a grand ambition, to come to be really more holy than others, but it is a proud ambition to covet to appear so. It is good to excel in real piety, but not to exceed in outward shows; for overdoing is justly suspected of design, Prov. 27. 14. It is the guise of hypocrisy, to make more ado than needs in external services, more than is needful either to prove, or to improve, the good affection of the heart. It is the very fancy of the Jews.

(2.) They enlarged the borders of their garments. God appointed the Jews to make borders, or fringes, upon their garments, (Numb. 15. 38.) to distinguish them from other nations, and to be a memorandum to them of their being a peculiar people; but the Pharisees were not content to have these borders like other people's, which might serve God's design in appointing them; but they must be larger than others, and more abundant, and work upon their fringes of making themselves to be taken notice of; it seemed they were more religious than others. But those who thus enlarge their phylacteries, and the borders of their garments, while their hearts are straitened, and destitute of the love of God and their neighbour, though they may now deceive others, will in the end deceive themselves.

4. They much affected pre-eminence and superiority, and prided themselves extraneously. In pride was the darling reigning sin of the Pharisees, the sin that did most easily beset them, and which our Lord Jesus takes all occasions to witness against.

(1.) He describes their pride, v. 6, 7. They courted and coveted, [1.] Places of honour and respect. In all public appearances, as at feasts, and in the synagogues, they expected, and had, to their hearts' delight, the uppermost seats. They took the place of all others, and precedence was awarded to them, as persons of the greatest note and merit; and it is easy to imagine what a complacency they took in it; they loved to have the pre-eminence, 3 John 9. It is not possessing the uppermost rooms, nor sitting in the chief seats, that is condemned, (somebody must sit uppermost,) but loving them; for men to value such a little piece of sitting highest, going first, taking the wall, or the better hand, and to value themselves upon it, to seek it, and to feel resentment if they have it not; is that but making an idol of ourselves, and then falling down and worshipping it,—the worst kind of idolatry! It is had anywhere, but especially in the synagogues. There to seat themselves, to turn up where we appear in order to give glory to God, and to humble ourselves before him, is indeed to mock God, instead of serving him. David would willingly lie at the threshold in God's house; so far was he from coveting the chief seat there, Ps. 84. 10. It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care for going to church, unless they can look fine, and make a figure there.

[2.] Titles of honour and respect. They loved greetings in the markets, loved to have people put off their hats to them, and shew them respect when they met them in the streets. Oh how it pleased them, and fed their vain humour, digito monstrare, et dicere, He est—to be jointed out, and to have it said, This is he, to have way made for them in the crowd of market-people; "Stand off, here is a Pharisee coming!" and to be thus complimented with the title of Rabbi, Master! This did not end in meat, and drink, and dainties to them; and they took as great a satisfaction in it as Nebuchadnezzar did in his palace, when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? The greetings would not have done them half so much good, if they had not been in the markets, where every body might see how much they were respected, and how high they stood in the opinion of the people. It was but a small matter, before Christ's time, that the Jewish teachers, the masters of Israel, had assumed the titles of Rabbi, Rab, and Rabban, which signifies great, or much; and was construed as Doctor, or My lord.

And they laid such a stress upon it, that they gave it for a maxim, that "he who salutes his teacher, and does not call him Rabbi, provokes the Divine Majesty to depart from Israel." So much religion did they place in that which was but a piece of good manners, and gave a title to the teacher, that they would give respect to him that teaches, is commendable enough in him that gives it; but for him that teaches, to love it, and demand it, and affect it, to be puffed up with it, and to be displeased if it be omitted, is sinful and abominable; and, instead of teaching, he has need to learn the first lesson in the school of Christ, which is, Humility.

(2.) He cautions his disciples against being herein like them; wherein they must not do after their works; "But be not ye called so, for ye shall not be of such a spirit," v. 8, &c.

Here is, [1.] A prohibition of pride. They are here forbidden,

First, To challenge titles of honour and distinction to themselves, v. 8, 10. It is repeated twice; Be not called Rabbi, neither be ye called Master or Guide; not that it is unlawful to give civil respect to those that are over us in the Lord, nay, it is an instance of the honour and esteem which it is our duty to shew them; but, 1. Christ's ministers must not affect the name of Rabbi, or Master, by way of distinction from other people; it is not agreeable to the simplicity of the gospel, for them to covet or accept the honour which they have that are in kings' palaces. 2. They must not assume the authority and dignity belonging to those names; they must not be magistrates, nor ministers of the civil government, but only over God's heritage, as if they had dominion over the faith of Christians: what they received of the Lord, all must receive from them; but in other things they must not make their opinions and wills
a rule and standard to all other people, to be admitted with an implicit obedience. The reasons for this prohibition are,

(1.) One is your Master, even Christ, v. 8. and again, v. 10. Note, [1.] Christ is our Master, our Teacher, our Guide. Mr. George Herbert, when he named the name of Christ, usually added, My Master. [2.] Christ only is our Master, ministers are but ushers in the company, disciples the servants of the great Prophet whom we must hear, and be ruled and overruled by; whose word must be an oracle and a law to us; Verily I say unto you, must be enough to us. And if he only be our Master, then for his ministers to set up for dictators, and to pretend to a supremacy, and an infallibility, is a daring usurpation of that honour of Christ which he will have none to advance to.

(2.) All ye are brethren. Ministers are brethren, not only to one another, but to the people; and therefore it ill becomes them to be masters, when there are none for them to master it over but their brethren; yea, and we are all younger brethren, otherwise the eldest might claim an excellency of dignity and power, Gen. 49. 3. But, to preclude that notion, Christ is First-born among many brethren, Rom. 8. 29. We are brethren, and as such, should help one another in getting their lesson; but it will by no means be allowed, that one of the scholars step into the master's seat, and give law to the school. If we are all brethren, we must not be many masters, Jam. 3. 1.

Secondly, They are forbidden to ascribe such titles to others (v. 9.) "All no man your father upon the earth; constitute no man the father of your religion, that is, the founder, author, director, and governor, of it." The fathers of our flesh must be called fathers, and as such we must give them reverence; but God only must be owned as the Father of our spirits, Heb. 12. 9. Our religion must not be derived from, or made to depend upon, any man. We are born again to the spiritual and divine life, not of corruptible seed, but by the word of God; not of the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but of God. Now the will of man, not being the rise of our religion, must not be the rule of it. We must not jurare in verba magistri—swear to the dictates of any creature, not the wisest or best, nor pin our faith on any man's sleeve, because we know not whether he will carry it. St. Paul calls himself a fellow-companion of; (1 Cor. 4. 15. Phil. 10.) but he pretends to no dominion over them, and uses that title to denote, not authority, but affection; therefore he calls them not his obliged, but his beloved, sons, 1 Cor. 4. 14.

The reason given, is, One is your Father, who is in heaven. God is our Father, and is All in all in our religion. He is the Fountain of it, and its Founder; the Life and our Lord; from whom alone, as the Original, our spiritual life is derived, and on whom it depends. He is the Father of all lights, (Jam. 1. 17.) that one Father, from whom are all things, and we in him, Eph. 4. 6. Christ having taught us to say, Our Father, who art in heaven, let us call no man Father upon earth; no man, because man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm, but of the earth, dust of the earth; specially not upon earth, for man upon earth is a spiritual worm, there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not, and therefore no one is fit to be called Father.

(2.) Here is a precept of humility and mutual submission, (v. 11.) He that is greatest among you shall be your servant; not only call himself so, (we know of one that styles himself Servus servorum Dei—Servant of the servants of God, but acts as Rabbi, and father, and master, and Dominus Dei master—The Lord our God, and what not,) but he shall be so. Take it as a promise; "He shall be accounted greatest, and stand highest in the favour of God, that is most submissive and serviceable;" or as a precept; "He that is advanced to any place of dignity, trust, and honour, in the church, let him be your servant;" (some copies read xes, for xei,) let him not think that his patron of honour is a point of ease to him; he that is greatest is not a lord, but a minister." St. Paul, who knew his privilege as well as duty, though free from all, yet made himself servant of all; (1 Cor. 9. 19.) and our Master frequently pressed it upon his disciples, to be humble and self-denying, mild and condescending, and to abound in all offices of Christian love, though mean, and to the meanest; and of this he hath set us an example.

[3.] Here is a good reason for all this, v. 12. Consider,

First, The punishment intended for the proud; Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased. If God give them repentance, they will be abased in their own eyes, and will abhor themselves for it; if they repent not, sooner or later they will be abased before the world. Nebuchadnezzar, in the height of his pride, was turned to be a fellow-commoner with the beasts; Herod, to be a feast for the worms; and Babylon, that sat as a queen, to be the scorn of nations. God made the proud and aspiring priests contemptible and base, (Mal. 2. 9.) and the lying prophet to be the tail, Isa. 9. 15. But, if proud men have not marks of humiliation set upon them in this world, there is a day coming, when they shall rise from everlasting shame and contempt; (Dan. 12. 2.) so plentifully will be rewarded the proud door? Ps. 31. 23.

Secondly, The precept referred for the humble: He that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Humility is that ornament which is in the sight of God of great price. In this world the humble have the honour of being accepted with the holy God, and respected by all wise and good men; of being qualified for, and often called out to, the most honourable services; for honour is like the shadow, which flees from those that pursue it, and grasp at it, but follows those that flee from it. However, in the other world, they that have humbled themselves in contrition for their sin, in compliance with their God, and in condescension to their brethren, shall be exalted to inherit the throne of glory shall be set up in publicly owned, but crowned, before angels and men.

13. But woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. 14. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. 15. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. 16. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor. 17. Ye fools, and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or
the temple that sanctifieth the gold? 12. 
And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. 13. Ye fools, and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? 14. Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. 15. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. 16. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. 17. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 18. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. 19. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 20. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. 21. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. 22. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 23. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, 30. And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. 31. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. 32. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. 33. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? 34. In these verses we have eight woes levelled directly against the Scribes and Pharisees by our Lord Jesus Christ, like so many claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning, from mount Sinai. Three woes are made to look very dreadful; (Rev. 8. 13. =9. 12.) but here are eight woes given, and operated upon the eight beatitudes, Matth. 5. 3. The gospel has its woes as well as the law, and gospel-curses are of all other the heaviest. These woes are the more remarkable, not only because of the authority, but because of the meekness and gentleness, of him that denounced them. He came to bless, and loved to bless; but, if his wrath be kindled, there is surely cause for it: and who shall entreat for him that the
great Intercessor pleads against? A woe from Christ is a remediless woe. 35. This is here the burden of the song, and it is a heavy burden; Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Note, 1. The Scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites; that is it in which all the rest of their bad characters are summed up. All the mean things which they said and did. A hypocrite is a stage-player in religion; (that is the primary signification of the word;) he personates, or acts, the part of one that he neither is, nor may be; or, perhaps, that he neither is, nor would be. 2. That hypocrites are in a woeful state and condition. Woe to hypocrites; so he said, whose saying that their case is miserable makes it so; whereas theirs, that their religion is vain; when they die, their ruin is great. 36. Now each of these woes against the Scribes and Pharisees has a reason annexed to it, containing a separate crime charged upon them, proving their hypocrisy, and justifying the judgment of Christ upon them; for his woes, his curses, are never causeless. 1. They were sworn enemies to the gospel of Christ, and consequently to the salvation of the souls of men; (v. 12.) They shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, that is, they did all they could to keep people from believing in Christ, and so entering into his kingdom. Christ came to open the kingdom of heaven, that is, to lay open for us a new and living way into it, to bring men to be subjects of that kingdom. Now the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses' seat, and pretended to the key of knowledge, ought to have contributed their assistance herein, by opening those scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at the Messiah and his kingdom, in their true proper sense; they that under took to expound Moses and the prophets, should have shewed the people how they testified of Christ; that Daniel's weeks were expiring, the sacrifice was departed from Judah, and therefore now was the time for the Messiah's appearing. Thus they might have facilitated that great work, and have helped thousands to heaven; but, instead of this, they shut up the kingdom of heaven; they made it their business to press the ceremonial law, which was now in the vanishing, to suppress the prophecies, which were now in the accomplishing, and to beget and nourish up in the minds of people prejudices against Christ and his doctrine. 1. They would not go in themselves; Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? (John 7. 48.) No; they were too proud to stoop to his meanness, too formal to be reconciled to his plainness; they did not like a religion which insisted so much on humility, self-denial, contempt of the world, and spiritual worship. Repentance was the door of admission into this kingdom, and nothing could be more disagreeable to the Pharisees, who justified and admired themselves, than to repent, thus to accuse, and abase, and abhor themselves; therefore they went not in themselves; but that was not all. 2. They would not suffer them that were entering, to go in. It is bad to keep away from Christ ourselves, but it is worse to keep others from him; yet that is common to the way of hypocrites; they do not love that any should go beyond them in religion, or be better than they. Their not going in themselves, was no reason why others should be restrained from doing so great an interest in the people, multitudes rejected the gospel only because their leaders did; but, besides that, they opposed both Christ's entertainment of sinners, (Luke 7. 39.) and sinners' entertaining of Christ; they perverted his doctrine, confronted his miracles, quarrelled with his disciples, and represented him, and his institutes and
manned to pray without ceasing too soon; where there are many sins to be confessed, and many wants to pray for the supply of, and many mercies to give thanks for, there is occasion for long prayers. But the Pharisees' long prayers were made up of vain repetitions, and (which was the end of them) they were for a pretence by them to get the reputation of pious devout men, that loved prayer, and were the favourites of Heaven; and by this means people were made to believe it was not possible that such men as they should cheat them; and, therefore, happy the widow that could get a Pharisee for her trustee, and guardian to her children! Thus, while they seemed to soar heavenly, their prayer, their eye, like the kite's, was all the while under the earth, some widows' house or other that lay convenient for them. Thus circumcision was the cloak of Shechemites' covetousness, (Gen. 34. 22, 23.) the payment of a vow in Hebron the cover of Ab- solom's rebellion, (2 Sam. 15. 7.) a fast in Jerzeel must patronise Naboah's murder, and the extirpa- tion of Baal is the footstool of Jehu's ambition. Po- pulous places, the price of justice, was sold for dead, masses, and dirges, and I know not what, en- rich themselves by devouring the houses of the wid- dows and fatherless. Note, It is no new thing for the show and form of godliness to be made a cloak to the greatest enormities. But dissembled piety, however it passeth now, will be reckoned for as double iniquity, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of hearts.

3. The doom passed upon them for this; The- refore we shall receive the greater damnation. (1.) There are degrees of damnation; there are some, whose sin is more inexcusable, and whose ruin will therefore be more intolerable. (2.) The pretences of religion, with which hypocrites disguise, or excu- se, their sin now, will aggravate their condemna- tion. Those, which are the deceitfulness of sin, that they will do and say the right as if that very thing by which sinners hope to ex- piate and atone for their sins, will come against them, and make their sins more exceeding sinful. But it is sad for the criminal, when his defence proves his offence, and his plea (We have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name made long prayers,) heightens the charge against him.

III. While they were such enemies to the con- vention of the Jews, they were very industrious in the perversion of them to their faction. They shut up the kingdom of heaven against those that would turn to Christ, but at the same time com- passed sea and land to make proselytes to them- selves. v. 15. Observe here,

1. Their commendable industry in making pro- selytes to the Jewish religion, not only proselytes of the gate, who obliged themselves to no more than the observance of the seven precepts of the son of Noah, but proselytes of righteousness, who addicted themselves wholly to all the rites of the Jewish reli- gion, for that was the game they flew at; for this, for one such, though but one, they compass sea and land, had many a cunning reach, and laid many a plot, and run, and sent and wrote, and laboured unwearyedly. And what did they aim at? Not the glory of God, and the good of souls; but that they might have the credit of making them proselytes, and the advantage of making a prey of them when they were made. Note, (1.) The making of pro- selytes, if it be to the truth and serious godliness, and be done with a good design, is a good work, well worthy of the utmost care and pains. Such is the value of souls, that nothing must be thought too much to be used for the recovery of them. The in- dustry of the Pharisees herein may shew the negli- gence of many, who would be thought to act from better principles, but will be at no pains or cost to
propagate the gospel. (2.) To make a proselyte, 
**and** hand must be compassed; all ways and meth
must be tried; first one way, and then 
other must be tried, all little enough; but all well 
paid, if the point be gained. (3.) Carnal hearts 
seldom shrink from the pains necessary to carry on 
their carnal purposes; when a penalty is imposed, 
many may serve a turn for themselves, they will com 
pass sea and land to make him, rather than be dis 
appointed.

2. Their cursed impiety in abusing their pros 
elytes when they were made; "Ye make him 
the disciple of a Pharisee presently, and he sucks in all 
a Pharisee's notions; and ye make him twofold 
the child of hell than yourselves. **Note.** (1.) 
Hyssop they call the lye of heaven, are, in the 
judgment of Christ, the children of 
hell. The rise of their hypocrisy is from hell, 
for the devil is the father of lies; and the tendency 
of their hypocrisy is toward hell, that is the country 
they belong to, the inheritance they are heirs to; 
they are called children of hell, because of their 
routed enmity to the kingdom of heaven, which 
is the principle and genius of Pharisaism. (2.) Though 
all love to hear fine words, and are children of 
hell, yet some are twofold more so than others, 
more furious, and bigoted, and malignant. (3.) Per 
verted proselytes are commonly the greatest bigots; 
the scholars outdid their masters. [1.] In fondness 
of ceremony; the Pharisees themselves saw the 
folly of their own impostions, and in their hearts 
smiled at the obsequiousness of those that conform 
to them; but their proselytes were eager for them. 
**Note.** Weak hearts commonly admire those 
shows and ceremonies which wise men (however 
for public ends they may countenance them) 
cannot but think meanly of. [2.] In fury against 
Christianity; the proselytes readily imbibed the principles 
which their crafty leaders were not want 
going to possess them with, and so became extreme 
hot against the truth. The most bitter enemies the 
apostles met with in all places, were, the Hellenist 
 Jews, who were mostly proselytes, Acts 13. 45. 
14. 2. 19. — 17. 5. 18. 6. 
Paul, a disciple of the 
Pharisees, was exceedingly mad against the Chris 
tians, (Acts 26. 11.) when his master, Gamaliel, 
seems to have been more moderate.

IV. Their seeking of their own worldly gain and 
honour more than God's glory, put them upon coin 
ing false and unwarrantable distinctions, with which 
they courted them to sin against their own consciences, becoming 
to dangerous mistakes, partic 
ularly in the matter of oaths; which, as an evi 
dence of a universal sense of religion, have been by 
all nations accounted sacred; (v. 16.) **Ye blind 
guides.** Note. 1. It is sad to think how many are 
under the guidance of such as are themselves blind; 
who undertake to shew others their way that which they 
are themselves willingly ignorant of. His watch 
men are blind; (Isa. 58. 10.) and too often the peo 
lple 
love to follow the guides they know of; See not. 
But the case is bad, when the leaders misuse the 
cause them to err, Isa. 9. 16. 2. Though the con 
tdition of those whose guides are blind is very sad, 
yet that of the blind guides themselves is yet more 
woeful. Christ denounces a woe to the blind guides 
who have the blood of so many souls to answer for.

Now, to prove their blindness, he specifies the 
matter of swearing, and shews what corrupt casuists 
they are;

(1.) He lays down the doctrine they taught. 
**[1.] They were allowed swearing by creatures, 
provided they were consecrated to the service of 
God, and stood in any special relation to him. They 
allowed swearing by the temple and the altar, though 
they were the work of men's hands, intended to be 
the servants of God's honour, not sharers in it. An oath 
is an appeal to God, to his omniscience and 

justice; and to make this appeal to any creature, is 
to put that creature in the place of God. See Deut. 
6. 13.

[2.] They distinguished between an oath by the 
temple and an oath by the gold of the temple; an 
a oath by the altar and an oath by the gift upon 
the altar; making the latter an oath not to be gamed. 
Here was a double wickedness; first, that there were some oaths which they dispensed with, 
and made light of, and reckoned a man was not bound by to assert the truth, or perform a promise. 
They ought not to have sworn by the temple, or the altar; but, when they had so sworn, they were 
taken in the words of their mouth. That doctrine 
cannot be of the word of truth, which gives counte 
teance to the breach of faith, and the exaction of 
oaths. Oaths are edged-tools, and are not to be jested with. 
Secondly, That they preferred the gold before the 
temple, and the gift before the altar, to encourage 
people to bring gifts to the altar, and gold to the 
treasurers of the temple, which they hoped to be 
gainers by. They who had made gold their hope, 
and whose eyes were blinded by gifts in secret, were 
great friends to the Corban ; and gain being their 
goods, by a thousand artifices, they made reli 
gion truckle to their worldly interests. Corrupt 
church-guides make things to be sin or no sin, as it 
serves their purposes, and lay a much greater stress 
on that which concerns their own gain, than on that 
which is for God's glory and the good of souls.

(2.) He shews the folly and absurdity of this dis 
tinction; (v. 17. 19.) Ye fools, and blind. It was 
in the way of necessity reproved, not an easy revo 
cunch, that Christ called them fools. Lot it suffice 
us, from the word of wisdom, to show the folly of 
sinful opinions and practices; but, for the fastening of 
the character upon particular persons, leave that 
to Christ, who knows what is in man, and has for 
bidden us to say, Thou fool.

To convict them of folly, he appeals to them 
sewelves, Whether is greater, the gold, (the golden vesse 
s, and ornaments, or the gold in the treasure,) or 
the temple that sanctifies the gift? Any one who will, Profes 
se a word aliquid, est tale, id est magis tale, that, on an account of which any thing is qualified in a par 
ticular way, must itself be much more qualified in 
the same way. They that swear by the gold of the 
temple, had an eye to it as holy; but what was it 
that made it holy but the holiness of the temple, to 
the service of which it was appropriated? And 
therefore the temple must be holy which exceeds 
gold, but must be more so; for the less is blessed 
and sanctified of the better, Heb. 7. 7. The tem 
ple and altar were dedicated to God, fixedly, the 
gold and gift but secondarily. Christ is our Altar, 
(Heb. 13. 10.) our Temple; (John 2. 21.) for it is 
he that sanctifies all our gifts, and puts an accept 
ableness in them, 1 Pet. 2. 5. Those that put their own works into the place of Christ's righteousness 
may be justly charged with the Pharisees' abuse 
not 
ity, who preferred the gift before the altar. Every 
true Christian is a living temple; and by virtue 
thereof common things are sanctified to him; unto 
the pure all things are pure, (Tit. 1. 15.) and the 
unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing 
wife, 1 Cor. 7. 14. 

(3.) He rectifies the mistake, (v. 20. 22.) by 
requiring the oaths to be limited to the true 
intent of an oath, which is, Be thou the Lord: so that though an oath by the temple, or the altar, 
or heaven, he formally bad, yet they are binding. 
Quod fieri non debuit, fuitum vale—Enga 
gements which ought not to have been made, are 
not, when made, binding. A man shall never take 
advantage of his own fault.

[1.] He that swears by the altar, let him not
think to shake off the obligation of it by saying, "The altar is but wood, and stone, and brass;" for his oath shall be construed most strongly against himself; because he was culpable, and so as that the obligation of it may be preserved, ut res patius vactat quam peracta—the obligation being hereby strengthened rather than destroyed. And therefore an oath by the altar should be interpreted by it and by all things thereon; for the appellant, whose word it was, was accursed both in the case and thereon being offered up to God, to swear by it and them, was, in effect, to call God himself to witness: for it was the altar of God; and he that went to that, went to God, Ps. 43. 4.—26. 6.

[2.] He that swears by the temple, if he understand what he does, cannot but apprehend that the ground of such a respect to it, is, not because it is a faithful temple of God, but because it is the house of God, dedicated to his service, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; and therefore he swears by it, and by him that dwells therein; there he was pleased in a peculiar manner to manifest himself, and give tokens of his presence; so that whose swears by it, swears by him who had said, This is my rest, here will I dwell. God Christians are God's people, and this is God's house; and God dwells in the temple. (1 Cor. 3. 16.—6. 19.) and God takes what is done to them as done to himself; he that grievances a gracious soul, grieves it, and the Spirit that dwells in it, Eph. 4. 30.

[3.] If a man swears by heaven, he sins; (ch. 5. 34.) yet he shall not therefore be discharged from the obligation of his oath; no, God will make him know that the heaven he swears by is his throne; (Isa. 66. 1.) and he that swears by the throne, appeals to him that sits upon it; who, as he resents the affront done to him in the form of the oath, so he will certainly revenge the greater affront done to him by the violation of it. Christ will not countenance the evasion of a solemn oath, though ever so plausible.

They were very strict and precise in the smaller matters of the law, but as careless and loose in the weightier matters, v. 23. 24. They were partial in the law, (Mal. 2. 9.) would pick and choose their duty, according as they were interested or stood affected. Sincere obedience is universal, and he that from a right principle obeyes any of God's precepts, will have respect to them all, Ps. 119. 6. But hypocrites, who act in religion for their own ends, and not for God, will do no more in religion than they can serve a turn for themselves. The partiality of the Scribes and Pharisees appears here, in two instances.

1. They observed smaller duties, but omitted greater: they were very exact in paying tithes, till it came to mint, anise, and cummin, their exactness in tithing of which would not cost them much, but would be increased up, and they would buy reputation cheap. The Pharisee boasted of this, I give tithes of all that I possess, Luke 18. 12. But it is probable that they had ends of their own to serve, and would find their own account in it; for the priests and Levites, to whom the tithes were paid, were in their interests, and knew how to return their kindness. Paying tithes was their duty, and what the law required of God, and they should buy reputation leave it undone. Note, All ought in their places to contribute to the support and maintenance of a standing ministry: withholding tithes is called robbing God, Mal. 3. 8—10. They that are taught in the word, and do not communicate to them that teach them, that love a cheap gospel, come short of the Pharisees.

But that, which Christ here condemns them for, is, that they omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; and their niceness in paying tithes, was, if not to atone before God, yet at least to excuse and palliate to men the omission of those. All the things of God's law are weighty, but those are most weighty which are most expressive of inward holiness in the heart; the instances of self-denial, contempt of the world, and resignation to God, in which lies the life of religion. Judgment and mercy toward men, and faith toward God, are the weightier matters of the law, which the Lord our God requires, (Mic. 6. 8.) to do justly, and love mercy, and humble ourselves by faith to walk with God. This is the obedience which is better than sacrifice or tithes; judgment is preferred before sacrifice, Isa. 1. 11. To be just to the priests in their tithes, and yet to cheat and defraud every body else, is but to mock God, and deceive our own souls. Mercy and faith are greater things than the Lord our God requires. (Mic. 6. 8.) To feed those who made themselves fat with the offerings of the Lord, and at the same time to shut up the bowels of compassion from a brother or a sister that is naked, and disteute of daily food, to pay tithes-mint to the priest, and to deny a crumb to Lazarus, is to lie open to that judgment without mercy, which is awarded to those who were presuma
tious in judgment the Lord of the world. They would not with
divine revelation; for God will be honoured in his truths as well as in his laws.

2. They avoided lesser sins, but committed greater; (v. 24.) Ye blind guides; so he had called them before, (v. 15.) for their corrupt teaching; here he calls them so for their corrupt living, for their example was leading as well as their doctrine; in their ten they were blind and partial; they stranglnd at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. In their doctrine they strained at grats, warned people against every the least violation of the tradition of the elders. In their practice they strained at grats, heaved at them, with a seeming dread, as if they had a great abhorrence of sin, and were afraid of it in the least instance; but they made no difficulty of those sins which, in comparison with them, were as a camel to a gnat; when they devoured widows' houses, they did indeed swallow a camel; when they gave Judas the price of innocent blood, and yet scrupled to put the returned money into the treasury; (ch. 27. 6.) when they would not go into the judgment-hall, for fear of being defiled, and yet would stand at the door, and cry out against the holy Jesus; (John 18. 29.) when they quarrelled with the temple for being open at the sabbath; they who, yet, for the filling of the Corban, taught people to break the fifth commandment, they strained at grats, or lesser things, and yet swallowed camels. It is not the scrupling of a little sin that Christ here reproves; if it be a sin, though but a gnat, it must be strained at; but the doing of that, and then swallowing a camel. In the lesser matters of the law to be supercilious, and to be particular in the greater, is the hypocrisy here condemned.

VI. They were all for the outside, and not at all for the inside, of religion. They were more desirous and solicitous to appear pious to men, than to approve themselves so toward God. This is illustrated by two similitudes:

1. They are compared to a vessel that is clean washed out and filled with all dirt within, v. 25. 26. The Pharisees placed religion in that which at best was but a point of decency—the washing of cups, Mark 7. 4. They were in care to eat their meat in clean cups and platters, but made no conscience of getting their meat by extortion, and using it to excess. Now, what a foolish thing would it be for a man to wash only the outside of a cup, which is to be looked at, and to leave the inside dirty, which is to be used? so they do, who only avoid scandalous sins that would spoil their reputation with men,
but allow themselves in heart-wickedness, which renders them odious to the pure and holy God. To reference to this, observe,

(1.) The practice of the Pharisees; they made clean the outside. In those things which fell under the observation of their neighbours, they seemed very exact, and carried on their wicked intrigues with so much artifice, that their wickedness was not suspected; people generally took them for very good men. In nothing of heart, and the chief ingredients of their lives, they were full of extortion and excess; of violence and incontinence; (so Dr. Hammond;) that is, of injustice and intemperance. While they would seem to be godly, they were neither sober nor righteous. Their inward part was very wicked; (Ps. 5. 9.) and that we are really, which we are inwardly.

(2.) The rule Christ gives, in opposition to this practice, 26. It is addressed to the blind Pharisees. They thought themselves the sons of the land, but (John 9. 40.) Christ calls them blind. Note, Those are blind, in Christ's account, who (how quick-sighted soever they are in other things) are strangers, and no enemies, to the wickedness of their own hearts; who see not, and hate not, the secret sin that lodgeth there. Self-ignorance is the most shameful and hurtful ignorance, Rev. 3. 17. The rule is, Cleanse first that which is within. Note, They should have made a careful search, and washed our hearts from wickedness, Jer. 4. 14. The main business of a Christian lies within, to get cleansed from the filthiness of the spirit. Corrupt affections and inclinations, the secret lusts that lurk in the soul, unseen and unobserved; those must first be mortified and subdued. Those sins must be conscientiously abstained from, which the eye of God only is a witness to, who searcheth the heart.

Observe, the method prescribed; Cleanse first that which is within; not that only, but that first; because, if due care be taken concerning that, the outside will be clean also. External motives and inducements may keep the outside clean, while the inside is filthy; but if renewing, sanctifying grace make clean the inside, that will have an influence upon the outside, for the commanding principle is within. If the heart be well kept, all is well, for our outward life will not only please but profit, and must needs be a comfort and refreshment of course. If the heart and spirit be made new, there will be a newness of life; here therefore we must begin with ourselves; first cleanse that which is within; we then make sure work, when this is our first work.

2. They are compared to whitened sepulchres, v. 27, 28. (1.) They were fair without, like sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward. Some make it to refer to the custom of the Jews to whiten graves, only for the notifying of them, especially if they were in unusual places, that people might avoid them, because of the ceremional pollution contracted by the touch of a grave, Num. 19. 16. And it was part of the charge of the overseers of the highways, to repair that when it was decayed. Sepulchres were thus made remarkable, 2 Kings 23. 15, 17. The formality of hypocrites, by which they study to recommend themselves to the world, doth but make all wise and good men the more careful to avoid them, for fear of being defiled by them. Beware of the Sepulchres, Luke 20. 46. It rather alludes to the custom of whitening the sepulchres of eminent persons, for the beautifying of them. It is said here, (v. 29.) that they garnished the sepulchres of the righteous; as it is usual with us to erect monuments upon the graves of great persons, and to straw flowers on the graves of dear friends. Now the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was like the ornaments of a grave, or the dressing up of a dead body, only for show. The top of their ambition was to appear righteous before men, and to be applauded and had in admiration by them. But,

(2.) They were foul within, like sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness; so vile are our bodies, when the soul has deserted them. Thus were they full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Hypocrisy is the worst iniquity of all other. Note, It is possible for those that have their hearts full of sin, to live and die free from blame, and to appear very good. But what is the true godly life? The life of our fellow-servants, if our Master doth not say, Will done? When all other graves are opened, these whitened sepulchres will be looked into, and the dead men's bones, and all the uncleanness, shall be brought out, and be spread before all the host of heaven, Jer. 8. 1, 2. For it is the day when God shall judge, not the shows, but the secrets, of men. And it will then be small comfort to them, who shall have held their portion with hypocrites, to remember how credibly and plausibly they went to hell, applauded by all their neighbours.

VII. They pretended a deal of kindness for the memory of the prophets that were dead and gone, while they hated and persecuted those that were present with them. This is put last, because it was the blackest part of their character. God is jealous for his honour in holy things, and makes it appear, that if they be harmed and abused; but he has often expressed an equal jealousy for his honour in his prophets and ministers, and resents it worse, if they be wronged and persecuted: and therefore, when our Lord Jesus comes to this head, he speaks more fully than upon any of the other; (v. 29—37.) for he that toucheth his ministers, toucheth his Anointed, and toucheth the apple of his eye. Observe here, 1. The respect which the Scribes and Pharisees pretended to the prophets, that were gone; v. 29, 30. This was the varnish, and that in which they outwardly appeared righteous.

(1.) They honoured the relics of the prophets, they built their tombs, and garnished their sepulchres. It seems, the places of their burial were known, David's sepulchre was with them, Acts 2. 29. There was a title upon the sepulchre of the man of God, (2 Kings 23. 17.) and Josiah thought it a glory to himself, that he had washed his feet there, 18. They were not content with the tombs of the dead; they would do more, and beautify them. Now consider this, [1.] As an instance of honour done to deceased prophets, who, while they lived, were counted as the off-scouring of all things, and had all manner of evil spoken against them falsely. Note, God can extort, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the honour of piety and holiness. Them that honour God, he will honour, and some times with those from whom contempt is expected, 2 Sam. 6. 22. The memory of the just is blessed, when the names of those that hated and persecuted them shall be covered with shame. The honour of constancy and resolution, in the way of duty, will be a lasting honour; and those that are manifest to God, will be manifest in the consciences of those about them. [2.] As an instance of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees who paid their respect to them. Note, Carnal people can easily honour the memories of faithful ministers that are dead and gone, because they do not reprove them, nor disturb them, in their sins. Dead prophets are seen; but we not, and those they can bear well enough; they do not torment them, as the living witnesses do, that bear their testimony vivâ voce—with a living voice, Rev. 11. 10. They can pay respect to the writings of the dead prophets, which tell them what they should be; but not the reproofs of the living prophets, which tell them what they are. Sit divini, modo non sit givas.—Let there be saints, but let them not be living here. The extravagant respect which the
church of Rome pays to the memory of saints departed, especially the martyrs, dedicating days and places to their names, endowing their relics, praying to them, and offering to their images, while they make themselves drunk with the blood of the saints of their own day, is a manifest proof that they not only succeed, but exceed, the Scribes and Pharisees in a counterfeit hypocritical religion, which builds the prophets' tombs and damns the prophets' doctrine. If Simeon protested against the murder of the child Jesus (v. 30.) If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them. They would never have consented to the silencing of Amos, and the imprisonment of Micaiah, to the putting of Hanani in the stocks, and Jeremiah in the dungeon, to the stoning of Zecchariah, the mocking of all the messengers of the Lord, and the abuses put upon his prophets; no more than that they were sooner have lost their right hands than have done any such thing. What, is thy servant a dog? And yet they were at this time plotting to murder Christ, to whom all the prophets bore witness. They think, if they had lived in the days of the prophets, they would have heard them gladly, and obeyed; and yet they rebelled against the light that Christ brought into the world. This is true, a Herod and a Herodias to John the Baptist, would have been an Abah and a Jezebel to Elijah. Note, The deceitfulness of sinners' hearts appears very much in this, that, while they go down the stream of the sins of their own day, they fancy they should have swum against the stream of the sins of the former days; that, if they had had other people's opportunities, they would have improved them more faithfully; if they had been in other people's temptations, they would have resisted them more vigorously; yet they improve not the opportunities they have, nor resist the temptations they are in. We are sometimes thinking, if we had lived when Christ was upon earth, how constantly we would have followed him; we would not have despised and rejected him, as they then did; and yet Christ in his spirit, in his word, in his ministers, is still no better treated. 2. The enmity and opposition to Christ and his gospel, notwithstanding, and the ruin they were bringing upon themselves and upon that generation thereby, v. 31—33. Observe here, (1.) The indictment proved; Ye are witnesses against yourselves. Note, Sinners cannot hope to escape the judgment of God, without doing it against themselves, when it is easy to find it witnesses against themselves; and their very pleas will not only be overruled, but turned to their conviction, and their own tongues shall be made to fall upon them, Ps. 64. 8. [1.] By their own confession, it was the great wickedness of their fathers, to kill the prophets; so that they knew the fault of it, and yet they condemned in the same. Note, They who condemn sin in others, and yet allow the same or worse in themselves, are of all others most inexcusable, Rom. 1. 32.—2. 1. They knew they ought not to have been partakers with persecutors, and yet were the followers of them. Such self-contradiction will not do. They confess to their own building of the tombs of the prophets than what they intended; as if by beautifying their graves they justified their murdering, (Luke 11. 48.) for they persisted in the sin. [2.] By their own confession, these notorious persecutors were their ancestors; Ye are the children of your fathers. No more than that they were their children by blood and nature; but Christ turns it upon them, that they were so by spirit and disposition; You are of those fathers, and their lusts you will do. They are, as you say, your fathers, and you partake—take after your fathers; it is the sin that runs in the blood among you. As your fathers did, so do ye, Acts 7. 51. They came of a persecuting race, were a seed of evil doers, (Isa. 1. 4.) risen up in their fathers' stead, Numb. 32. 14. Malice, envy, and cruelty, were bred in the bone with them, and they had formerly espoused it for a principle, to do evil, in the days of their fathers. And it is told us here, (v. 36.) be careful they are to mention the relation; They were our fathers, that killed the prophets, and they were men in honour and power, whose sons and successors we are. If they had detested the wickedness of their ancestors, as they ought to have done, they would not have been so fond to call them their fathers; for it is no credit to be akin to persecutors, though they had even such high dignities and dominions.
under their tongues; the seed of the old serpent.
They were a generation of vipers; they, and those
that went before them, they, and those that joined
with them, were a generation of envenomed, engag-
ed, spiritful adversaries to Christ and his gospel.
They loved to be called, of men, Righteous.
...and thus, they preach them serpents, and vipers; for he gives
men their true characters, and delights to put con-
tempt upon the proud.

Secondly, Their doom. He represents their con-
dition as very sad, and in a manner desperate; **How

| can ye escape the damnation of hell?** Christ himself
preached hell and damnation, for which his minis-
ters have often been reproach by those that care
not of eternal matters. Note, 1. The damnation of hell
will be the fearful end of all impenitent sinners.
This doom, coming from Christ, was more terrible
than coming from all the prophets and ministers
that ever were, for he is the Judge, into whose hands
the keys of hell and death are put, and his saying
they were damned made them so. 2. There is
a way of escaping this damnation, this is implied here;
some are delivered from the wrath to come. 3. Of
all sinners, those who are of the spirit of the Seraphs
and Pharisees are least likely to escape this dis-
creation; for repentance and faith are necessary to that
escape; and how will they be brought to these, who
are so concocted of themselves, and so prejudiced
against Christ and his gospel, as they were? How
could they be healed and saved, who would not hear
to have their wound searched, nor the balm of Gib-
lead applied to it? Publicans and harlots, who were
sensible of their disease, and applied themselves to
the Physician, were more likely to escape the dam-
nation of hell than those; who, though they were in
the high road to it, were confidant they were in the
way to heaven.

34. Wherefore, behold, I send unto you
prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and
some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and
some of them shall ye scourge in your syna-
gogues, and persecute them from city to
city: 35. That upon you may come all the
righteous blood shed upon the earth, from
the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood
of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye
slew between the temple and the altar. 36.
Verily I say unto you, All these things shall
come upon this generation. 37. O Jerusa-
lem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the pro-
phets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered
thy children together, even as a hen gather-
eth her chickens under her wings, and ye
would not! 38. Behold, your house is left
unto you desolate. 39. For I say unto you,
Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall
say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

We have left the blind leaders fallen into the
ditch, under Christ's sentence, into the damnation
of hell; let us see what will become of the blind
followers, call them the hirelings of the Jewish church, and par-
ticularly Jerusalem. 1. Jesus Christ designs yet to try them with the
means of grace: I send unto you prophets, and wise
men, and scribes: The connexion is strange; **You
are a generation of vipers, not likely to escape the
damnation of hell;** one would think it should follow,
"Therefore you shall never have a prophet sent to

you any more;" but no, **Therefore I will send unto
your prophets, to see if you will yet at length be
wrought upon, or else to leave you insensible, and
to justify God in your ruin." It is therefore usher-

| ed in with a note of admiration, behold! Observe,
ye, who think it is God's will to prove you, I send.
By this he avows himself to be God, having power to gift
and commission prophets. It is an act of kingly of-

| fice; he sends them as ambassadors to treat with us
about the concern of our souls. After his resurrec-
tion, he made this word good, when he said, So send
I you, John 20. 21. Though now he appeared mean,
yet he was intrusted with this great authority.

2. He sends them to the Jews first; "I send them
to you." The Jews were the most hardened, were as the prophets
when they went, ther observed this rule, to make the
first tender of gospel-grace to the Jews, Acts 13. 46.

3. Those he sends are called prophets, wise men,
and scribes, Old-Testament names for New-Testa-
ment officers; to show that the ministers sent to them
now should not be inferior to the prophets of the
Old Testament, to Solomon, the wise, or Ezra the
scribe. The extraordinary ministers, who in the first
ages were divinely inspired, were as the prophets
and scribes, instructed to the kingdom of God; (ch. 13.
32.) for the office of a scribe was honourable till the
men dishonoured it.

II. He foresees and foretells the ill usage that his
messengers would meet with among them; **Some
of them ye shall kill and crucify, and yet I will send
them." Christ knows beforehand how ill his ser-
vants will be treated, and yet sends them, and ap-
points them their measure of sufferings; yet he leaves
them never the less for his thus exposing them, for
he designs to glorify himself by their sufferings, and
them after them; he will counterbalance them,
though not prevent them. Observe,
1. The cruelty of these persecutors; **Ye shall
kill and crucify them.** It is no less than the blood,
the life-blood, that they thirst after; their lust is not
satisfied with anything short of their destruction,
Exod. 15. 9. They killed the two James's, crucified Simon the son of Cleophas, and scourged
Peter and John; thus did the members partake of
the sufferings of the Head, he was killed and cruci-

cified, and so were they. Christians must expect to
resist into blood.

2. Their unwearied industry; **Ye shall perse-
cute them from city to city.** As the apostles went from

| city to city, to preach the gospel, the Jews dashed
them, and haunted them, and stirred up persecution
against them, Acts 14. 19. — 17. 12. They that
did not believe in Judea, were more bitter enemies
to the gospel than any other unbelievers, Acts 13.
31. The more they are stung by this, the more they
encouraged them in their synagogues, their places of
worship, where they kept their ecclesiastical courts, so
that they did it as a piece of service to the church;
cast them out, and said, *Let the Lord be glorified*
Isa. 66. 5. John 16. 2.

III. He imputes the sin of their fathers to them,
because they imitated it; That upon you may come
all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, v. 35.

That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, v. 35.

Though Christ had preached this persecuting ge-

| neration, he will not bear always; and patience
abused, turns into the greatest wrath. The longer
sinners have been heapimg up treasures of wicked-

| ness, the deeper and fuller will the treasures of
wrath be; and the breaking of them up will be like
breaking up the foundations of the great deep.
Observe, 1. The extent of this imputation; it takes in all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, that is, the blood shed for righteousness’ sake, which has all been laid up in God’s treasury, and not a drop of it lost, for it is precious, Ps. 72. 14. He dates the account from the blood of righteous Abel; he is called righteous Abel, for he obtained witness from heaven that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. How early did martyrdom come into the world! The first that died, died for his religion, and, being dead, he yet speaks. His blood not only cried against Cain, but continues to cry against all that shed blood; Cain, and God, and his brother, and all his sons and brothers. He cuts their brother, because their works are righteous. He extends it to the blood of Zacharias the son of Barachaiah, (ver. 36.) not Zechariah the prophet, (as some would have it,) though he was the son of Barach, (Zech. 1. 1.) nor Zechariah, the father of John Baptist, as others say; but, as is most probable, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who was slain in the court of the Lord’s house, 2 Chron. 24. 20, 21. His father is called Barachaiah, which signifies much the same with Jehoiada; and it was usual among the Jews for the same person to have two names; whom ye slew, ye of this nation, though not of this generation. This is specified, because the requiring of that is particularly spoken of, (2 Chron. 24. 22.) as that of Abel’s is. The Jews imagined that the captivity had sufficiently atoned for that guilt; but Christ lets them know it was not yet, nor is it yet, atoned, but remained upon the score. And some think that this is mentioned with a prophetic hint, for there was one Zecharias, the son of Baruch, whom Josephus speaks of, (De Bello Judaico, b. 5. cap. 1.) who was a just and good man, who was killed in the temple a little before it was destroyed by the Romans. Archbishop Tillotson thinks that Christ both and intended to give the history of the former Zecharias in Chronicles, and foretells the death of this latter in Josephus. Though the latter was not yet slain, yet, before this destruction comes, it will be true that they had slain him; so that all shall be put together from first to last.

2. The effect of it; All these things shall come; all the guilt of this blood, all the punishment of it, shall all come upon this generation. The misery and destruction shall be so severe as to be very great, that, though, considering the evil of their own sins, it was less than even those deserved; yet, comparing it with other judgments, it will seem to be a general reckoning for all the wickedness of their ancestors, especially their persecutions, to all which God declared this ruin to have special reference and relation. The destruction shall be so dreadful, as if God had once for all arranged them for all the righteous blood shed in the world. It shall come upon this generation; which intimates, that it shall come quickly; some here shall live to see it. Note, The sorer and nearer the punishment of sin is, the louder is the call to repentance and reformation.

IV. He laments the wickedness of Jerusalem, and justly upbraids them with the many kind offers he had made them, v. 37. See with what concern he speaks of Jerusalem: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! The repetition is emphatical, and demands the utmost of remorse of condemnation. A day or two before, Christ had wept over Jerusalem, now he sighed and ground over it. Jerusalem, the vision of peace, (so it signifies,) must now be the seat of war and confusion. Jerusalem, that had been the joy of the whole world, must now be a hissing, and an astonishment, and a bane to all the earth; and Jerusalem, that has been a city compact together, shall now be a city divided among their own intestine broils. Jerusalem, the place that God has chosen to put his name there, shall now be abandoned to the spoil and the robbers, Lam. 1. 1.—4. 1.

But wherefore will the Lord do all this to Jerusalem? Why? Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, Lam. 1. 8.

1. She persecuted God’s messengers; Thou that killedst the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee. This sin is especially charged upon Jerusalem, because there the Sanhedrim, or great council, sat, who took cognisance of church-matters, and therefore a prophet could not perish but in Jerusalem, Luke 15. 33. It is true, they had not now a power to put any man to death, but they killed the prophets in popular tumults, mobbed them, as Stephen, and put the Roman powers on to kill them. At Jerusalem, when Christ was first preached, it was first persecuted, (Acts 4. 1.) and here was the head-quarters of the persecutors, whence warrants were issued out to other cities, and thither the saints were brought bound, Acts 9. 2. Thou stonest them: that was a capital punishment, in use only among the Jews. By the law, false prophets and seducers were to be stoned, (Deut. 13. 10.) under colour of which law, they put the true prophets to death. Note, It has often been the artifice of Satan, to turn that artillery against the church, which was originally planted in the defence of it. Brand the true prophets as seducers, and the true professors of religion as heretics and schismatics, and then it will be easy to persecute them. There was abundance of other wickedness in Jerusalem; but this was the sin that made the loudest cry, and which it was an easy thing to go a-calling, and bring that ruin upon them, as 2 Kings 21. 4, 5. 36. 16. Observe, Christ speaks in the present tense; Thou killedst, and stonest; for all they had done, and all they would do, was present to Christ’s notice.

2. She refused and rejected Christ, and gospel-offers. The former was a sin without remedy, this against the remedy. Here is, (1.) The wonderful grace and favour of Jesus Christ; How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! Thus kind and condescending are the offers of gospel-grace, even to Jerusalem’s children, bad as she is, the inhabitants, the little ones not excepted.

[1.] The favour proposed, was the gathering of them. Christ’s design is to gather poor souls, gather them in from other parts of the earth, gather them home to himself, as the Centre of unity; for to him must the gathering of the people be. He would have taken the whole body of the Jewish nation into the church, and so gathered them all (as the Jews used to speak of proselytes) under the wings of the Divine Majesty. It is here illustrated by a humble similitude; as a hen checks her chickens together. Christ would have gathered them. First, With such a tenderness of affection as the hen does, which has, by instinct, a peculiar concern for her young ones. Christ’s gathering of souls comes from his love, Jer. 31. 3. Secondly, for the same end. The hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, for protection and safety, and for warmth and comfort; poor souls have in Christ both refuge and refreshment. The chickens naturally run to the hen for shelter, and there find them; so the souls, by coming to Christ, perhaps Christ refers to that promise, (Ps. 91. 4.) He shall cover thee with his feathers. There is healing under Christ’s wings; (Mal. 4. 2.) that is more than the hen has for her chickens.

[2.] The forwardness of Christ to confer this favour. His offers are, First, Very free: I would have done it. Jesus Christ is truly willing to receive and save the poor, and to make them partakers of his interest and favour. Note, Even the ruin of their ruin, he delights in their repentance. Secondly, Very frequent: How often! Christ often came up to Jerusalem, preached, and wrought miraculs
there; and the meaning of all this, was, he would have gathered them. He keeps account how often his calls have been repeated. As often as we have heard the sound of the gospel, as often as we have felt the stirrings of the Spirit, so often Christ would have gathered them; but not like the terms upon which Christ proposed to gather them; they loved their sins, and yet trusted to their righteousness; they would not submit either to the grace of Christ or to his government, and so the bargain broke off.

3. Their wilful refusal of this grace and favour; Ye would not. How emphatically is their obstinacy opposed to Christ’s mercy! I would, and ye would not. He was willing to save them, but they were not willing to be saved by him. Note, It is wholly owing to the wicked wills of sinners, that they are not gathered under the wings of the Lord Jesus. They did not like the terms upon which Christ proposed to gather them; they loved their sins, and yet trusted to their righteousness; they would not submit either to the grace of Christ or to his government, and so the bargain broke off.

V. He reads Jerusalem’s doom; (v. 38, 39.) Therefore behold, your house is left unto you desolate. Both the city and the temple, God’s house and their own, all shall be laid waste. But it is especially meant of the temple, which they boasted of, and trusted to; that holy mountain because of which they were so haughty. Note, They that will not be gathered by the love and grace of Christ, shall be consumed and scattered by his wrath; I would, and you would not. Israel would none of me, so I gave them up, Ps. 81. 11, 12.

1. Their house shall be desolate; It is left unto you. Christ was now departing from the temple, and never came into it again; but by his word he beheaded it to ruin. They dealt on it, would have in themselves; Christ must have no room or interest there. “Well,” saith Christ, “it is left to you; take it, and make your best of it; I will never have any thing more to do with it.” They had made it a house of merchandise, and a den of thieves, and so it is left to them. Not long after this, the voice was heard in the temple, “Let us depart hence.” Then Christ went, and left them: the city also was left to them, destitute of God’s presence and grace; he was no longer a Wall of fire about them, nor the glory in the midst of them.

2. It shall be desolate; It is left unto you desolate; it is left the wilderness. (1.) It was immediately, when Christ left it, in the eyes of all that understood themselves, a very dismal melancholy place. Christ’s departure makes the best furnished, best replenished, place a wilderness, though it be the temple, the chief place of concourse; for what comfort can there be where Christ is not? Though there may be a crown of other contentments, yet if Christ’s special spiritual presence be withdrawn, that soul, that place, is become a wilderness, a land of darkness, as darkness itself. This comes of men’s rejecting Christ, and driving him away. (2.) It was, not long after, desolate, destroyed and ruined, and not only Christ, left out one another. The lot of Jerusalem’s enemies will now become Jerusalem’s lot, to be made of a city a heap, of a defended city a ruin, (Isa. 25. 2.) a lofty city laid low, even to the ground, Isa. 26. 5. The temple, that holy and beautiful house, became desolate. When God goes out, all enemies break in.

Lastly, Here is the final farewell that Christ took of Jerusalem the city, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh.

This speaks.

1. His departure from them. The time was at hand, when he should leave the world, to go to his Father, and be seen no more. After his resurrection, he was seen only by a few chosen witnesses, and they saw him not long, but he soon removed to the invisible world, and there will be till the time of the restitution of all things, when his welcome at his first coming will be repeated with loud acclama-

1. The prophetic vision of the destruction of Jerusalem, (Rev. 11. 1.) and, even they, who, when time was, rejected and pierced him, will be glad to come in among his accusers; they shall not only see the ruin of the house of God, but those that had bowed to Baal; and even the workers of iniquity will then cry, Lord, Lord, and will own, when his wrath is kindled, that blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Would we have our lot in that day with those that say, Blessed is he that cometh; let us be with them now, with them that truly worship, and truly welcome, Jesus Christ.

2. The judgments, blindness and obstinacy; Ye shall not see me, that is, not see me to be the Messiah, (for otherwise they did see him upon the cross,) not see the light of the truth concerning me, nor the things that belong to your peace, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh. They will never be convinced, till Christ’s second coming convince them, when it will be too late to make an interest in him, and nothing will remain but a fearful looking for of judgment. Note, (1.)Wilful blindness is often punished with judicial blindness. If they will not see, they shall not see. With this word he concludes his public preaching. After his resurrection, which was the sign of the prophet Jonas, they should have no other sign given them, till they should see the sign of the Son of man, ch. 24. 30. (2.) When the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, he will convince all, and will force acknowledgments from the proudest of his enemies of his being the Messiah, and even they shall be found bars of their own. They that would not now come at his call, shall then be forced to depart with his curse. The chief priests and scribes were displeased with the children for crying Hosanna to Christ; but the day is coming, when proud persecutors would gladly be found in the condition of the meanest and poorest they now trample upon. They who now reproach Christ in ridicule, shall repent in another mind shortly; it were therefore better to be of that mind now. Some make this to refer to the conversion of the Jews to the faith of Christ; then they shall see him, and own him, and say, Blessed is he that cometh; but it seems rather to look further, for, the complete manifestation of Christ, and conviction of sinners, are reserved to be the glory of the last day.

CHAP. XXIV.

Christ’s preaching was mostly practical; but, in this chapter, we have a prophetic discourse, a prediction of things to come; such, however, as had a practical tendency, and was intended, not to gratify the curiosity of his disciples, but to guide their consciences and conversations, and it is therefore concluded with a practical application. The church has always had particular prophesies, beside general prophesies, concerning the future salvation and bliss of believers: but it is observable, Christ preached this prophetic sermon in the close of his ministry, as the Apocalypse is the last book of the New Testament, and the prophecies books of the Old Testament; placed last, to intimate that we must be well grounded in plain truths and duties, and those must first be well digested, before we dive into those things that are dark and difficult; many run themselves into confusion by beginning their fible at the end. This discourse is divided into two parts.

1. The occasion of this discourse, v. 1. 3. II. The discourse itself, in which we have, 1. The prophecy of diviner events, especially referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the terrible fight of the Lord Jesus Christ, which were now hastening on, and were completed about forty years after; the prefaces to that destruction, the concomitants and consequences of it, yet looking further, to Christ’s coming at the end of time; and the summation of all things, of which that was a type and figure, v. 4. 21. 2. The practical application of this prophecy for the awakening and quickening of his disciples to prepare for these great and awful things, v. 32. 51.
1. AND Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? 

Here is,
1. Christ's quitting the temple, and his public work there. He had said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, Your house is left unto you desolate; and here he made his words good, He went out, and departed from the temple. The manner of expression is observable: he not only went out of the temple, but departed from it, took his final farewell of it; he departed from it, never to return to it any more; and this immediately follows a prophetic word. Note, That house is left desolate indeed, which Christ leaves. Woe unto them when I depart, Hos. 9. 12. Jer. 6. 8. It was now time to greaten out their Jehovah, The glory is departed, their defence is departed. Three days after this, the vail of the temple was rent; when Christ left it, all became common and unclean; but Christ departed not till they drove him away; did not reject them, till they first rejected him.

2. His private discourse with his disciples; he left the temple, but he did not leave the twelve, who were the seed of the gospel-church, which the casting off of the Jews was the encreasing of. When he left the temple, his disciples left it too, and came to him. Note, It is good being where Christ is, and leaving that which he leaves. They came to him, to be instructed in private, when his public preaching was over; for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. He had spoken of the destruction of the Jewish church to the multitude in parables, which here, as usual, he explains to his disciples. Observe, 
1. His disciples came to him, to shew him the buildings of the temple. It was a stately and beautiful structure, out of the world, the world; no cost was spared, no art left untired, to make it sumptuous. Though it came short of Solomon's temple, and its beginning was small, yet its latter end did greatly increase. It was richly furnished with gifts and offerings, to which there were continual additions made. They shewed Christ these things, and desired him to take notice of them, either, (1.) As being greatly pleased with them; so the apostle, He rejoiced, and was glad with joy, Hos. 14. 5. Otherwise, they might have been more proper to have been admired. They had lived mostly in Galilee, at a distance from the temple, had seldom seen it, and therefore were the more struck with admiration at it, and thought he should admire, as much as they did, all this glory; (Gen. 51. 1.) and they would have him divert himself (after his preaching, and from his sorrow which they saw him perhaps almost overwhelmed with) was left to judge of and to commend it. Note, Good men are apt to be too much enamoured with outward pomp and gaiety, and to overvalue it, even in the things of God; whereas we should be as Christ was, dead to it, and look upon it with contempt. The temple was indeed glorious, but, (1.) Its glory was sullied and stained with the sin of the priests and people; that wicked doctrine of the Pharisees, which preferred the gold before the temple that sanctified it, was enough to deface the beauty of all the ornaments of the temple. [2.] Its glory was eclipsed and cut done by the presence of Christ in it, who was the glory of this latter house, (Hag. 2. 9.) so that the buildings had no glory, in comparison with that glory which excelled. Or, (2.) As grieving that this house should be left desolate; they shewed him the buildings, as if they would move him to reverse the sentence; "Lord, let not this house be, and beautiful house, which our fathers praised thee, be made a desolation." They forgot how many providences, concerning Solomon's temple, had manifested how little God cared for that outward glory which they had so much admired, when the people were wicked, 2 Chron. 7. 21. This house, which is high, will bring low. Christ had lately looked upon the precious stones, and wept for them, Luke 19. 41. The disciples look upon the temple buildings, and are ready to weep at them. In this, as in other things, his thoughts are not like our's. It was weakness, and meanness of spirit, in the disciples, to be so fond of fine buildings; it was a childish thing. Animus magni nihil magnus — To a great mind nothing is great. Seneca.

2. Christ, hereupon, foretells the utter ruin and destruction that were coming upon this place, 
(1.) He speaks of it as a certain ruin; "I say unto you. I, that know what I say, and know how to make good what I say; take my word for it, it shall be so; I, the Amen, the true Witness, say it to you." All judgment being committed to the Son, the threatenings, as well as the promises, are all yea, and amen, in him, Heb. 6. 17. 18.

(2.) He speaks of it as a certain ruin. The temple shall be, stripped, plundered, and defaced, but utterly demolished and laid waste; Not one stone shall be left upon another. Notice is taken, in the building of the second temple, of the laying of one stone upon another; (Hag. 2. 15.) and here, in the ruin, of not leaving one stone upon another. History tells us, that this was fulfilled in the latter; for though Titus, when he took the city, did all he could to save the temple, and the true images of God; yet he did constrain the enraged soldiers from destroying it utterly; and it was done to that degree, that Turnus Rufus ploughed up the ground on which it had stood: thus that scripture was fulfilled, (Mic. 5. 12.) Zion shall, for your sake, be ploughed as a field. And afterward, in Julian the Apostate's time, when the Jews were encouraged by him to rebuild their temple, in reparation to the destruction of it, the seating of the ruins was quite pulled down, to level the ground for a new foundation; but the attempt was defeated by the miraculous eruption of fire out of the ground, which destroyed the foundation they laid, and frightened away the builders. Now this prediction of the final and irreparable ruin of the temple, includes a prediction of the period of the Levitical priesthood and the ceremonial law.

3. The disciples, not disputing either the truth of
the equity of this sentence, nor doubting of the accomplishment of it, inquire more particularly of the time when it should come to pass, and the signs of its approach, v. 3. Observe,

(1.) Where they made this inquiry; privately, as he sat upon the mount of Olives; probably, he was returning to Bethany, and there sat down by the way, to rest, and the mouth of Olives was directly facing the temple, and from thence he might have a full prospect of it at some distance; there he sat as a judge upon the bench, the temple and city being before him as at the bar, and thus he passed sentence on them. We read (Ezek. 11. 23.) of the removing of the glory of the Lord from the temple to the mountain; so Christ, the great Shechinah, here removes to this mountain.

(2.) What the inquiry itself was; When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? Here are three questions.

[1.] Some think, these questions do all point at one and the same thing—the destruction of the temple, and the period of the Jewish church and nation, which Christ had himself spoken of at his coming, (ch. 21.) and which would be the consummation of the age, (for so it may be read,) the finishing of that dispensation. Or, they thought the destruction of the temple must needs be the end of the world. If that house be laid waste, the world cannot stand; for the Rabbins used to say, that the house of the sanctuary was one of the seven things for the sake of which the world was made; and they think, if so, the world will not survive the temple.

[2.] Others think their question, When shall these things be? refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the other two to the end of the world; or Christ's coming may refer to his setting up his kingdom, and the end of the world to the day of judgment. I rather incline to think that their question looked no further than the event Christ now foretold; but it appears, by other passages, that they had very confused thoughts of future events; so that perhaps it is not possible to put any certain construction upon this question of their's.

But Christ, in his answer, though he does not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples, (that must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit,) yet looks further than their question, and instructs his church, not only concerning the great events of that age, the destruction of Jerusalem, but concerning his second coming at the end of time, which here he insensibly slides into a discourse of; and of that, it is plain, he speaks in the next chapter, which is a continuation of this sermon.

4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. 6. And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. 7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8. All these are the beginning of sorrows. 9. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. 11. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. 13. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. 14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. 15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand.) 16. Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. 17. Let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. 20. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: 21. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25. Behold, I have told you before. 26. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. 27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. 29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. 30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. 31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The disciples had asked concerning the times, When these things should be? Christ gives them no answer to that, after what number of days and years
his prediction should be accomplished, for it is not for us to know the times: (Acts 1:7.) but they had asked, What shall be the sign? That question he answered fully, for we are concerned to understand the signs of the times, ch. 16, 3.

Now the prophecy primarily respects the events near at hand—the destruction of Jerusalem, the period of the Jewish church and state, the calling of the Gentiles, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world; but as they more especially of the Old Testament, which has an immediate reference to the affairs of the Jews and the revolutions of their state, under the figure of them, do certainly look further, to the gospel-church and the kingdom of the Messiah, and are so expounded in the New Testament; and such expressions are found in those predictions as are peculiar thereto, and not applicable otherwise; so this prophecy, under the type of Jerusalem's destruction, looks as far forward as the general judgment: God, as is usual in prophecies, some passages are most applicable to the type, and others to the antitype; and toward the close, as usual, it points more particularly to the latter. It is observable, that what Christ here saith to his disciples, tends more to engage their attention than to satisfy their curiosity; much more for these events that should happen, than to give them any account of events themselves. This is that good understanding of the times which we should all covet, thence to infer what Israel ought to do: and so this prophecy is of standing lasting use to the church, and will be so to the end of time; for the thing that has been, is that which shall be. (Ecc. 1, 5, 6, 7, 9.) and the adverbies, conjunction, and presages, of events, are much the same still that they were then; so that upon the prophecy of this chapter, pointing at that event, moral prognostications may be made, and such constructions of the signs of the times, as the wise man's heart will know how to improve.

I. Christ here foretells the going forth of deceivers; he begins with a caution, Take heed that no man deceive you. They expected to be told when these things should be, to be let into that secret; but this caution is a check to their curiosity, What is that to you? Mind you your duty, follow me, and be not seduced from following me. Those that are most inquisitive concerning the secret things which belong not to them, are easiest imposed upon by seducers. 2 Thess. 2, 3. The disciples, when they heard that the Jews, their most inveterate enemies, should be destroyed, might be in danger of falling into a false joy. No, brethren, you are more exposed other ways. Seducers are more dangerous enemies to the church than persecutors.

Three times in this discourse he mentions the appearance of false prophets, which was, I. A presage of Jerusalem's ruin. Justly were they who killed the true prophets, left to be insaried by false prophets; and they who crucified the true Messiah, left to be deceived by false Christs and pretended Messiahs. The Jews had the occasion of dividing that people into parties and factions, which made their ruin the more easy and speedy; and the sin of the many, that were led aside by them, helped to fill the measure. 2. It was a trial to the disciples of Christ, and therefore agreeable to their state of probation, that they which are hewn down are not manifest. 3. Now concerning these deceivers, observe here.

(1.) The pretences they should come under. Satan acts most mischievously, when he appears as an angel of light; the colour of the greatest good is often the cover of the greatest evil.

[1.] There should appear false prophets, (v. 11, 24.) the deceivers would pretend to divine inspiration, and immediate mission, and a spirit of prophecy, when it was all a lie. Such there had been formerly, (Jer. 23, 16. Ezek. 13, 6.) as was foretold, Deut. 13, 3. Some think, the seducers were pointed to were such as had been settled teachers in the church, and had gained reputation as such, but afterward betrayed the truth they had taught, and revolted to error; and from such the danger is the greater, because least suspected. One false traitor in the garrison may do more mischief than a thousand avowed enemies without.

[2.] I am Christ, false Christs, coming in Christ's name, (v. 5.) assuming to themselves the name peculiar to him, and saying, I am Christ, pseudo-Christs, v. 24. There was at that time a general expectation of the appearing of the Messias; they spoke of him, as he that should come; but when he did come, the body of the nation rejected him; which those who were ambitious of making themselves a name, took advantage of, and set up for Christs. Josephus speaks of several such impostors between this and the destruction of Jerusalem; one Thendus, that was defeated by Cuspinus Fadus; another by Felix, another by Festus. Dosethens said, he was the Christ foretold by Moses, Origen adversus Caelum. See Acts 3, 36, 37. 21, 28. Simon Magus pretended to be the great power of God, Acts 8, 10. In after-ages there have been such pretenders, who have about them a great deal of what he himself called himself Bar-cohoba—The son of a star, but proved Bar-cobo—The son of a lie. About fifty years ago, Sabbati-Levi set up for a Messiah in the Turkish empire, and was greatly cared by the Jews; but in a short time his folly was made manifest: see Sir John Rycart's History. The popish religion doth, in effect, set up a false Christ; the Pope comes, in Christ's name, as his vicar, but invades and usurps all his offices, and so is a rival with him, and, as such, an enemy to him, a deceiver, and an antichrist.

[3.] These false Christs and false prophets would have their agents and emissaries busy in all places to draw people in to them, v. 23. Then public troubles are great and threatening, and people will be catching at any thing that looks like deliverance, then Satan will take the advantage of imposing on them; then they will say, Lo, here is a Christ, or there is one; but do not mind them: the true Christ did not strive, or cry; nor was it said of him, Lo here! or, Lo there! (Luke 17, 21.) therefore if any man say so concerning him, look upon it as a temptation. The hermits, who place religion in a monastical life, say, He is in the desert; the priests, who make the consecrated wafer to be Christ, say, He is in this bread, in this wafer, in the sacred chambers; lo, he is in this of the image. Thus some appropriate Christ's spiritual presence to one party or persuasion, as if they had the monopoly of Christ and Christianity; and the kingdom of Christ must stand and fall, must live and die, with them; Lo, he is in this church, in that council; whereas Christ is in all, not here or there, but meets his people. Blessing in every face, says he, under these names.

(2.) The proof they should offer for the making good of these pretences; They shall show great signs and wonders, (v. 24.) not true miracles, those are a divine seal, and with those the doctrine of Christ stands confirmed; and therefore, if any offer to draw us from that by signs and wonders, we must have recourse to that rule given of old, (Deut. 13, 1, 2, 3.) If any show a power to foretell the end of the world, then to shew signs they that would draw you in to believe other gods, or believe in other Christs, for the Lord your God proveth you. But these were lying wonders wrought by Satan, (God permitting him,) who is the prince of the power of the air, 2 Thess. 2, 9. It is not said, They shall work miracles, but, They shall show great signs; they are but a show; either they impose upon men's credulity by false narratives, or deceive their
senses by tricks of legendarium, or arts of divination, as the magicians of Egypt by their enchantments.

(3.) The success they should have in these attempts.

[1.] They shall deceive many, (v. 5.) and again, (v. 10.) Note, The devil and his instruments may prevail far in deceiving poor souls; few find the strait gate, but many are drawn into the broad way; many will be imposed upon by their signs and wonders, and many drawn in by the hopes of deliverance from their oppressions. Note, Neither miracles nor multitudes are certain signs of a true church; for all the world wonders after the beast, Rev. 13. 3.

[2.] They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect, Matt. 24. This is the particular delusion of the delusion; it is such as many shall be carried away by, (so strange shall the stream be,) even those that were thought to stand fast. Men's knowledge, gifts, learning, eminent station, and long profession, will not secure them; but, notwithstanding these, many will be deceived; nothing but the almighty grace of God, pursuant to his eternal purpose, will be a protection. Secondly, The safety of the elect in the midst of this delusion is taken for granted in that parenthesis, If it were possible, plainly implying that it is not possible, for they are kept by the power of God, that the purpose of God, according to the election, may stand. It is possible for those that have been enlightened to fall away, (Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6.) but not for those that were elected. If God's chosen ones should be deceived, God's choice would be defaced, which belies the three graces, for whom he did predestinate, he called, justified, and glorified, Rom. 8. 30. They were given to Christ; and of all that were given to him he will lose none, John 10. 28. Grotius will have this to be meant of the great difficulty of drawing the primitive Christians from their religion, and quotes it as used proverbially by Galen; when he would express a thing very difficult and morally impossible, he said, You may sooner draw a wasp from Christ.

(4.) The repeated caution which our Saviour gives to his disciples to stand upon their guard against them; therefore he gave them warning, that they might watch; (v. 25.) Behold, I have told you before. He that is told before where he will be assaulted, may save himself, as the king of Israel did, 2 Kings 6. 9, 10. Note, Christ's warnings are designed to engage pursuers of unfaithfulness; and though the elect shall be preserved from delusion, yet they shall be preserved by the use of appointed means, and a due regard to the cautions of the word; we are kept through faith, faith in Christ's word, which he has told us before.

[1.] We must not believe those that say, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there, v. 23. We believe that the true Christ is the right hand of God, and that his spiritual presence is where two or three are gathered together in his name. The devil therefore would draw you off from a Christ in heaven, by telling you he is anywhere on earth; or draw you off from the catholic church on earth, by telling you he is here, or he is there; believe it not. Note, There is not a greater enemy to true faith than vain credulity. The simple believe every word, and runs after every cry. Miserere mei, omnipotens virgo amabilis.

[2.] We must not go forth after those that say, He is in the desert, or, He is in the secret chambers, v. 26. We must not hearken to every empiric and pretender, nor follow every one that puts up the finger to point us to a new Christ, and a new gospel; Go not forth, for if you do, you are in danger of being taken by them; therefore keep out of harm's way; be not carried about with every wind; many a man's vain curiosity to go forth hath led him into a fatal apostacy; your strength at such a time is to sit still, to have the heart established with grace.

II. He foretells wars and great commotions among the nations, v. 6, 7. When Christ was born, there was a universal peace; but the birth of Janus was shewn; but think not that Christ came to send, or continue, such a peace; (Luke 12. 51.) no, his city and his wall are to be built even in troublesome times, and even wars shall forward his work. From the time that the Jews rejected Christ, and he left their house desolate, the sword did never depart from their house, the sword of the Lord was never quiet, because he had given it a charge against a good tithe of the people of his wrath, and by it brought ruin upon them.

Here is, 1. A prediction of the event of the day; You will now shortly hear of wars, and rumours of wars. When wars are, they will be heard; for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa. 9. 5. See how terrible it is, (Jer. 4. 10.) Thou hast heard, O my soul, the alarm of wars! Even the quiet in the land, and the least inquisitive after things of this world, hear of wars. See what comes of refusing the gospel! Those that will not hear the messengers of peace, shall be made to hear the messengers of war. God has a sword ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, his new covenant. Nation shall rise up against nation, that is, one part or province of the Jewish nation against another, one city against another; (2 Chron. 15. 5, 6.) and in the same province and city of another party of faction shall rise up against another, so that they shall be devoured by, and dashed in pieces against, one another, Isa. 9. 19, 21.

2. A prescription of the duty of the day; See that ye be not troubled. Is it possible to hear such sad news, and not be troubled? Yet, where the heart is fixed, trusting in God, it is kept in peace, and is not afraid, no not of the evil tidings of wars, and rumours of wars; no not the noise of Arm. arm. Be not troubled; and of this comfort, Be not just put into confusion or commotion; not put into throes, as a woman with child by a fright; See that ye be not—ignor. Note, There is need of constant care and watchfulness to keep trouble from the heart when there are wars abroad; and it is against the mind of Christ, that his people should have troubled hearts even in troublous times.

We must not be troubled, for two reasons:

(1.) Because we are bid to expect this; the Jews must be punished, ruin must be brought upon them; by this the justice of God and the honour of the Redeemer must be asserted; and therefore all those things must come to pass; the word is gone out of God's mouth, and it shall be accomplished in its season. Note, The consideration of the unchangeableness of the divine counsels, which govern all events, should compose and quiet our spirits, whatever happens. God is but performing the things which he has appointed for us, and our inordinate trouble is an intemperate quarrel with that appointment. Let us therefore acquiesce, because these things must come to pass; not only necessitate decreti—as the product of the divine counsel, but necessitate medit—as a means in order to a further end. The old house must be taken down, (though it cannot be done with out noise, and dust, and danger,) ere the new fabric can be erected; and the house of the new fabric (which is not to be utterly destroyed, though it may be shaken they,) must be removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain, Heb. 12. 27.

(2.) Because we are still to expect worse; The end is not yet; the end of time is not, and, while time lasts, we must expect trouble, and that the end of one affliction will be but the beginning of another; or, "The end of these troubles is not yet; there must be more judgments than one made use of to
bring down the Jewish power; more vials of wrath must yet be poured out; there is but one woes past, more woes are yet to come, more arrows are yet to be spent upon them out of God’s quiver; therefore be not troubled, do not give way to fear and trouble, sink not under the present burden, but rather gather in all the strength and spirit you have, to encounter what is yet before you. You do not truly hear of wars and rumours of wars; for then what will become of you when the famines and pestilences come? If it be to us a vexation but to understand the report, (Isa. 28. 19.) what will it be to feel the stroke when it toucheth the bone and the flesh? If running with the footmen weary us, how shall we contend with horses? And if we be frightened at a little thing, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? Jer. 12. 5.

11. He foretells other judgments more immediately sent of God—famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Famine is often the effect of war, and pestilence of famine. These were the three judgments which David was to choose one out of; and he was in a great strait, for he knew not which was the worse. But what dreadful desolations will they make, when they all proceed together? Beside war, (and that is enough,) there shall be, 1. Famine, signified by the black horse under the third seal, Rev. 6. 5, 6. We read of a famine in Judea, not long after Christ’s time, which was very impoverishing; (Acts 11. 28, 29.) but the sorest famine was in Jerusalem during the siege. See Lam. 4. 9, of it. 2. Pestilences, signified by the pale horse, and Death upon him, and the grave at his heels, under the fourth seal, Rev. 6. 7, 8. This destroys without distinction, and in a little time lays heaps upon heaps. 3. Earthquakes in divers places, or from place to place, pursuing those that flee from them, as they did from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, Zech. 14. 5. Great desolations have sometimes been made by earthquakes, of late and formerly; they have been the death of many, and the terror of more. In the apocalyptic visions, it is observable, that earthquakes bode good, and no evil, to the church, Rev. 6. 12. Compare v. 15—11. 12, 13, 19, 16—17—19. When God shakes terribly the earth, (Isa. 2, 21.) it is to shake the wicked out of it, (Job 38. 13.) and to introduce the Desire of all nations, Hag. 2, 6, 7. But he speaks of these spoken judgments, and yet but the beginning of sorrows, Mirae—or travelling pains, quick, violent, yet tedious too. Note, When God judgeth, he will override; when he begins in wrath, he will make a full end, 1 Sam. 3, 12. When we look forward to the eternity of misery that is before the obstinate refusers of Christ and his gospel, we may truly say, concerning the greatest temporal judgments, “They are but the beginning of sorrows, as thine are with them, there is worse behind.”

IV. He foretells the persecution of his own people and ministers, and a general apostacy and decay in religion, thereupon, v. 9, 10, 12, 13. Observe, 1. The cross itself foretold, v. 9. Note, Of all future events, we are as much concerned, though constant temptations are desirous, to know of our own sufferings as of any other. 2. When famines and pestilences prevail, then shall they impiate them to the Christians, and make that a pretence for persecuting them; Christianas ad leones—Away with Christians to the lions. Christ had told his disciples, when he first sent them out, what hard things they should suffer, but they had hitherto experienced little of it. And therefore he reminds them again, that the less they had suffered, the more there was behind to be filled up, Col. 1, 24. 1. They shall be afflicted with bonds and prisons, cruel mockings and scourgings, as blessed Paul; (2 Cor. 11. 23, 25.) not killed outright, but killed all the day long, in deaths often, killed so as to feel themselves die, made a spectacle to the world, 1 Cor. 4. 9, 11.

2. They shall be killed; so cruel are the church’s enemies, that nothing less will satisfy them than the blood of the saints, which they thirst after, suck, and shed, like water.

3. They shall be hated of all nations for Christ’s name’s sake, as he had told them before, ch. 10. 22. The world was generally leavened with enmity and malignity to Christians; the Jews, though stupid to the heathen, were never persecuted by them so as the Christians were; they were hated by the Jews that were saved at the destruction of Jerusalem; they were the common butt of the world’s malice. What shall we think of this world, when the best men had the worst usage in it? It is the cause that makes the martyr, and comforts him; it was for Christ’s sake that they were thus hated; their professing and preaching his name incensed the nations so much against them; the devil, finding a fatal shock thereby given to his kingdom, and that his time was likely to be short, can do nothing in great wrath.

2. The offence of the cross, v. 10, 12. Satan thus carries on his interest by force of arms, though Christ, at length, will bring glory to himself out of the sufferings of his people and ministers. Three ill effects of persecution are here foretold: (1.) The apostasy of some. When the profession of Christianity begins to cost men dear, then shall many be offended; shall first fall out with, and then fall off from, their profession; they will begin to pick quarrels with their religion, sit loose to it, grow weary of it, and at length revolt from it. Note, [1.] It is no new thing (though it is a strange thing) for those that have known the way of righteousness, to turn aside out of it. Paul often complains of desertors, who began well, but sometimes hindered them. They were with us, but went out from us, because their profession cost them any thing, they quit it presently. (2.) The malignity of others. When persecution is in fashion, envy, enmity, and malice, are strangely diffused into the minds of men by contagion; and charity, tenderness, and moderation, are looked upon as singularities, which make a man like a speckled bird. Then they shall betray one another, that is, three times; for treasure is first accumulated, and then directly contrary to two of the best, (truth and love,) shall have the ascendant. This seems to refer to the barbarous treatment which the several contending factions among the Jews gave to one another; and justly were they, who eat up God’s people as they eat bread, left thus to bite and devour one another till they were consumed one of another; or it may refer to the mischiefs done to Christ’s disciples by those that were nearest to them, as ch. 10. 21. The brother shall deliver up the brother to death.
(3.) The general declining and cooling of most, v. 12. In seducing times, when false prophets arise, in persuading those when the saints are hated, expect these two things: 1. The abounding of iniquity; though the world always lies in wickedness, yet there are some times in which it may be said, that iniquity doth in a special manner abound; as when it is more extensive than ordinary, as in the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their way; and when it is more excessive than ordinary, as in Christ's time, when Christ's disciples were hot in their wickedness, (Exod. 7. 11.) so that hell seems to be broke loose in blasphemies against God, and enmities to the saints.

[2.] The abating of love; this is the consequence of the former: Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. Understand it in general of true serious godliness, which is all summed up in love; it is too common for professors of religion to grow cold in their profession, when the wicked are hot in their wickedness; as the church of Ephesus in bad times left her first love, Rev. 2. 4. Or, may be understood more particularly of brethrenly love. When iniquity abounds, seducing iniquity, persecuting iniquity, this grace commonly waxeth cold. Christians begin to be shy and suspicious one of another; affections are alienated, distances created, parties made, and so love comes to nothing.

This gives a melancholy prospect of the times, that there shall be such a great decay of love; but, First, it is of the love of many not of all. In the worst of times, God has his remnant that hold fast their integrity, and retain their zeal, as in Elijah's days, when there was evil abounding throughout all the land, and the people were without bread; yet God was ready to save his prophets, and preserve and comfort them, as he did in the days of the judges, when the people were so wicked as to provoke God to cast them out of the land; yet God preserved a remnant, and gave strength to those that feared him, who were against the heathen by whom they were reproached, and by whom their lives were in danger.

3. Comfort administered in reference to this offence of the cross, for the support of the Lord's people under it; (v. 13.) He that endureth to the end shall be saved. This is a promise of the grace of God well to the cause of Christ in general, that, though many are offended, yet some shall endure to the end. When we see so many drawing back, we are ready to fear that the cause of Christ will sink for want of supporters, and his name be left and forgotten for want of some to make profession of it; but even at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace, Rom. 11. 5. It is spoken of the same time that this prophecy has reference to; a remnant who are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but believe and persevere to the saving of the soul; they endure to the end, to the end of their lives, to the end of their present state of probation, or to the end of these suffering trying times, to the last encounter, though they shall be called to resist unto blood. (2.) It is comfortable to those who do thus endure to the end, and suffer for their constancy, that they shall be saved. Perseverance wins the crown through free grace, and shall wear it. They shall be saved; perhaps they may be delivered out of their troubles, and comfortably survive them in this world; but it is the eternal salvation that is here intended. They that endure to the end of their days, shall receive the end of their faith and hope, even the salvation of their souls. 1 Pet. 1. 9. Rom. 2. 7. Rev. 3. 20. The contrast of glory with self-love, and death, and abasing regard to that will enable us to choose rather to die at a stake with the persecuted, than to live in a palace with the persecutors.

V. He foretells the preaching of the gospel in all the world; (v. 14.) This gospel shall be preached, and then shall the end come. Observe here, 1. It is called the gospel of the kingdom, because it reveals the kingdom of grace, which leads to the kingdom of glory, sets up Christ's kingdom in this world; and secures ours in the other world. 2. This gospel, sooner or later, is to be preached in all the world, to every creature, and all nations are to be discipled by it; for in it Christ is to be Salvation to the ends of the earth; for this end the gift of tongues was the sign foretold, Acts 2. 33. It is preached to be a witness to all nations, that is, a faithful declaration of the mind and will of God concerning the duty which God requires from man, and the recompence which man may expect from God. It is a record, (1 John 5. 11.) it is a witness, for those who believe, that they shall be saved, and against those who persist in unbelief, that they shall be damned. See Mat. 10. 17. But how does this come in here? 1. It is intimated that the gospel should be, if not heard, yet at least heard of, throughout the then known world, before the destruction of Jerusalem; that the Old-Testament church should not be quite dissolved till the New-Testament was pretty well settled, had got considerable footing, and began to make some figure. Better is the face of a corrupt degenerate church than none at all. Within forty years after the first resurrection of Christ, the gospel was borne forth to the ends of the earth, Rom. 10. 18. St. Paul fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum; and the other apostles were not idle. The persecuting of the saints at Jerusalem helped to disperse them, so that they went everywhere, preaching the word, Acts 8. 1, 4. And when the tidings of the Redeemer are sent over all parts of the world, then shall come the end of the Jewish state. Thus, that which they thought to procure by means of the gospel to Christ to death, they thereby procured; all men believed on him, and the Romans came, and took away their place and nation, John 11. 48. Paul speaks of the gospel being come to all the world, and preached to every creature, Col. 1. 6, 23.

(2.) It is likewise intimated, that, even in times of temptation, trouble, and persecution, the gospel of the kingdom shall be dispersed by the preaching of it, and shall force its way through the greatest opposition. Though the enemies of the church grow very hot, and many of her friends very cool, yet the gospel shall be preached. And even then, when many fall by the sword and by flame, and many do wickedly, and are corrupted by flatteries, yet then the people that do know their God shall be strengthened to do the greatest exploits of all, in instructing many; see Dan. 11. 32, 33, and see an instance, Phil. 1. 12, 14.

(3.) That which seems chiefly intended here, is, that the end of the world shall be then, and not till then, when the gospel has done its work in the world. The gospel shall be preached, and that work carried on, when you are dead; so that all nations, first or last, shall have either the enjoyment, or the refusal, of the gospel; and then come the end, when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father; when the mystery of God shall be finished, the mystical body completed, and the nations either converted and saved, or convicted and silenced, by the gospel; then shall the end come, of which he had said before, (v. 6, 7.) not yet, not till those intermediate counsels be fulfilled. The world shall stand as long as any of God's chosen ones remain uncalled; but, when they are all gathered in, it will be set on fire immediately.

VI. He foretells more particularly the ruin that was coming upon the people of the Jews, their city, temple, and nation, v. 15, &c. Here he comes more closely to answer their question concerning the deso
The Romans setting up the abomination of desolation in the holy place. v. 15. Now, (1.) Some understand by this an image, or statue, set up in the temple by some of the Roman governors, which was very offensive to the Jews, provoked them to rebel, and so brought the desolation upon them. The image of Jupiter Olympus, which Antiochus caused to be set up upon the altar of God, is called by the historian, 1 Mac. 1. 54. The abomination of desolation, the very word here used by the historian, 1 Mac. 1. 54. Since the captivity in Babylon, nothing was, nor could be, more distasteful to the Jews than an image in the holy place, as appeared by the mighty opposition they made when Gallipula offered to set up his statute there, which had been of fatal consequence, if it had not been prevented, and the matter accommodated, by the conduct of Petronius; but Herod did set up an eagle over the temple-gate; and, some say, the statue of Titus was set up in the temple. (2.) Others choose to expand it by the parallel place, (Luke 21. 20.) when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies. Jerusalem was the holy city, Canaan the holy land, the mount Moriah, which lay about Jerusalem, for its nearness to the temple, was, they thought, as it were a hand in the mouth of the country lying round about Jerusalem the Roman army was encamped, that was the abomination that made desolate. The land of an enemy is said to be the land which thou abhorrest; (Isa. 7. 16.) so an enemy's army, to a weak but wily people, may well be called the abomination. Now this is said to be spoken of by Daniel the prophet, who spoke more plainly of the desolation of Messiah and his kingdom than any of the Old-Testament prophets did. He speaks of an abomination making desolate, which should be set up by Antiochus; (Dan. 11. 31.—12. 11.) but this, that our Saviour refers to, we have in the message that the angel brought him, (Dan. 9. 27.) of what shall come to the end at seventy weeks, long after the former; for the overspreading of abominations, or, as the margin reads it, with the abominable armies, (which some understand means idolatry,) shall make it desolate. Armies of idolaters may well be called abominable armies; and, some think, the tumults, insurrections, and abominable faction and seditions, in the city and temple, may at least be taken in as part of the abomination making desolate. Christ refers them to that prophecy of Daniel, that they might see how the ruin of their city and temple was spoken of in the Old Testament, which would both confirm his prediction, and take off the odium of it. They might likewise from thence gather the time of it—soon after the cutting off Messiah the Prince; the sin that procured it—their rejecting him, and the certainty of it—it is a desolation determined. As Christ by his precepts confirmed the law, so by his predictions he confirmed the prophecies of the Old Testament, and it will be of good use to compare both together.

Reference being here had to a prophecy, which is commonly dark and obscure, Christ inserts this memorandum, "Whoso readeth, let him understand; whose readeth the prophecy of Daniel, let him understand that it is to have its accomplishment now shortly in the desolations of Jerusalem." Note, Those that read the scriptures should labour to understand the scriptures, else their reading is to little purpose; we cannot use that which we do not understand. See John 5. 39. Acts 8. 30. The angel, that delivered this prophecy to Daniel, stirred him up to know and understand, Dan. 9. 25. And we must not despair of understanding even dark pro-

phiccies; the great New-Testament prophecy is called a revelation, not a secret. Now, things revealed belong to us, and therefore must be humbly and diligently searched into. Or, Let him understand, not as the Saviour means here, but the disciples. Thus the scriptures, let him understand the times. Chron. 12. 32. Let him observe and take notice, so some read it; let him be assured, that, notwithstanding the vain hopes with which the deluded people fed themselves, the abominable armies will make desolate.

2. The means of preservation which thinking men should betake themselves to; (v. 23.) Then let them which are in Judea flee. Then concludes, there is no other way to help yourselves than by flying for the same. We may take this,

(1.) As a prediction of the ruin itself; that it should be irresistible; that it would be impossible for the stoutest hearts to make head against it, or contend with it, but they must have recourse to the last shift, getting out of the way. It speaks that which Jeremiah so much insisted upon, but in vain, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans, that it would be to no purpose to resist, but that it was their wisdom to yield and capitulate; and so Christ here, to shew how fruitless it would be to stand it out, bids every one make the best of his way.

(2.) We may take it as a direction to the followers of Christ what to do, not to say, A confederacy with those who are in Judea is the last hope of empire, or the preservation of the city and nation, only that they might consume the wealth of both upon their lusts; (for this very affair the struggles of the Jews against the Roman power, some years before their final overthrow, the apostle refers, Jam. 4. 1—3.) but let them acquiesce in the decree that was gone forth, and with all speed quit the city and country, as they would quitt a falling house or a sinking ship, and get away, if possible, before the storm. Thus did theusted of Jehoiakim and Ahabram; he shews them,

[1.] Whither they must flee—from Judea to the mountains; not the mountains round about Jerusalem, but those in the remote corners of the land, which would be some shelter to them, not so much by their strength as by their secrecy. Israel is said to be scattered among the mountains; (2 Chron. 13. 18.) and thus did the ten tribes, which were the descendants of the twelve who passed from the lion's den, and the mountains of the leopards, than among the seditious Jews, or the enraged Romans. Note, In times of imminent peril and danger, it is not only lawful, but our duty, to seek our own preservation by all good and honest means; and if God opens a door of escape, we ought to make our escape, otherwise we do not trust God, but tempt him. There may be a time when even those that are in Judea, where God is known, and his name is great, must flee to the mountains; and while we only go out of the way of danger, not out of the way of duty, we may trust God to provide a dwelling for his outcasts, Isa. 16. 4, 5. In times of public calamity, when it is manifest that we cannot be serviceable at home, and may be safe abroad, Providence calls us to make our escape. He that flees may find again.

[2.] What haste they must make, v. 17, 18. The life will be in danger, in imminent danger, the scourge will slay suddenly; and therefore he that is on the house-top, when the alarm comes, let him not come down into the house, to look after his effects there, but go the nearest way down, to make his escape; and so he that shall be in the field will find the house that he hath sought and was inquiring for the Romans to return to fetch his clothes or the wealth of his house, for two reasons, First, Because the time which would be taken up in packing up his things would delay his flight. Note, When death is at the door, delays are dangerous; it was the charge to Lot.
Look not behind thee. Those that are convinced of the misery of a sinful state, and the rain that attends them in that state, and, consequently, of the necessity of their fleeing to Christ, must take heed, lest, after all these convictions, they perish eternally by delays. Secondly, Because the carrying of his clothes, and his other moveables and valuables, with him, would but burden him, and clog his flight. The Syrians, in their flight, used not any thing to load them. 12 Sentenc. 7. 1. At such a time we must be thankful if our lives be given us for a prey, though we can save nothing. Jer. 45. 4, 5. For the life is more than meat, ch. 6. 25. Those who carried off, least, were safest in their flight. Cantabt vaccaea carrum larvator—The moneyless traveller can lose nothing by robbers. It was to his own disciples that Christ recommended this forgetfulness of their house and clothes, when he said, if the world be then heaven, treasure there, and durable clothing, which the enemy could not plunder them of. Omnia mea mecum porto—I have all my property with me, said Bias the philosopher in his flight empty-handed. He that has grace in his heart, carries his all along with him, when strip of all.

Now, those to whom Christ said this immediately, did not live to see this dismal day, none of all the thousands that perished in the destruction of Jerusalem; for they had gone up into the mountains, (Christ hid them in heaven,) but they left the direction to their successors in profession, who pursued it, and it was of use to them; for, when the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea saw the ruin coming on, they all retired to a town called Pelus, on the other side Jordan, where they were safe; so that, of the many thousands that perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, there was not so much as one. Christians, Euseb. Ecol. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 5. Thus the prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself, Prov. 22. 3. Heb. 11. 7. This warning was not kept private. St. Matthew’s gospel was published long before that destruction, so that others might have taken the advantage of it; but their perishing through their unbelief of this, was a figure of their eternal perishing through their unbelief of the warnings Christ gave concerning the coming of such a conformation.

[3.] Whom it would go hard with at that time; (v. 19.) Woe to them that are with child, and to them that gave suck. To this same event that saying of Christ at his death refers, (Luke 23. 29.) They shall say, Blessed are the wombs that never bare, and the laps that never gave suck. Happy are they that have no children to see the murder of; but most unhappy those, whose labours are then heaven, their pains then giving suck; they of all others must be in the most melancholy circumstances. First, To them the famine would be most grievous, when they should see the tongue of the sucking child cleaving to the roof of his mouth for thirst, and themselves by the calamity made more cruel than the sea monsters, Lam. 4. 3, 4. Secondly, To them the sword would be most terrible, when it is in the hand of whose the brutal rage. It is a direful midwife, when the wound is delivered. Thirdly, To them the enraged conqueror, (2 Kings 15. 16. Hos. 13. 16. Amos 1. 13.) or the children brought forth to the murderers, Hos. 9. 13. Thirdly, To them also the flight would be most afflicting; the women with child cannot make haste, or go far; the sucking child cannot be left behind; or, if it should, can a woman forget it, that she should not have compassion of the opulent young mother? (2) 2 Peter 3. 9.) Carried along, it retarded the mother’s flight, and so exposes her life, and is in danger of Mephibosheth’s fate, who was lamed by a fall he got in his nurse’s flight, 2 Sam. 4. 4.

[4.] What they should pray against at that time—that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath day, v. 20. Observe, in general, it becomes Christ’s disciples, in times of public trouble and calamity, to be much in prayer; that is a salve for every sore, never out of season, but in a special manner seasonable when we are distressed on every side. There is no remedy but you must flee, the decree is gone forth, so that God will not he treated to take away his wrath, no not if Noah, Daniel, and Job, stood before him. Let it suffice them sufficient that they desire to be taken away, to make the best of that which is; and when you cannot in faith pray that you may not be forced to flee, yet pray that the circumstances of it may be graciously ordered, that though the cup may not pass from you, yet the extremity of the judgment may be prevented. Note, God has the disposing of the circumstances of events, which sometimes make a great alteration one way or other; and therefore in such an hour of trouble as this, Christ’s bidding them pray for this favour, intimates his purpose of granting it to them; and in a general calamity we must not overlook a circumstantial kindness, but see and own wherein it might have been worse. Christ still bids his disciples to pray for themselves and their friends, that, whenever they were forced to flee, it might be in the most convenient time. Note, When the body of Christ is put to the test, it is proper to lay in a stock of prayers beforehand; they must pray, First, That their flight, if it were the will of God, might not be in the winter, when the days are short, the weather cold, the ways dirty, and therefore travelling very uncomfortable, especially for whole families. Paul hastens Timothy to come to him before winter, 2 Tim. 4. 21. Note, Though the case of the body is not to be mainly consulted, it ought to be duly considered; though we may make what God sends, and when he sends it, yet we may pray against bodily inconveniences, and are encouraged to do so, in that the Lord is for the body. Secondly, That it might not be on the sabbath day; not on the Jewish sabbath, because travelling then would give offence to them who were angry with the disciples for plucking the ears of corn on that day; not on the Christian sabbath, because being forced to travel on that day they should be free from grief to themselves. This intimates Christ’s design, that a weekly sabbath should be observed in his church, after the preaching of the gospel to all the world. We read not of any of the ordinances of the Jewish church, which were purely ceremonial, that Christ ever expressed any care about, because they were all to vanish; but for the sabbath he often shewed a concern. It intimates likewise that the sabbath was originally to be observed as a day of rest from travel and worldly labour; but that, according to his own explication of the fourth commandment, works of necessity were lawful on the sabbath day, as this of feasting from an enemy to save our lives; had it not been lawful, he would have said, “Whatever becomes of you, do not flee on the sabbath day; but abide by it, though you die by it.” For we must not commit the least sin, to escape the greatest trouble. But it intimates, that where it is very unseasonable uncomfortable to a good man, to be taken off by any work of necessity from the solemn service and worship of God on the sabbath day. We should pray that we may have quiet unobstructed sabbaths, and may have no other work than sabbath work to do on sabbath days; that we may attend upon the Lord without distraction. It was desirable, that, if they must flee, they might have the benevolence of him who desired them to help to bear their charges. To flee in the winter is uncomfortable to the body; but to flee on the sabbath day is so to the soul, and the more so when it remembers former sabbaths, as Ps. 42. 4. 3. The greatness of the troubles which should immediately ensue; (v. 21.) Then shall be great tribu-
lution: then when the measure of iniquity is full; then when the servants of God are sealed and secured. Then shall the holy children be delivered out of the hand of Sodom till Lot is cutted into Zoor, and then look for fire and brimstone immediately. There shall be great tribulation. Great indeed, when within the city plague and famine raged, and (worse than either) faction and division, so that every man's sword was against his fellow; then, and there, it was, that the hands of the pitiful women flowered their own children. Without the city the Red Sea army, ready to swallow them up, with a particular rage against them, not only as Jews, but as rebellious Jews. War was the only one of the three sore judgments that David excepted against; but that was by it which the Jews were ruined; and there were famine and pestilence in extremity, besides. Josephus's History of the Wars of the Jews has it in more tragical passages than perhaps any history whatsover.

(1.) It was a desolation unparalleled, such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. Many a city and kingdom has been made desolate, but never any with desolation like this. Let not daring sinners think that God has done his worst, he can heat the furnace seven times, and yet seven times hotter, and will, when he sees greater and still greater absurdities. But, Jos. 37, 27, when they destroyed Jerusalem, were degenerated from the honour and virtue of their ancestors, which had made even their victories easy to be vanquished. And the wildness and obstinacy of the Jews themselves contributed much to the increase of the tribulation. No wonder that the ruin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled ruin, when the sin of Jerusalem was an unparalleled sin; even their crucifying Christ. The nearer any people are to God in profession and privileges, the greater and heavier will his judgments be upon them, if they abuse those privileges, and be false to that profession. Amos 3. 2.

(2.) It was a desolation which, if it should continue long, would be intolerable, so that no flesh should be saved, v. 22. So triumphantly would death ride, in so many dismal streets, and with such attendants, that there would be few escapees, either first or last, all would be cut off. He that escaped one sword, would fall by another, Isa. 24. 17, 18. The computation which Josephus makes of those that were slain in several places amounts to above two millions, No flesh shall be saved; he doth not say, "No soul shall be saved," for the destruction of the flesh may be for the saving of the spirit in the day of the Lord Jesus; but temporal lives will be sacrificed so profusely, that one would think, if it last a while, it would make a full end.

But here is one word of comfort in the midst of all this terror—that for the elect's sake these days shall be shortened, not made shorter than what God had determined, (for that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolate, Dan. 9. 27,) but shorter than the world, the end of which he will deal with them according to their sins; shorter than what the enemy designed, who would have cut all off, if God, who made use of them to serve his own purpose, had not set bounds to their wrath; shorter than one, who judged by human probabilities, would have imagined. Note, [1.] In times of common calamity God manifests his favour to the elect remaining, who, in a manner, will then make up, his peculiar treasure, which he will preserve when the common lumber is abandoned to the spoiler. [2.] The shortening of calamities is a kindness God often grants for the elect's sake. Instead of complaining that our afflictions last so long, if we consider our defects, we shall see reason to be thankful that they do not last always; when it is bad with us, it becomes us to say, "Blessed be God that it is no worse; blessed be God that it is not hell, and endless and remnant misery." It was a lamenting church that used the words here, 1. of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; and it is for the sake of the elect, lest their spirit should fail before them, if he should contend for ever, and lest they should be tempted to put forth, if not their heart, yet their hand, to iniquity.

And now comes in the repeated caution, which was opened before, to take heed of being insnared by false Christs, false apostles, (27.) who would promise them deliverance, as the lying prophets in Jeremiah's time, (Jer. 14. 13.—25. 16, 17.—27. 16.—28. 2,) but would delude them. Times of great trouble are times of great temptation, and therefore we have need to double our guard then. If they shall say, Here is a Christ, or there is one, that shall deliver us from the Romans, do not heed them, it is all but talk; such a deliverance is not to be expected, and therefore not such a deliverer.

VII. He foretells the sudden spreading of the gospel in the world about the time of these great events; (v. 27, 28.) As the lightning comes out of the east, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. It comes in here, as an antidote against the poison of those seducers that said, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there; compare Luke 17. 23, 24. Hearken not to them, for the coming of the Son of man will be as the lightning.

1. It seems primarily to be meant of his coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in the world; where the gospel came in its light and power, there the Son of man came, and in a way quite contrary to the fashion of the seducers and false Christs, who came creeping in the desert, or the secret chambers; (2 Tim. 3. 5.) whereas Christ comes not with such a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The gospel would be remarkable for two things:

(1.) Its swift spreading; it shall fly as the lightning; so shall the gospel be preached and propagated. The gospel is light; (John 3. 19,) and it is not in this as the lightning, that it is a sudden flash, and away; for it is sun-light, and day-light; but it is lightning in these respects:

[1.] It is light from heaven, as the lightning. It is God, and not man, that sends the lightnings, and summons them, that they may go, and say, Here we are, Job 38. 35. It is God that directs it: (Job 37. 3.) To man it is one of nature's miracles, above his power to effect, and one of nature's mysteries, above his skill to account for, but is from above; his lightnings lightened the world, Ps. 97. 4.

[2.] It is visible and conspicuous as the lightning. The seducers carried on their depths in Satan in the desert, and the secret chambers, shunning the light; heretics were called lucifuge—light-shunners. But truth seeks no corners, however it may sometimes be forced into them, as the woman in the wilderness, though elusiveness with the sun, Rev. 12. 1, 6. Christ preached openly, as 2 Cor. 11. 10; and his apostles on the house-tops, (ch. 10. 27,) not in a corner, Acts 26. 26. See Ps. 98. 2.

[3.] It was sudden and surprising to the world as the lightning; the Jews indeed had predictions of it, but to the Gentiles it was altogether unlooked for, and came upon them with an unaccountable energy or ever they were aware. It was light out of darkness, ch. 4. 6. And the Lord made the confused armies of lightnings, 2 Sam. 22. 15. Ps. 144. 6. The powers of darkness were dispersed and vanquished by the gospel-lightning.

[4.] It spreads far and wide, and that quickly and irresistibly, like the lightning, which comes, supposing out of the east, (Christ is said to ascend from the east, Rev. 7. 2. Isa. 41. 2,) and lighteneth to the west. The propagating of Christianity to so
many distant countries, of divers languages, by such unlikely instruments, destitute of all secular advantages, and in the face of so much opposition, and this in so short a time, was one of the greatest miracles that was ever wrought for the confirmation of it; here was Christ upon his white horse, denoting speed as well as strength, and going on conquering and to conquer, Rev. 19. 1. Gospel-light rose with the sun, and went with the same, so that the beams of it reached to the ends of the earth, Rom. 10. 18. Compare with Ps. 19. 3, 4. Though it was fought against, it could never be cooped up in a desert, or in a secret place, as the seducers were; but by this, according to Gamaliel's rule, proved itself to be of God, that it could not be overthrown, Acts 5. 38, 39. Christ speaks of shining into the west, because it spread most effectually into those countries which lay west from Jerusalem, as Mr. Herbert observes in his Church-Militant. He gathered them, not by external compulsion, but, as it were, by such a natural instinct and inclination, as brings the birds of prey to their prey; for where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together, (v. 28.) where Christ is preached, souls will be gathered in to him. The lifting up of Christ from the earth, that is, the preaching of Christ crucified, which, one would think, should drive all men from him, will draw them to him. (John 12. 32.) According to Jacob's prophecy, that to him shall the gathering of the people be, Gen. 49. 10. See Isa. 60. 8. The eagles will be where the carcase is, for it is food for them, it is a feast for them; where the slay are, there is the shephe to Job 39. 30. Eagles are said to have a strange sagacity and quickness of scent to find out the prey, and then fly swiftly to it, Job 9. 26. So these, whose spirits God shall open, will be effectually drawn to Jesus Christ, to feed upon him; whither should the eagle go but to the prey? Whether should the soul go but to Jesus Christ, who has the words of eternal life? The eagles will distinguish what is proper for them from that which is not; so those who have spiritual senses exercised, will know the voice of the good Shepherd from that of a thief and a robber. Saints will be where the true Christ is, not the false Christs. This is applicable to the desires that are wrought in every grace-worked soul, who love Christ, and communion with him. Where he is in his ordinances, there will his servants choose to be. A living principle of grace is a kind of natural instinct in all the saints, drawing them to Christ, to live upon him.

2. Some understand these verses of the coming of the Son of man to destroy Jerusalem, Mal. 3. 1, 2. So there was there of an extraordinary display of divine power and justice in that event, that it is called the coming of Christ.

Now here are two things intimated concerning it.

(1.) That to the most it would be as unexpected as a flash of lightning, which indeed gives warning of the clap of thunder which follows, but is itself surprising. The seducers say, Lo, here is Christ to deliver us; or there is one, a creature of their own fancies; but here they are aware of the wrath of the Lord, the true Christ, will arrest them, and they shall not escape.

(2.) That it might be as justly expected as that the eagle should fly to the carcases; though they put far from them the evil day, yet the desolation will come as certainly as the birds of prey to a dead carcase, that lies exposed in the open field. [1.] The Jews were so corrupt and degenerate, so vile and vicious, that they were become a carcase, obnoxious to the righteous judgment of God: they were also so factious and seditious, and every way so provoking to the Romans, that they had made themselves obnoxious to their resentment, and an inviting prey to them. [2.] The Romans were as eagles upon a carcase, so eager to carry away and devour that carcase. The army of the Chaldeans is said to fly as the eagle that hateth to eat, Hab. 1. 8. The ruin of the New-Testament Babylon is represented by a call to the birds of prey to come and feast upon the slain, Rev. 19. 17, 18. Notorious malcontents have their eyes eaten out by the young eagles, Prov. 30. 17. The Jews were hung up in chains, Jer. 7. 23—16. 4. [3.] The Jews can no more preserve themselves from the Romans than the eagles can secure itself from the eagles. [4.] The destruction shall find out the Jews, wherever they are, as the eagle scents the prey. Note, When a people do by their sin make themselves carcases, putrid and loathsome, nothing can be expected but that God should send eagles among them, to devour and destroy them.

It is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, and our gathering together unto him, 2 Thess. 2. 1. Now see here,

(1.) How he shall come; as the lightning. The time was now at hand, when he should depart out of the world, to go to the Father. Therefore these that inquire after Christ must not go into the desert or the secret places, nor listen to every one that will put on the fatten to invite them to a sight of Christ; but let them look upward, for the heavens must contain him, and thence we look for the Saviour; (Phil. 3. 20.) he shall come in the clouds, as the lightning doth, and every eye shall see him, as they say it is natural for all living creatures to turn their faces toward the lightning, Rev. 1. 7. Christ will appear to all the world, from one end of heaven to the other; nor shall any thing be hid from the light of his countenance.

(2.) How the saints shall be gathered to him; as the eagles are to the carcase by natural instinct, and with the greatest swiftness and alacrity imaginable. Saints, when they shall be fetched to glory, will be carried as on eagles' wings. (Exod. 19. 4.) as on angels' wings. They shall mount up with wings, like eagles, and, like them, renew their youth.

VIII. He foretells his second coming at the end of time, or to the end of the world. The sun shall be darkened, Jer. 12. 1. Some think this is to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation; the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, denotes the eclipse of the glory of that state, its convulsions, and the general confusion that attends that desolation. Great slaughter and devastation are in the Old Testament thus set forth: (as Isa. 13. 10—34. 4. Ezek. 32. 7. Joel 2. 31.) or by the sun, moon, and stars, may be intended the cities of Judah, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, which should all come to ruin. The sign of the Son of man, (v. 36.) means a signal appearance of the power and justice of the Lord Jesus in it, avenging his own blood on them that imprecated the guilt of it upon them and their children; and the gathering of the elect, (v. 31.) signifies the delivering of a remnant from this sin and ruin. It seems rather to refer to Christ's second coming. The destruction of the particular enemies of the church was typical of the complete request of them all; and therefore what will be done really, at the great day, may be applied metaphorically to those destructions: but still we must attend to the
principal scope of them; and, while we are all agreed to expect Christ's second coming, what need is there to put such strained constructions, as some do, upon these verses, which speak of it so clearly, and so agreeably to other scriptures, especially when Christ is here answering an inquiry concerning his coming at the end of the world, which Christ was never shy of speaking of to his disciples? The only objection against this, is, that it is said to be after the tribulation of those days; but, as to that, (1.) It is usual, in the prophetic style, to speak of things great and certain as near and just at hand, only to express the greatness and certainty of them. Enoch spake of Christ's second coming as within ken, Behold, the Lord cometh, Jude 14. (2.) A thousand years are, in God's sight but as one day, 2 Pet. 3. 8. It is there urged, with reference to this very thing, and so it might be said to be immediately after. The tribulation of those days includes not only the destruction of Jerusalem, but all the other tribulations which the church must pass through; not only its share in the calamities of the nations, but the tribulations peculiar to itself; while the nations are torn with wars, and the church with schisms, delusions, and persecutions, we cannot say that the tribulation of those days is over; the whole state of the world, the earth is militant, we must count upon that; but when the church's tribulation is over, her warfare accomplished, and what is behind of the sufferings of Christ fulfilled, then look for the end.

Now, concerning Christ's second coming, it is here foretold,

[1.] That there shall be then a great and amazing change of the creatures, and particularly the heavenly bodies; (v. 29.) The sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light. The moon shines with a borrowed light, and therefore if the sun, from whom she borrows her light, is turned into darkness, she must fall out of course, and become bankrupt. The stars shall fall; they shall lose their light, and disappear, and be as if they were fallen; and the powers of heaven shall be shaken. This intimates,

Firstly, That there shall be a great change, in order to the making of all things new. Then shall be the restitution of all things, when the heavens shall not be cast away as a rag, but changed as a vesture, to be worn in a better fashion, Ps. 102. 26. They shall pass away with a great noise, that there may be new heaven and new earth, Rev. 21. 5. 13. Secondly, It shall be a visible change, and such as all the world must take notice of; for such the darkening of the sun and moon cannot but be: and it would be an amazing change; for the heavenly bodies are not so liable to alteration as the creatures of this lower world are. The days of heaven, and the continuance of the sun and moon, are used to express that which is lasting and unchangeable; (as the sea and rivers,) which signifies, they shall be for ever. Thirdly, It shall be a universal change. If the sun be turned into darkness, and the powers of heaven be shaken, the earth cannot but he turned into a dungeon, and its foundation made to tremble. Howl, fr-teen, if the cedars be shaken. When the stars of heaven drop, no marvel if the everlasting mountains melt, and the perpetual hills bow. Nature's immovable pillars shall then be moved, which yet shall be no hindrance to the joy and rejoicing of heaven and earth before the Lord, when he cometh to judge the world; (Ps. 96. 11, 13,) they shall, as it were, glory in the tribulation.

Fourthly, The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars, which were made to rule over the day, and over the night, (which is the first dominion we find of any creature, Gen. 1. 16, 18,) signifies the putting down of all rule, authority, and power, (even that which seems of the greatest antiquity and usefulness,) that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the Father, and he may be All in all, 1 Cor. 15. 24, 28. The sun was darkened at the death of Christ, for then was, in one sense, the judgment of this world, (John 12. 31,) an indication what would be at the general judgment.

Fifthly, The glorious appearance of our Lord Jesus, who will then shew himself as the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person, will darken the sun and moon as a candle is darkened in the beams of the noon-day sun; they will have no glory, because of the Glory that excelleth, 2 Cor. 3. 10. Then the sun shall be ashamed, and the moon confounded, when God shall appear, Isa. 24. 23.

Sixthly, The sun and moon shall be then darkened, because then will be no occasion for them. To sinners who choose their portion in this life, all comfort will be eternally denied; as they shall not have a drop of water, so not a ray of light. Now God causeth his Son to rise on the earth, but then Interdicti tibi sole et luna—I forbid thee the light of the sun and the moon. Darkness must be their portion. To the saints that had their treasure above, such light of joy and comfort will be given, as will enable them to shine as the moon, and render it useless. What need is there of vessels of light, when we come to the Fountain and Father of light? See Isa. 60. 19. Rev. 22. 5.

[2.] That then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, (v. 30.) The Son of man himself, as it follows here, They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds. At his first coming, he was for a sign that should be spoken against; (Luke 2. 34,) but, at his second coming, a Sign that should be admired. Ezekiel was a son of man, set for a sign, Ezek. 12. 6. Some make this a prediction of the harbinger and forerunners of his coming, giving notice of his approach; a light shining before him, and the fire devouring, (Ps. 30. 3. 1 Kings 19. 11, 12,) the beams coming out of his hand, where had long been the hindering of his power, Hab. 3. 4. It is a groundless conceit of some of the ancients, that this sign of the Son of man will be the sign of the cross displayed as a banner. It will certainly be such a clear convincing sign as will dash infidelity quite out of countenance, and fill their faces with shame, who said, Where is the promise of his coming?

[3.] That then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, 30. See Rev. 1. 7. All the kindreds of the earth shall then wail because of him; some of all the tribes and kindreds of the earth shall mourn: for the greater part will tremble at his approach, while the chosen remnant, one of a family and two of a tribe, shall lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, and their Redeemer. Note, Sooner or later, all sinners will be convinced of sin, and horror-stricken with the sight, sinners, look to Christ, and mourn after a godly sort; and they who sow in these tears, shall shortly reap in joy; impenitent sinners shall look unto him whom they have pierced, and, though they laugh now, shall mourn and weep, after a devilish sort, in endless horror and despair.

[4.] That then they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Note, First. The judgment of the great day will be conducted to this end, in pursuance, and in recompense, of his great undertaking for us as Mediator, John 5. 22, 27. Secondly, The Son of man will at that day come in the clouds of heaven. Much of the sensible intercourse between heaven and earth is by the clouds; they are betwixt them, as it were, the medium parcellations—the medium of parcellation, drawn by heaven from the earth, distilled by heaven upon the
Christ went to heaven in a cloud, and will in like manner come again, Acts 1. 10. Behold, he cometh with clouds; Rev. 1. 7. A cloud will be the Judge’s chariot, (Ps. 104. 3.) his robe, (Rev. 10. 1.) his pavilion, (Ps. 18. 11.) his throne, Rev. 14. 14. When the world was destroyed by water, the judgment came in the clouds of heaven, for the windows of heaven were opened; so shall it be when it shall be destroyed by fire. Christ went before Israel in a cloud, which had a bright side and a dark side; so will the cloud have in it which Christ will come at the great day, it will bring forth comfort and terror. Thirdly, He will come with power and great glory: his first coming was in weakness and great meanness; (2 Cor. 13. 4.) but his second coming will be with power and glory, agreeable both to the dignity of his person and to the purposes of his coming. Fourthly, He will be seen with bodily eyes in his coming: therefore the Son of man will be in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, (Matt. 24. 30.) that he may be seen, that sinners thereby may be no more confounded, who shall see him as Balaam did, but not nigh, (Num. 24. 17.) see him, but not as their’s. It added to the torment of that damned sinner, that he saw Abraham after off. "Is this he whom we have slighted, and rejected, and rebelled against; whom we have crucified to ourselves afresh; who might have been our Saviour, but is our Judge, and will be our enemy." The Design of all nations will then be their bread. [5.] That he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, v. 31. Note, First, The angels shall be attendants upon Christ at his second coming; they are called his angels, which proves him to be God and Lord of the angels; they shall be obliged to wait upon him. Secondly, These attendants shall be employed by him as officers of the court. Take the cloud, and every eye shall see him, and they shall be ministering spirits sent forth by him, (Heb. 1. 14.) and will be so then. Thirdly, Their ministration will be ushered in with a great sound of a trumpet, to awaken and alarm a sleeping world. This trumpet is spoken of, 1 Cor. 15. 52. and 1 Thess. 4. 16. At the giving of the law on mount Sinai, the sound of the trumpet was remarkably terrible; (Exod. 19. 13, 14.) but much more will it be so in the great day of wrath. Take the cloud, and every eye shall see him, and they shall be ministering spirits sent forth by him, (Heb. 1. 14.) and will be so then. Thirdly, Their ministration will be ushered in with a great sound of a trumpet, to awaken and alarm a sleeping world. This trumpet is spoken of, 1 Cor. 15. 52. and 1 Thess. 4. 16. At the giving of the law on mount Sinai, the sound of the trumpet was remarkably terrible; (Exod. 19. 13, 14.) but much more will it be so in the great day of wrath. Take the cloud, and every eye shall see him, and they shall be ministering spirits sent forth by him, (Heb. 1. 14.) and will be so then. Very fitly, therefore, shall there be the sound of a trumpet at the last day, when the general assembly shall be called, when the praises of God shall be gloriously celebrated, when sinners shall fall as sacrifices to divine justice, and when the saints shall enter upon their eternal jubilee. [6.] That they shall gather together his elect from the four winds. At the second coming of Jesus Christ, there will be a general meeting of all the saints. First, The elect only will be gathered, the chosen remnant, who are but few in comparison with the many that are only called. This is the foundation of the saints’ eternal happiness, that they are God’s elect. The gifts of love to eternity follow the thoughts of love from eternity; and The Lord knows them that are his. Secondly, The angels shall be employed to bring them together, as Christ’s servants, and as the saints’ friends; we have the commission given them, Ps. 50. 5. Gather my saints together unto me; (Ps. 68.) say, it will be said to them, Habeas frater—These are your brethren; for the elect will then be equal to the angelic spirits. They shall be gathered from one end of heaven to the other; the elect of God are scattered abroad, (John 11. 52.) there are some in all places, in all nations; (Rev. 7. 9.) but when that great gathering day comes, there shall not one of them be missing; distance of place shall keep none out of heaven, if distance of affection do not. Undique ad caelos taturam est vix—Heaven is equally accessible from every place. See ch. 8. 11. Isa. 43. 6.—49. 12.

32. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and put forth leaves, ye know that summer is high. 33. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. 34. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. 36. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. 37. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 38. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, 39. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 40. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 41. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 42. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43. But know this, that if the Goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. 45. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46. Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 47. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. 48. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; 49. And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; 50. The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of. 51. And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We have here the practical application of the foregoing prediction; in general, we must expect and prepare for the events here foretold.

1. We must expect them: Now learn a parable of the fig-tree, v. 32, 33. Now learn what use to make of the things you have heard; so observe and understand the signs of the times, and compare them with the predictions of the word, as from thence to
to see what is at the door, that you may provide accordingly. The parable of the fig-tree is no more than this, that its budding and blossoming are a presage of summer; for as the rock in the heaven, so the trees of the field, know their appointed time. The beginning of the working of second causes assures us of the progress and perfection of it. Thus, when God begins to fulfil prophecies, he will make an end. There is a certain series in the works of providence, as there is in the works of nature. The signs of the times are compared with the prognostics of old, Luke 21. 16, 17: so before are those of the face of the earth; when that is renewed, we foresee that summer is coming, not immediately, but at some distance; after the branch grows tender, we expect the March winds, and the April showers, before the summer comes; however, we are sure it is coming; "so likewise ye, when the gospel-day shall dawn, count upon it, that through this variety of events, which I have told you of, the perfect day will come. The things revealed must shortly come to pass; (Rev. 1. 1.) they must come in their own order, in the order appointed for them. Know that it is near." He does not here say what, but it is that which the hearts of his disciples are upon, and which they are inquisitive after, and long for; the kingdom of God is near, so it is expressed in the parallel place, Luke 21. 31. Note, When the trees of right- eousness and love and faithfulness and patience and hope promise faithfulness, it is a happy presage of good times. In them God begins his work, first prepares their heart, and then he will go on with it; for, as for God, his work is perfect; and he will revive it in the midst of years.

Now, touching the events foretold here, which we are to expect,
1. Christ here assures us of the certainty of them; (v. 35.) Heaven and earth shall pass away; they continue this day indeed, according to God's ordinance, but they shall not continue forever; (Ps. 102. 25, 26. 2 Pet. 3. 10.) but my words shall not pass away. Note, The word of Christ is more sure and lasting than heaven and earth. Hath he spoken, and shall he not do it? We may build with more assurance upon the word of Christ than we can upon the props of the world; and the strong foundations of the earth; for, when they shall be made to tremble and totter, and shall be no more, the word of Christ shall remain, and be in full force, power, and virtue. See 1 Pet. 1. 24, 25. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than the word of Christ; so it is expressed, Luke 16. 17. Compare Isa. 34. 10. The accomplishment of these prophecies might seem to be delayed, and intervening events might seem to disagree with them; but do not think that the work of Christ is fallen to the ground, for that shall never pass away: though it be not fulfilled, either in the time or in the way that we have prescribed; yet, in God's time, which is the best time, and in God's way, which is the best way, it shall certainly be fulfilled. Every word of Christ is very sure, and therefore, well worth our dependence upon.

2. He here instructs us as to the time of them, v. 34, 36. As to this, it is well observed by the learned Grothus, that there is a manifest distinction made between the وارع, (v. 34.) and the يمام, (v. 35.) these things, and that day and hour; which will help to clear this prophecy.
(1.) As to these things—the wars, seductions, and persecutions, here foretold, and especially the ruin of the Jewish nation; "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled;" (v. 34.) there are those now alive that shall see Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish church brought to an end." Because it might seem strange, he backs it with a solemn asseveration; "Verily, I say unto you. You may take my word for it, these things are at the door." Christ often speaks of the nearness of that desolation, the more to affect people, and quicken them to prepare for it. Note, There may be greater trials and troubles yet before us, in our own day, than we are aware of. They that are old, know not what sons of Anak may be reserved for their last encounters.

(2.) But as to that day and hour which will put a period to time, that knows no man, v. 36. Therefore take heed of confounding these two, as they did, who, from the words of Christ, and the apostles' answers, inferred that the destruction of Jerusalem was the end of the world. But is it not so; and many another, shall pass, before that day and hour come. Note, [1.] There is a certain day and hour fixed for the judgment to come; it is called the day of the Lord, because so unalterably fixed. None of God's judgments are adjourned sine die—without the appointment of a certain day. [2.] That day and hour are a great secret.

Prudent futuri temporis exitum
Caliginosa nocet premit Deus.
But Heav'n has wisely hid from human sight
The dark deuces of future fate,
And sown their seeds in depth of night.—Hor.

No man knows it; not the wisest by their sagacity, not the best by any divine discovery. We all know that the day of the Lord is coming, but when no one knows when it shall be, no, not the angels; though their capacities for knowledge are great, and their opportunities of knowing this advantageous, (they dwell at the fountain-head of light,) and though they are to be employed in the solemnity of that day, yet they are not told when it shall be: none knows, but my Father only. This is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord our God. The uncertainty of the time of Christ's coming is a trial to those who are watchful, a savour of life unto life, and makes them more watchful; but to those who are careless, it is a savour of death unto death, and makes them more careless.

[1.] To this end we must expect these events—that we may prepare for them; and here we have a caution against security and sensuality, which will make it to the worse. If we shall delay preparing for it, that day will be a surprising day, a surprising day, and a separating day. 1. It will be a surprising day, as the deluge was to the old world, v. 37—39. That which he here intends to describe, is, the posture of the world at the coming of the Son of man; besides his first coming to save, he has other comings, to judge. He saith, (John 9. 39.) For judgment I am come; and for judgment he will come; for all judgment is committed to him, both that of the word, and that of the sword.

Now this here is applicable,
(1.) To temporal judgments, particularly that which was now hastening upon the nation and people of the Jews; though they had fair warning given them of it, and there were many prodigies that were presages of it, yet it found them secure, crying, Peace and safety, I Thess. 5. 3. The siege was laid to Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, when they were met at the passover in the midst of their mirth: like the men of Laish, they dwelt careless when the ruin arrested them, Judg. 18. 7, 27. The destruction of Babylon, both that day in the Old Testament, and that in the New, comes, when she saith, I shall be a lady for ever, Isa. 47. 7—9. Rev. 18. 7. Therefore the plagues come in a moment, in one day. Note, Men's unbelief shall not make God's threatenings of no effect.

(2.) To the eternal judgment; so the judgment of
the great day is called, Heb. 6. 2. Though notice has been given of it from Enoch, yet, when it comes, it will be followed for by the deluge in the latter days, which are nearest to that day, will produce scoffers, that say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. 3. 3, 4. Luke 18. 8. Thus it will be when the world that now is shall be destroyed by fire; for thus it was when the old world, being overflowed by water, perished, 2 Pet. 3. 6, 7. Now Christ here shows what were the temper and posture of the old world when the deluge came.

(1.) The sensual and worldly; they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage. It is not said, They were killing and stealing, and whoring and swearing; (these were indeed the horrid crimes of some of the worst of them; the earth was full of violence;) but they were all of them, except Noah, over head and ears in the world, and regardless of the word of God, and this ruined them. Note, Universal neglect of religion is a more dangerous symptom to any people than particular instances here and there of daring irreligion. Eating and drinking are necessary to the preservation of man's life; marrying, and giving in marriage, are necessary to the preservation of mankind; but, Licus perimus omnes—These hateful things undo us, unlawfully managed. First, They were unreasonable in it, inordinate and entire in the pursuit of delight and pleasure; as the brutes do in the woods and fields, when wholly taken up with these things, Here they are;—they were eating; they were in these things as in their element, as if they had their being for no other end than to eat and drink, Isa. 56. 12. Secondly, They were unreasonable in it; they were entire and intent upon the world and the flesh, when the destruction was at the door, which they had had such fair warning of. They were eating and drinking, when they should have been repenting and praying; when God, by the ministry of Noah, called to weeping and mourning, then joy and gladness. This was to them, as it was to Israel afterwards, the unpardonable sin, (Is. 22. 12, 14.) especially, because it was in defiance of those warnings, by which they should have been awakened. Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; if it must be a short life, let it be a merry one. The apostle James speaks of this as a great general practice of the wealthy Jews, before the destruction of Jerusalem: They are drunk with wine, and reeling in the醉ing, they have been weeping for the miseries that were coming upon them, they were living in pleasure, and nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter, Jam. 5. 1, 5.

[2.] They were secure and careless: they knew not, until the flood came, v. 39. 'Knew not! Surely, they could not but know. Did not God, by Noah, give them fair warning of it? Did he not call them to repentance, while his long-suffering waited? 1 Pet. 3. 19, 20. But they knew not, that is, they believed not; they might have known, but would not know. Note, What we know of the things that belong to our everlasting peace, if we do not mix faith with it, and improve it, is all one as if we did not know it at all. Their not knowing is joined with their eating, and drinking, and marrying; for, First, They were sensual, because they were secure. Note, The sensual are in the pursuit, and so entangled in the pleasures, of this world, is, because they do not know, and believe, and consider, the eternity which they are upon the brink of. Did we know aright, that all these things might shortly be dissolved, and we must certainly survive them, we should not set our eyes and hearts so much upon them as we do. Secondly, Therefore they were secure, because they were sensual; therefore they knew not that the flood was coming, because they were eating and drinking; were so taken up with things seen and present, that they had neither time nor heart to mind the things not seen as yet, which they were warned of. Note, As security makes a man courious and profligate in their brutish sensuality, so sensuality rocks them asleep in their carnal security. They knew not until the flood came. The flood did come; though they would not foresee it. Note, Those that will not know by faith, shall be made to know by feeling, the wrath of God revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness. The evil day is never the further off for men's putting it farther off. Note, They did not repent till it was too late to prevent it, as they might have done, if they had known it in time, which made it so much the more grievous. Judgments are most terrible and amazing to the secure, and those that have made a jest of them.

The application of this, concerning the old world, we have in these words; So shall the coming of the Son of man be; that is, (1.) In such a posture shall he find people eating and drinking, and not excusing him. Note, Security and sensuality are likely to be the epidemic diseases of the latter days. All stumber and sleep, and at midnight the bridegroom comes. All are on their watch, and at their ease. (2.) With such a power, and for such a purpose, will he come upon them. As the flood took away the sinners of the old world, irresistibly and irrecoverably, so shall secure sinners, that mocked at and laughed at the flood, and were taken from the waters of the Lamb, when the great day of his wrath comes; which will be like the coming of the deluge, a destruction which there is no fleeing from. 2. It will be a separating day; (v. 40, 41.) Then shall two be in the field. Two ways this may be applied:

(1.) We may apply it to the success of the gospel, especially at the first preaching of it; it divided the world; some believed, and were saved; others believed not, and were left to perish in their unbelief. Those of the same age, place, capacity, employment, and condition, in the world, grudging in the same mill, those of the same family, nay, those that were joined in the same bond of marriage, were, one effectually called, the other passed by, and left in the gall of bitterness. This is that division, that separating fire, which Christ came to send. Luke 13. 28, 29. 5. 21. 22. 27. Two are at work in the field together, and one of them was a Christian, he was taken into a place of shelter, and had his life given him for a prey, while the other was left to the sword of the enemy. Nay, if but two women were grinding at the mill, if one of them belonged to Christ, though but a woman, a poor woman, a servant, she was taken to a place of safety, and the other abandoned. Thus the mark of the earth is hid in the day of the Lord's coming, (2 Pet. 3. 12.) which will be an evening.
elect will be gathered together. Here he tells us, that, in order to that, they will be distinguished from those who were nearest to them in this world; the choice and chosen ones taken to glory, the other left to perish eternally. Those who sleep in the dust of the earth, two in the same grave, their ashes mixed, yet shall also, one to be taken to everlasting life, the other left to shame and everlasting contempt, Dan. 12. 2. Here it is applied to them who shall be found alive. Christ will come unlooked for, will find people busy at their usual occupations, in the field, at the mill; and then, according as they are vessels of mercy, prepared for glory, or vessels of wrath, prepared for ruin, accordingly it will be with those the one taken to meet the Lord and his angels in the air, to be for ever with him and them; the other left to the devil and his angels, who, when Christ has gathered out his own, will sweep up the residue. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners—that others shall be taken from the midst of them to glory, and they left behind. And it speaks abundance of comfort to the Lord’s people. [2.] They are inexpressibly blessed, who know the man-servant in the field, or the maid at the mill? (Exod. 11. 5.) Yet they shall not be forgotten or overlooked in that day. The poor in the world, if rich in faith, are heirs of the kingdom. [3.] Are they dispersed in distant and unlikely places, where one would not expect to find the heirs of glory, in the field, at the mill? Yet the angels will find them there, hidden, as Saul among the stuff, when they are to be enthroned, as Saul was. And, if well may they be said to be changed, for a very great change it will be, to go to heaven from ploughing and grinding. [3.] Are they weak, and unable of themselves to move heavenward? They shall be taken, or laid hold on, as Lot was taken out of Sodom, by a gracious violence, Gen. 19. 16. Those whom Christ had once apprehended, and laid hold on, he will never lose his hold of. [4.] Are they intermixed with others, linked with them in the same habitations, societies, employments? Let not that discourage any true Christian; God knows how to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and dross in the same lump, the wheat and the chaff in the same floor.

III. Here is a general exhortation to us, to watch and be ready against that day, when enforced by divers weighty considerations, v. 42, 43. Observe, I. The duty required; Watch, and be ready, v. 42, 44. (1.) Watch therefore, v. 42. Note, It is the great duty and interest of all the disciples of Christ, to watch, to be awake, and keep awake, that they may mind their business. As a sinful state and way is compared to sleep, senseless and inactive, (1 Thess. 5. 4.) so a gracious state and way is compared to watching and waking. We must watch for our Lord’s coming to us, in particular, at our death, after which is the judgement, that is, the great day with us, the end of our time; and his coming at the end of all time to judge the world, the great day with all mankind. To watch, implies not only to believe that our Lord will come, but to desire that he would come, and to be taken to everlasting life, and always looking for it, as sure and near, and as distant and remote, and as near and remote, as the day of the Lord. To watch for Christ’s coming, is to maintain that gracious temper and disposition of mind which we would be willing that our Lord, when he comes, should find us in. To watch, is to be aware of the first notices of his approach, that we may immediately attend his motions, and advance ourselves into the course of expecting him. Watching is supposed to be in the night, which is sleeping time; while we are in this world, it is night with us, and we must take pains to keep ourselves awake. (2.) Be ye also ready. We wake in van, if we do not get ready. It is not enough to look for such things; but we must therefore give diligence, 2 Pet. 3. 11, 14. We have then our Lord to attend upon, and we must have our lamps ready trimmed; a cause to be tried, and we must have our plea ready drawn, and signed by our Advocate; a reckoning to be made up, and we must have our accounts ready stated and balanced; there is an inheritance which we then hope to enter upon, and we must have ourselves ready, made meet to partake of it, Col. 1. 12. 2. The reasons to induce us to this watchfulness, and diligent preparation for that day; which are two:

(1.) Because the time of our Lord’s coming is very uncertain. This is the reason immediately annexed to the double exhortation; (v. 42, 44.) and it is illustrated by a comparison, v. 43. Let us consider, then,

[1.] That we know not what hour he will come, v. 42. We know not the day of our death, Gen. 27. 2. We may know that we have but a little time to live; The time of my departure is at hand; (2 Tim. 4. 6.) but we know not the hour. We may be sure to live, for our souls are continually in our hands; nor can we know how little a time we have to live, for it may prove less than we expect: much less do we know the time fixed for the general judgment. Concerning both we are kept at uncertainty, that we might, every day, expect that which may come any day; may never boast of a year’s continuance, (Jam. 4. 13.) no, nor of tomorrow’s return, as if it were our own; Luke 12. 17. 1. Luke 12. 20. (2.) That he may come at such an hour as we think not, v. 44. Though there be such uncertainty in the time, there is none in the thing itself; though we know not when he will come, we are sure he will come. His parting word was, Surely I come quickly; his saying, If I come surely, obliges us to expect him; his saying, I come quickly, obliges us to be always expecting him; for it keeps us in a state of expectancy. In such an hour as you think not, that is, such an hour as they who are unready and unprepared, think not; (v. 50.) may, such an hour as the most lively expectants perhaps thought least likely. The bridgewater came when the wise were slumbering. It is agreeable to our present state, that we should be under the influence of a constant and general expectation, rather than in that of a particular and particular anticipations, which we are sometimes tempted vainly to desire and wish for. [3.] That the children of this world are thus wise in their generation, that, when they know of a danger approaching, they will keep awake, and stand on their guard against it. This he shews in a particular instance, v. 43. If the master of a house had notice, that a thief would come such a night, and such a watch of the night, and when he added the night into four watches, allowing three hours to each,) and would make an attempt upon his house, though it were the midnight watch, when he was most sleepy, yet he would be up, and listen to every noise in every corner, and be ready to give him a warm reception. Now, though we know not just when our Lord will come, yet, knowing that he will come, and coming quietly, and without taking any warning from what he hath given in his word, it concerns us to watch always. Note, First, We have every one of us a house to keep, which lies exposed, in which all we are worth is laid up, that house is our own souls, which we must keep with all diligence. Secondly, The day of the Lord comes by surprise, as a thief in the night. Christ chooses to come when he is least expected, that the fruits of his labours may be turned into the greater shame, and the fears of his friends into the greater joy. Thirdly, If Christ, when he comes, finds us asleep and unready, our house will be broken up, and we shall lose all
we are worth, not as a thief, unjustly, but as by a just and legal process; death and judgment will such as to have, to our trimmed, not damage, and utter undoing. Therefore be ready, be ye also ready; as ready at all times as the good man of the house would be at the hour when he expected the thief; we must put on the armour of God, that we may not only stand in that evil day, but, as more than conquerors, may divide the spoil. (2.) Because the issue of our Lord's coming will be very happy and comfortable to him that shall be found ready, but very dismal and dreadful to those that are not, v. 45, &c. This is represented by the different state of good and bad servants, when their lord comes to reckon with them. It is likely to be well or ill with us to eternity, according as we are found ready or unready at that day; for Christ comes to render to every man according to his works. Now this parable, with which the chapter closes, is applicable to all Christians, who are, in profession and obligation, God's servants; but it seems especially intended as a warning to ministers; for the servant spoken of is a steward. Now, observe what Christ here saith,

[1.] Concerning the good servant; he shews here what he is—a ruler of the household; what, being so, he should be—faithful and wise, and what, if he be so, he shall be eternally—blessed. Here are good instructions and encouragements to the ministers of Christ.

First, We have here his place and office. He is one whom his Lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season. Note, 1. The church of Christ is his household, or family, standing in relation to him as the Father and Master of it. It is the household of God, a family named from Christ, Eph. 3. 15. 2. Gospel-ministers are and are those who are clothed in authority, (Christ has entered a caveat against that,) but as stewards, or other subordinate officers; not as lords, but as guides; not to prescribe new ways, but to shew and lead in the ways that Christ has appointed: that is the signification of the συνεργος, which we translate, having rule over you; (Heb. 13. 17.) as overseers, not to cut out new work, but to direct in, and quicken to, the work which Christ has ordained them to do, and which they have by him power and right to do. They are rulers by Christ; what power they have is derived from him, and none may take it from them, or abridge it to them; he is one whom the Lord has made ruler; Christ has the making of ministers. They are rulers under Christ, and act in subordination to him; and rulers for Christ, for the advancement of his kingdom. 3. The work of gospel-ministers, is, to give to Christ's household their meat in due season, as stewards, and therefore they have the keys delivered to them. (1.) Their work is to give, not take themselves, (Ezek. 34. 8.) but give to the family what the Master has bought, to dispense what Christ has purchased. And to ministers is said, that it is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts 20. 35. (2.) It is to give meat; not to give law, (that is Christ's work,) but to deliver those doctrines to the church, which, if duly digest-ed, will be nourishment to souls. They must give, not the poison of false doctrines, not the stones of hard and unprofitable doctrines, but the meat that is sound and wholesome. (3.) It must be given in due season, (v. 5.)—while there is time for it; when eternity comes, it will be too late; we must work while it is day: or in time, that is, whenever any opportunity offers itself, or in the stated time, time after time, according as the duty of every day requires.

Secondly, His right discharge of his office. The good servant, if thus preferred, will be a good steward; for,

1. He is faithful; stewards must be so, 1 Cor. 4. 2. He that is trusted, must be trusted; and the greater the trust is, the more is expected from him. It is a great good thing that is committed to ministers; (2 Tim. 2. 2.) and they must be faithful, as Moses was, Heb. 3. 2. Christ counts those ministers, and those only, that are faithful, 1 Tim. 1. 12. A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is one that sincerely designs his Master's honour, not his own; delivers the whole counsel of God, not his own fancies and conceits; follows Christ's institutions, and adheres to them; regards the meanest, reproves the greatest, and doth not respect persons.

2. He is wise to understand his duty, and the proper season of it; and in guiding of the flock there is need, not only of the integrity of the heart, but the skilfulness of the hands. Honesty may suffice for a good servant, but wisdom is necessary to a good steward; for it is profitable to direct.

He is one, so doing, as his office requires. The ministry is a good work, and they whose office it is have always something to do; they must not indulge themselves in ease, nor leave the work undone, or carelessly turn it off to others, but be doing, and doing to the purpose; so doing, giving meat to the household, minding their own business, and not meddling with that which is foreign; so doing, as the Master has appointed, as their office is to do, and to do the case, not talking, but doing. It was the motto Mr. Perkins used, Minister verbi est—You are a minister of the word. Not only Age—Be doing; but, Hoc agere—Be so doing.

4. He is found doing when his Master comes; which intimates, (1.) Constancy at his work. At what hour soever his Master comes, he is found busy at the work of the day. Ministers should not leave empty spaces in their time, lest their Lord should say, as he did, to the旌es, See xxv. 24, 25. As with a good God the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so with a good man, the minister, the end of one duty is the beginning of another. When Calvin was persuaded to remit his ministerial labours, he answered, with some resentment, "What, who have my Master find me idle?" (2.) Perseverance in his work till the Lord come. Hold fast till then, Rev. 2. 25. Continue in these things, 1 Tim. 4. 15. Endure to the end.

Thirdly, The recompense of reward intended him for this, in three things,

1. He shall be taken notice of. This is intimated in these words, Who then is that faithful and wise servant? Which supposes that there are but few who answer this character; such an interpreter is one of a thousand, such a faithful and wise steward. Those who thus distinguish themselves now by humility, diligence, and sincerity in their work, Christ will in the great day both dignify and distinguish by the glory conferred on them.

2. He shall be blessed: Blessed is that servant; and Christ's pronouncing him blessed makes him so. All the dead that die in the Lord are blessed, Rev. 14. 13. But there is a peculiar blessedness secured to them that approve themselves faithful stewards, and are found so doing. Next to the honour of those who die in the field of battle, suffering for Christ as the martyrs, is the honour of those that die in the field of service, ploughing, and sowing, and reaping, for Christ.

3. He shall be preferred; (v. 47.) He shall make him ruler over all his goods. The allusion is to the way of great men, who, if the stewards of their house conduct themselves well in that place, commonly prefer them to be the managers of their estate, thus Joseph was preferred in the house of Potiphar; Gen. 39. 4, 6. But the greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of
glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon his faithful watchful servants in the world to come. We may not be permitted to see for ourselves the circumstances of this glorious scene; but we are told that it will be great. The utmost passions of the heart, and the most hideous crimes, have been the subjects of a judicial description of the judgment-seat of Christ. The mention of these things is said more plainly, John 12. 26. *He will my Father's honour.* And God's servants, when thus preferred, shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness, to bear that weight of glory, so that there is no danger from these servants when they reign.

2. Concerning the evil servant. Here we have,

*First,* His description given; (v. 48, 49.) where we see the wicked servant, and he is wretched, the vilest of creatures is a wicked man, the vilest of men is a wretched Christian, and the vilest of them a wicked minister. *Corruptum optimis est pessimum—What is best, when corrupted, becomes the worst.* Wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem is a horrible thing indeed, Jer. 23. 14. Here is,

1. The cause of his wickedness; and that is, a practical disbelief of Christ's second coming. He hath said in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming; and therefore he begins to think he will never come, but has quite forsaken his church. Observe, (1.) Christ knows what they say in their hearts, who with their lips cry, *Lord, Lord,* as this servant here. (2.) The delay of Christ's coming, though it is a gracious instance of his patience, is greatly abuse, that his heart of wickedness may be hardened in their wicked ways. When Christ's coming is looked upon as doubtful, or a thing at an immense distance, the hearts of men are fully set to do evil, Eccl. 8. 11. See Ezek. 12. 27. They that walk by sense, are ready to see of the unseeen Jews, as the people did of Moses, when he tarried in the mount upon their errand, *We wait not what is become of him,* and therefore up, *make us gods,* the world a god, the belly a god, any thing but him that should be.

2. The particulars of his wickedness; and they are sins of the first magnitude; he is a slave to his passions and his appetites.

(1.) *Persecution* is here charged upon him. He begins to *smite* his fellow-servants. Note, [1.] Even the stewards of the house are to look upon all the servants of the house as their fellow-servants, and therefore are forbidden to lord it over them. If the angel call himself fellow-servant to John, (Rev. 19. 10.) no marvel if John have learned to call himself brother to the Christians of the churches of Asia, Rev. 1. 9. [2.] It is no new thing to see evil servants smiting their fellow-servants; both private Christians and faithful ministers. He smites them, either because he despises them, or because they will not bow and do him reverence; will not say as he saith, and do as he doeth, against their consciences: he smites them with the tongue, as they smote the prophet, Jer. 18. 18. And if he got power into his hand, or can press those into his service, that have, as the ten horns upon the head of the beast, it goes further. Pashur the priest smote Jeremiah, and put him in the stocks, Jer. 20. 1. The revolters have smitten the people; xli. 8. The wicked, most profound to make slaughter, Hos. 5. 2. The steward, when he smites his fellow servants, does it under colour of his Master's authority, and in his name; he says, *Let the Lord be glorified;* (Isa. 66. 5.) but he shall know, that he could not put a greater affront upon his Master.

(2.) Profaneness and immorality; He begins to *eat, drink, and be drunken.* [1.] He associ-ates with the worst of sinners, has fellowship with them, is intimate with them; he walks in their counsel, stands in their way, sits in their seat, and sings their songs. The drunken are the merry jovial company, and those he is for, and thus he hardens them in their wickedness. [2.] He does like them; *eat, and drinks, and is drunken;* so it is in Luke. This is an inlet to all manner of sin. Drunk-
are gone out. 9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

Here.

I. That in general which is to be illustrated, is, the kingdom of heaven, the state of things under the gospel, the external kingdom of Christ, and the administration and success of it. Some of Christ's parables had showed us what it is like now in the present reception of it, as ch. 13. This tells us what it shall be like, when the mystery of God shall be finished, and that kingdom delivered up to the Father. The administration of Christ's government towards the world, and the church, the great day, may be illustrated by this similitude; or the kingdom is put for the subjects of the kingdom. The professors of Christianity shall then be likened to these ten virgins, and shall be thus distinguished.

II. That by which it is illustrated, is, a marriage solemnity. It was a custom sometimes used among the Jews, on that occasion, that the bridegroom came, attended with his friends, late in the night, to the house of the bride, where the bride was, attended with her bride-maids; who, upon notice given of the bridegroom's approach, were to go out with lamps in their hands, to light him into the house with ceremony and formality, in order to the celebration of the nuptials with great mirth. And some think that on these occasions they had usually ten virgins: for the Jews never held a synagogue, circumcised, kept the passover, or conducted marriage, except at least there were present. Boaz, when he married Ruth, had ten virgins, Ruth 4:2. Now in this parable.

1. The Bridegroom is our Lord Jesus Christ; he is so represented in the 45th Psalm, Solomon's Song, and often in the New Testament. It bespeaks his singular and superlative love to, and his faithful and inviolable covenant with, his spouse, the church. Believers are now betrothed to Christ; (Hos. 2. 19.)

2. The solemnizing of the marriage is reserved for the great day, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, will have made herself completely ready, Rev. 19. 7, 9.

3. The virgins are the professors of religion, members of the church; but here represented as her companions, (Ps. 45. 14.) as elsewhere her children, (Isa. 54. 1.) her ornaments, Isa. 49. 18. They that forsook their Lord, and his cause, are said to be virgins, (Rev. 13. 4.) this denotes their beauty and purity; they are to be presented as chaste virgins to Christ, 2 Cor. 11. 2. The bridegroom is a king; so these virgins are maid of honour, virgins without number, (Cant. 6. 8.) yet here said to be ten.

4. The office of these virgins is to meet the bridegroom, which is as much their happiness as their duty. They come to wait upon the bridegroom in the night, and stand in readiness to wait for him. See here the nature of Christianity. As Christians, we profess ourselves to be, (1.) Attendants upon Christ, to do him honour, as the glorious Bridegroom, to be to him for a name and a praise, especially then when he shall come to be glorified

CHAP. XXV.

This chapter continues and concludes our Saviour's discourse, which began in the foregoing chapter, concerning his second coming and the end of the world. This was his final, last sermon of caution, as John 14. 15, and 27, was of comfort, to his disciples; and they had need of both in a world of so much temptation and trouble as this is. The application of that discourse, was, Watch therefore, and be ye vigilant, as one that attendeth to his own business, and keepeth watch against any violent assault. Now, in prevention of these serious awakenings in this chapter we have three parables, the scope of which is the same— to quicken us all with the utmost care and diligence to get ready for Christ's second coming, which, in all his forewills to his church, mention was made of, as in that before he died. (John 14. 2.) at that in his ascension, (Acts 1. 11.) and in that at the shutting up of the canon of the scripture, Rev. 21. 8. prepared for eternal joy and happiness. It comes in thus.

1. That we may then be ready to attend upon him; and this is shewed in the parable of the ten virgins, v. 1. 13.

2. That we may then be ready to give up our account to him; and this is shewn in the parable of the talents, v. 14. 30.

3. That we may then be ready to receive from him our final sentence, and that it may be eternal life; and this is shewn in a more plain description of the process of the judgment, v. 31. 46. These are things of awful consideration, because of everlasting concern to every one of us.

1. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4. But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. 13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.
in his saints. We must follow him as honorary servants do their masters, John 12. 26. Hold up the name, and hold forth their name, of the exalted Jesus of their profession, and of the exalted Jesus Christ, of his second coming. As Christians, we profess, not only to believe and look for, to love and long for, the appearing of Christ, and to act in our whole conversation with regard to it. The second coming of Christ is the centre in which all the lines of our religion meet, and to which the whole of the day of life hath a constant reference and tendency.

4. Their chief concern is, to have light in their hands, when they attend the bridegroom, thus to do him honour and to do him service. Note, Christians are children of light. The gospel is light, and they who receive it, must not only be enlightened by it themselves, but must shine as lights must hold forth, Phil. 2. 15, 16. This in general.

Now, concerning these ten virgins, we may observe,

1. Their different character, with the proof and evidence of it.

1. Their character was, that five were wise, and five foolish, (v. 2.) and wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness; so saith Solomon, a competent judge, Eccl. 2. 13. Note, Those of the same profession and denomination among men, may have no character vastly different in the sight of God. Sincere Christians are the wise virgins, and hypocrites the foolish ones, as in another parable they are represented by wise and foolish builders. Note, Those are wise or foolish indeed, that are so in the affairs of their souls. True religion is true wisdom; sin is folly, but especially the sin of hypocrisy, for those are the greatest fools that are wise in their own conceit, and those the worst of sinners, that feign themselves just men. Some observe, from the equal number of the wise and foolish, what a charitable decorum (it is Archbishop Tillotson's expression) Christ observes, as if he would have that the number of true believers were near equal to that of hypocrites, or, at least, would teach us to hope the best concerning those that profess religion, and to think of them with a bias to the charitable side. Though, in judging of ourselves, we must remember that the gate is strait, and few find it, yet, in judging of others, we ought to remember, that the Captain of our salvation brings many sons to glory.

2.] The evidence of this character was in the very thing which they were to attend to; by that there was a judgment of the wise and unwise ones.

First, It was the folly of the foolish virgins, that they took their lamps, and took no oil with them, v. 3. They had just oil enough to make their lamps burn for the present, to make a show with, as if they intended to meet the bridegroom; but no cruse or bottle of oil with them for a recruit, if the bridegroom tarried; thus hypocrites, who have no principle within. They have a lamp to shine, and use it, but have not in their hearts that stock of sound knowledge, rooted dispositions, and settled resolutions, which is necessary to carry them through the services and trials of the present state. They act under the influence of external inducements, but are void of spiritual life; like a tradesman, that sets up without a stock, or a wife, or seed on the stony ground, that wanted root.

2. They had provisions for, what is to come. They took lamps for a present show, but not oil for after-use. This incognti- nancy is the ruin of many professors; all their care is to recommend themselves to their neighbours, whom they now converse with, not to approve themselves to Christ, whom they must hereafter appear before; as if any thing will serve, provided it will but serve for the present. Tell them of things not seen as yet, and you are like Lot to his sons in law, as one that mocked. They do not provide for hereafter; for, when the sun is set, they go into their cellars, nor lay up for the time to come, 2 Cor. 12. 14.

Secondly, It was the wisdom of the wise virgins, that they took oil in their vessels with their lamps, v. 4. They had a good principle within, which would maintain and keep up their profession. 1. The heart is the vessel, which is our wisdom to get furnished; for out of a good treasure there, good things must be brought; but if that root be rotten-ness, the blossom will be dust. 2. Grace is the oil which we must have in this vessel; in the tabernacle there was constant provision made of oil for the light, Exod. 35. 14. Our light must shine before men in good works; but this cannot be, or not long, unless there be a fixed active principle in the heart, of faith in Christ, and love to God and our brethren, from which we must act in every thing we do in religion, with an eye to what is before us. They that took oil in their vessels, did it upon supposition, that perhaps the bridegroom might tarry. Note, In looking forward, it is good to prepare for the worst, to lay in for a long siege. But remember that this oil, which keeps the lamp burning, is derived to the candlestick from Jesus Christ, the great and good Olive, by the golden fifte of the ordinances, as it is said concerning wisdom, Proverbs 3. 13. Yet which is explained John 1. 16. Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.

2. Their common fault, during the bridegroom's delay; They all slumbered and slept, v. 5. Observe here,

1. The bridegroom tarried, that is, he did not come out so soon as they expected. What we look for as certain, we are apt to think is very near; many in the apostles' times imagined the day of the Lord was at hand, but it is not so. Christ, as to us, seems to tarry, and yet really does not, Hab. 2. 3. There is good reason for the Bridegroom's tarrying; there are many intermediate counsels and purposes to be accomplished, the elect must all be called in, God's patience must be manifested, and the saints' patience tried, the harvest of the earth must be reap- ed, the last great judgment brought to the harvest of history. But, though Christ tarry past our time, he will not tarry past the due time.

2. While he tarried, those that waited for him grew careless, and forgot what they were attending; They all slumbered and slept; as if they had given over looking for him; for, when the Son of man comes, he will not find faith, Luke 19. 8. Those that inferred the suddenness of it from its coming, when that answered not their expectation, were apt, from the delay, to infer its uncertainty. The wise virgins slumbered, and the foolish slept; so some distinguish it; however, they were both faulty. The wise virgins kept their lamps burning, but did not keep themselves awake. Note, Too many good Christians, when they have been long in profession, are like the foolish virgins, who are asleep when their presence is not coming; they intermit their care, abate their zeal, their graces are not lively, nor their works found perfect before God; and though all love be not lost, yet the first love is lost. If it was hard to the disciples to watch with Christ an hour, much more to watch with him an age. I sleep, saith the spouse, but my heart wakes. Observe, First, They slumbered, they were careless. Hence their first love is lost. Yet this is not a vice, provided it be not carelessness. Carelessness and remissness makes way for another. Those that allow themselves in slumbering, will scarcely keep themselves from sleeping; the refore dread the beginning of spiritual decays; Venienti occurrisce morbo—Attend to the first symptoms of disease. The ancients generally understood the virgins' slumbering and sleeping, of their dying; they all died, wise and foolish, (Ps. 49. 10.) before judg
ment-day. So Ferus, Autequam veniat sponsus, omnibus obliviscendium est, hoc est, moriendium. Before the Bridegroom come, all must sleep, that is, do slumber. But I think it is rather to be taken as we have opened it.

(3.) The surprising summons given them to attend the bridegroom; (v. 6.) At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Note, [1.] Though Christ tarried long, he will come at last; though he seems slow, he is sure. In his former coming, he was thought long by those that waited for the coming of the Lord, 2 Thess. 3. 20; but his second coming, though long deferred, is not forgotten; his enemies shall find, to their cost, that forbearance is no acquaintance; and his friends shall find, to their comfort, that the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie. The year of the redeemed is fixed, and it will come. [2.] Christ's coming will be at our midnight, when we least look for him, and are most disposed to take our rest. His coming for the relief and comfort of his people, often is when the godly intended seems to be at the greatest distance; and his coming to reckon with his enemies, is when they put the evil day farthest from them. It was at midnight that the first-born of Egypt were destroyed, and Israel delivered, Exod. 12. 22. Death often comes when it is least expected; the soul is required this night, Luke 12: 20. Christ will come when his enemies are most secure, and it will not let us know when, to teach us our duty. [3.] When Christ comes, we must go forth to meet him. As Christians, we are bound to attend all the motions of the Lord Jesus, and meet him in all his outings. When he comes to us at death, we must go forth out of the body, out of the world, to meet him with affections and workings of soul suitable to the discoveries we then expect to make of himself. Go ye forth to meet him, is a call to those who are habitually prepared, to be actually ready. [4.] The notice given of Christ's approach, and the call to meet him, will be awakening; There was a cry made. His first coming was not with any observation at all, nor did they say, Lo, here is Christ, or Lo, he is there; he was in the world, and the world knew him not; but his second coming will be with the observation of all the world; Every eye shall see him. Isa. 11. 12. Then shall descend with a shout, Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment; and a cry from the earth too, a cry to rocks and mountains, Rev. 6. 16.

(4.) The address they all made to answer this summons; (v. 7.) They all arose, and trimmed their lamps, snuffed them, and supplied them with oil, and went about with all expedition to put themselves in a posture to receive the bridegroom. Now, [1.] This, in the wise virgins, bespeaks an actual preparation for the Bridegroom's coming. Note, Even those that are best prepared for death, have, upon the immediate arrest of it, work to do to get themselves actually ready, that they may be found in peace (2 Pet. 3. 14.) found doing, (ch. 24. 46.) and not found naked, 2 Cor. 5. 3. It will be a day of search and inquiry; and it concerns us to think how we shall then be found. When we see the day approaching, we must address ourselves to our dying work, and seek to fit ourselves for the Bridegroom's coming. Note, Even counterfeited graces will serve a man to make a show of when he comes to die, as well as they have done all his life long; the hypocrite's hopes blaze when they are just expiring, like a lightning before death.

(5.) The distress which the foolish virgins were in, for want of oil, v. 8, 9. This bespeaks, [1.] The strictness of those which some hypocrites have a regard to, for the misery of their state, even on this side death, when God opens their eyes to see their folly, and themselves perishing with a lie in their right hand. Or, however, [2.] The real misery of their state on the other side death, and in the judgment; how far their fair, but false, profession of religion, will be from availing them anything in the great day; see v. 26.

First, Their lamps are gone out. The lamps of hypocrites often go out in this life, when they who have begun in the spirit end in the flesh, and the hypocrisy breaks out in an open apostasy, 2 Pet. 2. 20. The profession withers, and the credit of it is lost; the hopes full, and the comfort of them is gone; how often is the candle of the wicked thus put out? Job 21. 17. Yet many a hypocrite keeps up his credit, and the comfort of his profession, such as it is, to the last; but what is it when God takes away his soul? Job 27. 8. If his candle be not put out before him, it is put out with him, Job 18. 5, 6. He shall lie down in sorrow, Isa. 50. 11. The gains of a hypocritical profession will not follow a man to judgment, ch. 7. 22, 23. The lamps are gone out, when the hypocrite's hope proves like the spider's web, (Job 8. 11, &c.) and like the giving up of the ghost, (Job 11. 20.) like Absalom's mule that left him in the oak.

Secondly, They wanted oil to supply them when they were going out. Note, Those that take up short of true grace, will certainly find the want of it one time or other. An external profession, well humoured, may carry a man far, but it will not carry him through; it may light him along this world, but the lamps of the valley of the shadow of death will put him out.

Thirdly, They would gladly be beholden to the wise virgins for a supply out of their vessels; Give us of your oil. Note, The day is coming when carnal hypocrites would gladly be found in the condition of true Christians. Those who now hate the strictness of religion, will, at death and judgment, wish for the solid comforts of it. Those who care not to live the life, yet would die the death, of the righteous. The day is coming when those who now are in league with those that are enemies of religion, would gladly get an interest in them, and would value those as their best friends and benefactors, whom now they set with the dogs of their flock. Give us of your oil; that is, 'Speak a good word for us,' so some; but there is no occasion for vouchers in the great day, the Judge knows what is every man's true character. But is it not well that they are brought to say, Give us of your oil? It is so; but, 1. This request was exerted by sensible necessities. Note, Those will see their need of grace hereafter, when it should save them, who will not see their need of grace now, when it should sanctify and rule them. 2. It comes too late. God would have given them oil, had they asked in time; but there is no buying when the market is over, no bidding when the inch of candle is dropped.

Fourthly, They were denied a share in their companions' oil. Their oil was suitable to such an age of grace, in which they were thus reproved by good people.

The wise answered, Not so; that peremptory declarative is not in the original, but supplied by the translators: these wise virgins would rather give a reason, without a positive refusal, than (as many do) give a positive refusal, without a reason. They were well inclined to help their neighbours in distress; but, We must not, we cannot, we dare not, do it, lest there be not enough for us and you; charity begins at home; but go, and buy for your selves. Note, 1. Those that would be saved, must
have grace of their own. Though we have benefit by the communion of saints, and the faith and prayers of others may now redound to our advantage, yet our own sanctification is indispensably necessary to our own salvation. This may be seen in the case of Adam and Eve. They never had grace, and yet they were created in the image and likeness of God. But if they had been born in grace, then they could not have sinned. And this is the case with all sinners. Every man shall give account of himself, and therefore let every man prove his own work; for he cannot get another to muster for him in that day. 2. Those that have most grace have none to spare; all we have is little enough for ourselves to appear before God in. The best have need to borrow from Christ, but they have none to lend to any of the needful. Thus would the church live by his faith. Every man shall have account of himself, and therefore let every man prove his own work; for he cannot get another to muster for him in that day.

The Thirdly, never have grace to come, or have it, and be not renewed in the whole heart. The church shall be but a man's day dreams of works of supererogation and the imputation of the righteousness of saints, forgets that it was the wisdom of the wise virgins to understand that they had but oil enough for themselves, and none for others. But observe, These wise virgins did not upbraid the foolish with their neglect, nor boast of their own forecast, nor torment them with suggestions tending to despair, but gave them the best advice the case will bear, Go ye rather to them that sell. Note, Those that deal foolishly in the affairs of their souls are to be pitied, and not insulted over; for who made thee to differ? When ministers attend such as have been mindless of God and their souls all their days, but are under death-bed convictions; and, because true repentance is never too late, will not put to repentance, they are close with Christ; yet, because late repentance is seldom true, they do but as these wise virgins did by the foolish, even make the best of bad. They can but tell them what is to be done, if it be not too late; but whether the door may not be shut before it is done, is an unspeakable hazard. It is good advice now, if it be taken in time, Go to them that sell, and buy. Note. Those that would have grace, must have recourse to God and attend upon, the means of grace. See Isa. 55. 1.

(6.) The coming of the bridegroom, and the issue of all this different character of the wise and foolish virgins. See what came of it.

[i]While they went out to buy, the bridegroom came. Note, With regard to those that put off their good work no others. It is a thousand to one, that they have not time to do it. Getting grace is a work of time, and cannot be done in a hurry. While the poor awakened soul addresses itself, upon a sick-bed, to repentance and prayer, in awful confusion, it scarcely knows which end to begin at, or what to do first; and presently death comes, judgment comes, and the work is undone, and the poor sinner undone for ever. This comes of having oil to buy when we should, burn it, and grace to get when we should use it.

The bridegroom came. Note, Our Lord Jesus will come to his people, at the great day; as a bridegroom; will come in pomp and rich attire, attended with his friends: now that the Bridegroom is taken away from us, we fast, (ch. 9. 15.) but then will be an everlasting feast. Then the Bridegroom will fetch his countrymen to be his bridegroom, (John 17. 24.) and will rejoice over his bride, Isa. 62. 5.

[i]They that were ready went in with him to the marriage. Note, First, To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ to the marriage, to be in his immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with him in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. Secondly, Those, and those only, are fit for eternal joy, that are made ready for heaven here, that are turned to the Lord, and same thing, 2 Cor. 5. 5. Thirdly, The suddenness of death, and of Christ's coming to us then, will be no obstruction to our happiness, if we have been habitually prepared.

[i]The door was shut, as is usual when all the company is come that are to be admitted. The door was shut, First, To secure those that were with in; that, being now made pillars in the house of our God, they may go no more out, Rev. 3. 12.Adam was put into paradise, but the door was left open, and so he went out again; but when glorified saints are put into the heavenly paradise, they are shut in. Secondly, To exclude those that were out. The state of saints and sinners will then be unalterably fixed, and those that are shut out then will be shut out for ever. Now the gate is strait, yet it is open; but then it will be shut and bolted, and a great gulf fixed. This was like the shutting of the door of the ark; after the door was shut, no present preservation, so all the rest were finally abandoned.

[4.] The foolish virgins came when it was too late, (v. 11.) Aferward came also the other virgins. Note, First, There are many that will seek admission into heaven when it is too late; as profane Esau, who afterward would have inherited the blessing. God and religion will be glorified by those late solicitations, though sinners will not be saved by them; it is for the honour of Lord, Lord, that is, of fervent and importunate prayer, that those who slight it now will flee to it shortly, and it will not be called whining and canting then. Secondly, The vain confidence of hypocrites will carry them very far in their expectations of happiness. They go to heaven-gate, and demand entrance, and yet are shut out; lifted up to heaven to God, but shut out as to the goodness of their state, and yet thrust down to hell.

[5.] They were rejected, as Esau was; (v. 12.) I know you not. Note, We are all concerned to seek the Lord while he may be found; for there is a time coming when he will not be found. Time was, when Lord, Lord, open to us, would have sped well, by virtue of that promise, Knock, and it shall be opened to you; and yet it is too late. The Lord is come; nor is any now bound with, Verily I say unto you, which amounts to no less than swearing in his wrath, that they shall never enter into his rest. It bespeaks him resolved, and then silenced by it.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from this parable; (v. 13.) Watch therefore. We had it before, (ch. 24. 42.) and here it is repeated, as the most needful caution. Note, 1. Our great duty is to watch, to attend to the business of our souls with the utmost diligence and circumspection. Be awake, and be watchful. 2. It is a good reason for our watching, that the time of our Lord's coming is very uncertain; we know neither the day nor the hour. Therefore every day and every hour we must be ready, and not off our watch any day in the year, or any hour in the day. Be thou in the fear of the Lord every day, and all the day long.

14. For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. 16. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. 17. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. 18. But he that had received one went and dug in the earth, and hid his lord's money. 19. After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. 20. And so he that had received five talents came, and
brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou delivertest unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. 21. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22. He also that had received two talents, and said, Lord, thou delivertest unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. 23. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 24. Then he which had received one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not straid: 25. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. 26. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strayed: 27. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. 28. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. 29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. 30. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

We have here the parable of the talents committed to three servants; this implies that we are in a state of work and business, as the former implies that we are in a state of expectancy. That shewed the necessity of habitual preparation, the duty of actual diligence in our present work and service. In that, we were stirred up to do well for our own souls; in this, to lay out ourselves for the glory of God and the good of others.

In this parable, 1. The Master is Christ, who is the absolute Owner and Proprietor of all persons and things, and in a special manner of his church; into his hands all things are delivered. 2. The servants are Christians, his own servants, so they are called; born in his house, bought with his money, devoted to his praise, and employed in his work. It is probable that ministers are especially intended here, who are more immediately attending on him, and sent by him. St. Paul often calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. See 2 Tim. 2. 24.

We have three things, in general, in this parable. 1. The trust committed to these servants; Their master delivered to them his goods; having appointed them to work, (for Christ keeps no servants to be idle,) he left them something to work upon. Note, Christ's servants have and receive their all from him: for they are of themselves worth nothing, nor have any thing they can call their own but sin. 2. Our receiving from Christ is in order to our working for him. Our privileges are intended to find us with business. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 3. Whatever we receive to be made use of for Christ, still the property is vested in him; we are but tenants upon his land, stewards of his manifold grace, 1 Pet. 4. 10. Now observe here,

(1.) On what occasion this trust was committed to these servants; The master was travelling into a far country. This is explained, Eph. 4. 8. When he ascended on high, he gave gifts unto men. Note, [1.] When Christ went to heaven, he was as a man travelling into a far country; that is, he went with a purpose to be away a great while. [2.] When he went, he took care to furnish his church with all things necessary for it during his personal absence. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to his right, or to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. First, There were the spiritual—[1.] The great depositum, (as it is called, 1 Tim. 6. 20. 2 Tim. 1. 14.) the good thing that is committed to us; and he sent his Spirit to enable his servants to teach and profess those truths, to press and observe these laws, to improve and apply these promises, and to exercise and employ those powers, ordinary or extraordinary, this Christ, at his ascension, left to his church.

(2.) In what proportion this trust was committed. [1.] He gave talents; a talent of silver is computed to be in our money here more than forty-five pounds. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit. For, and in consideration of, his departure, he committed the church to his care; to the duty of his servants; in his interest, or for his benefit.
themselves to their business. Those that have so much work to do, as every Christian has, need to set about it quietly and steadily, and not waste no time. They went, and traded. Note, A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman. Trades are called mysteries, and without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; it is a manufacture trade; there is something to be done by us upon our own hearts, and for the good of others. It is a merchant-trade; things of less value to us are parted with for things of greater value; spiritual interests, for the world, Prov. 31. 10. 11. A tradesman is one who, having made his trade his choice, and taken pains to learn it, makes it his business to follow it, lays out all he has for the advancement of it, makes all other affairs bend to it, and lives upon the gain of it. Thus does a true Christian act in the work of religion; we have no stock of our own to trade with, but trade as factors with our Master's stock of the endowments of the mind—reason, wit, learning, must be used in subserviency to religion; the enjoyments of the world—estate, credit, interest, power, preferment, must be improved for the honour of Christ. The ordinances of the gospel, and our opportunities of attending them, bibles, ministers, sabbaths, sacraments, must be improved for the end for which they were instituted, and are made use of by him, and the gifts and graces of the Spirit must be exercised; and this is trading with our talents.

(2.) They were successful; they doubled their stock, and in a little time made cent. per cent. of it: he that had five talents soon made them other five. Trading with our talents is not always successful with others, but, however, it shall be so to ourselves, Isa. 49. 4. Note, The honest and diligent makes rich in graces, and comforts, and treasures of good works. There is a great deal to be got by industry in religion. Observe, The returns were in proportion to the receivings. [1.] From those to whom God hath given five talents, he expects the improvement of five, and to reap plentifully where he sows plentifully. The greater gifts any have, the more pains they ought to take, as those must that have a large stock to manage. [2.] From those to whom he hath given but two talents, he expects only the improvement of two, which may encourage those who are placed in a lower and narrower sphere of usefulness; if they lay out themselves to do good according to the best of their capacity and opportunity, they shall be accepted, though they do not so much prosper.

2. The third did ill; (v. 18.) He that had received the one talent, went and hid his lord's money. Though the parable represents but one in three unfaithful, yet, in a history that answers this parable, we find the disproportion quite the other way, when ten lepers were cleansed, nine of the ten hid the talent, and only one returned to give thanks. Luke 17. 17. A Christian faithful servant had that had but one talent; doubtless, there are many that have five talents, and bury them all; great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them: but Christ would hint to us, (1.) That, if he that had but one talent be reckoned with thus for burying that one, much more will they be accounted offenders that have more, that have many, and bury them. In a man's own mind, in the small corner of his own, he is in outer darkness, because he did not improve what he had, as he might have done, of how much fonder punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that tramples under foot the greatest advantages? (2.) That those who have least to do for God, frequently do least of what they have to do. Some make it an excuse for their laziness, that they have not the opportunities of serving God that others have; and, because they have not wherewithal to do what they say they would, they will not do what they are able, and can, and so sit down and do nothing; it is really an aggravation of their sloth, they when they have but one talent to take care about, they neglect that one.

He digged in the earth, and hid the talent, for fear it should be stolen; he did not misdoubt or misemploy it, did not enmembel it or squander it away, but he hid it. Money is like manure, (so my lord Bacon used to say,) good for nothing in the heap, but it is a great treasure, and as it has been often seen under the sun, treasure heaped together, (Jam. 5. 3. Eccl. 6. 1, 2,) which does good to nobody; and so it is in spiritual gifts; many have them, and make no use of them for the end for which they were given them. Those that have estates, and do not lay them out in works of piety and charity; that have power and interest, and do not with it promote religion in the places where they live; millions that have capacities and opportunities of doing good, but do not stir up the gift that is in them, are those slothful servants that seek their own things more than Christ's.

He hid his lord's money; had it been his own, he might have done as he pleased; but whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own, and therefore must be used as instruments to do good to our Lord, whose goods they are. It was an aggravation of his slothfulness, that his fellow-servants were busy and successful in trading, and their zeal should have provoked his. Are others active, and shall we be idle?

III. The account of this improvement, v. 19. 1. The account is deferred; it is not till after a long time that they are reckoned with; not that the master neglected his affairs, or that God is slack concerning his promise; (2 Pet. 3. 9.) no, he is ready to judge; (1 Pet. 4. 5.) but every thing must be done in its time and order. 2. Yet the day of account comes at last; The lord of those servants recketh with them. Note, The stewards of the manifolds grace of God must shortly give account of their stewardship. [1.] We must all be reckoned with—what good have we got to our own souls, and what good have we done to others, by the advantages we have enjoyed. See Rom. 14. 10, 11. Now here is, [1.] The good account of the faithful servants, and there observe,

[1.] The servants giving up the account; (v. 20. 22.) Lord thou deliverest to me five talents, and to me two; behold, I have gained five talents, and I two talents more.

First, Christ's faithful servants acknowledge with thankfulness his vouchsafements to them; Lord, thou deliverest to me such and such things. Note, 1. It is good to keep a particular account of our receivings from God, to remember what we have received, that we may know what is expected from us, and may render according to the benefit. 2. We must own our luck that has come, when the general mention of God's favour to us, of the honour he has put upon us, in intrusting us with his goods, and of that grace which is the spring and fountain of all the good that is in us, or is done by us. For, the truth is, The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him for making use of us, and enabling us, for his service.

Secondly, They produce, as an evidence of their faithfulness, what they have gained. Note, God's good stewards have something to show for their diligence: Show me thy faith by thy works. He that is a good man, let him shew it, Jam. 3. 13. If we be careful in our spiritual trade, it will soon be seen by us, and our works will follow us, Rev. 14. 13. Not that the saints will, in the great day, make mention of their own good deeds; no, Christ will do that for them; (v. 35.) but it intimates, that they who
faithfully improve their talents shall have boldness in the day of Christ, 1 John 2. 28. — 17. And it is observable, that he who had but two talents, gave up his account as cheerfully as he who had five; for our comfort, in the day of account, will be according to our faithfulness, not according to our usefulness; our sincerity, not our success; according to the degree of the grace we had, not according to the degree of our opportunities.

[2.] The master's acceptance and approbation of their account, v. 21, 23.

First, He commended them; Well done, good and faithful servant. Note, The diligence and integrity of those who approve themselves the good and faithful servants of Jesus Christ, will certainly be found of great avail; it will secure them against the judgment of their own consciences, and recommend them to the approbation of their Lord. Now, they are justly commended, if they have been found, as Jesus says, faithful from the beginning, Luke 12. 14. 1. Their persons will be accepted; Thou good and faithful servant. He that knows the integrity of his servants now, will witness to it in the great day; and they that are found faithful shall be called so. Perhaps they were censured by men, as righteous overmuch; but Christ will give them their just characters; God will commended them, 1 Cor. 4. 5. 2. Their performances will be accepted; Well done. Christ will call those, and those only, good servants, that have done well; for it is by patient continuance in well-doing that we seek for this glory and honour; and if we seek, we shall find; if we do that which is good, and do it well, we shall have praise of the same. Some masters are so morose, that they will not commend their servants, though they do their work ever so well; it is thought enough not to chide: but Christ will commend his servants that do well; whether their praise be of men or no, it is of him; and if we have the good word of our Master, the matter is not great what our fellow-servants say of us; if he saith, Well done, we are happy, and it should then be a small thing to us to be judged of men's judgment; as, on the contrary, not he who commendeth himself, or whom his neighbours commend, is approved, but whom the Lord commends.

Secondly, He rewards them. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with bare commendation; no, all their work and labour of love shall be rewarded.

Now this reward is here expressed two ways. 1. In one expression agreeable to the parable; Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. It is usual, in the courts of princes and families of great men, to advance those to higher offices that have been faithful in lower. Note, Christ is a Master that will prefer his servants who acquit themselves well. Christ has honour in store for those that honour him—a crown, 2 Tim. 4. 8. a throne, Rev. 3. 21. a kingdom, ch. 25. 34. Here they are beggars, in heaven they shall be rulers. The upright shall have dominion. Christ's servants are all princes.

Observe, the discretion of God in his work, and the reward; there are but few things in which the saints are serviceable to the glory of God, but there are many things wherein they shall be glorified with God. What charge we receive from God, what work we do for God in this world, is but little, very little, compared with the joy set before us. I put together all our services, all our sufferings, all our impropriations, and we are but a few things, next to nothing, not worthy to be compared, not fit to be named, the same day with the glory to be revealed.

2. In another expression, which slips out of the parable into the thing signified by it; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Note, 1. The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs of comfort shall be opened to them, and the fountains of joy broken up. Where there are the vision and fruition of God, a perfection of holiness, and the society of the blessed, there cannot be but a fulness of joy. 2. This joy is the joy of our Lord; the joy which he himself has purchased and provided for them; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the blood of the Lamb. It is the joy which he himself is in the possession of, and which he had his eye upon when he endured the cross, and despised the shame, Heb. 12. 2. It is the joy of which he himself is the Fountain and Centre. It is the joy of the Lord, for it is joy in the Lord, who is our exceeding Joy. Abraham was not willing that the steward of his house, though faithful, should be his heir; whereas Christ commends his faithful stewards into his own joy, to be joint-heirs with him.

(3.) Glorified saints shall enter into this joy, shall have a full and complete possession of it, as the heir, when he comes of age, enters upon his estate, or as they that were ready went in to the marriage feast. Here the joy of our Lord enters into the saints, in the earnest of the Spirit; shortly they shall enter into it, shall be in it to eternity, as in the element of fire.

(2.) The bad account of the slothful servant. Observe, [1.] His apology for himself, v. 24, 25. Though he had received but one talent, for that one he is called to account. The smallness of our receiving will not excuse us from a reckoning. None shall be called to an account for more than they have received; but for what we have we must all account. Observe, First, What he cooly does. He comes to the account with a deal of assurance, relying on the plea he had to put in, that he was able to say, Lo, thou hast that is thine; if I have not made more, as the others have done, yet this I can say, I have not made it less. This, he thinks, may serve to bring him off, if not with praise, yet with safety.

Note, Many a one goes very securely to judgment, presuming upon the validity of a plea that will be overruled as vain and frivolous. Slothful professors, who* are afraid of doing too much for God, yet hope to come off as well as those that take so much pains in religion. Thus the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason, Prov. 26. 16. This servant thought that his account would pass well enough, because he could say, There thou hast that is thine; and Lord, I was not afraid of the loss of my estate, nor afraid of my profaner of my sabbaths, no opposer of good ministers and good preaching; Lord, I never ridiculed my Bible, nor set my wits to work to banter religion, nor abused my power to persecute any good man; I never drowned my parts, nor wasted God's good creatures in drunkenness and glutonny, nor ever to my knowledge did I injury to any body. Many, that are called Christians, build great hopes for heaven upon their being a hazards with such an account; yet all this amounts to no more than, There thou hast that is thine; as if no more were required, or could be expected.

Secondly, What he confesses. He owns the burying of his talent, I hid thy talent in the earth. He speaks as if that were no great fault; nay, as if he deserved praise for his prudence in putting it in a safe place, and running no hazard with it. Note, Those who are communicative, who make a very light matter of that which will be their condemnation in the great day. Or, if he was conscious to himself that it was his fault, it intimates how easily slothful servants will be convicted in the judgment; there will need no great search for proof, for their own tongue shall fall upon them.

Thirdly, What he makes his excuse; I knew that
thou wast a hard man, and I was afraid. Good thoughts of God would beget love, and that love would make us diligent and faithful; but hard thoughts of God beget fear, and that fear makes us slothful and unfaithful. His excuse bespeaks,

1. The sentiments of an enemy; I knew thee, that thou art a hard man. This was like that wicked saying of the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal, Ezek. 18. 25. Thus his defence is his offence. The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then, as if that would mend the matter, his ways are straighter than the transgression, as Adam, who implicitly laid the fault on God himself; The woman which thou gavest me. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to conceive false and wicked opinions concerning God, and with them to harden themselves in their evil ways. Observe how confidently he speaks; I knew thee to be so. How could he know him to be so? What inquiry have we or our fathers found in him? Jer. 2. 5. Wherin has he wearied us with our work, or deceived us in his wages? Mic. 6. 3. Has he been a wilderness to us, or a land of darkness? Thus long God has governed the world, and may ask, with more reason than Samuel himself could, Whom have I deformed, or whom have I oppressed? Does not all the world know the contrary, that he is so far from being a hard Master, other than that he is full of his goodness, so far from reaping where he sowed not, that he sows a great deal where he reaps nothing? For he causes the sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful, and fills their hearts with food and gladness, who says to the Almighty, Depart from us. This suggestion bespeaks the common reproach which wicked people cast upon God, as if all the blame of their sin and ruiner were upon him. And here it is observed, whereas it is certain that never any, who faithfully improved the common grace they had, perished for want of special grace; nor can any shew what could in reason have been done more for an unfruitful vineyard than God has done in it. God does not demand brick, and deny straw; nor, whatever is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant; so that if we perish, it is owing to ourselves.

2. The spirit of a slave; I was afraid. This ill affection toward God arose from his false notions of him; and nothing is more unworthy of God, nor more hinders our duty to him, than slavish fear. This has bondage and torment, and is directly opposite to that entire love which the great commandment requires. Note, Hard thoughts of God drive us from, and cram us in, his service. Those who think it impossible to please him, and in vain to serve him, will do nothing to purpose in religion.

[2.] His Lord's answer to this apology. His plea will stand him in no stead, it is overruled, nay, it is made to turn against him, and he is struck speechless with it; for here we have his conviction and his condemnation.

And the conviction, v. 26, 27. Two things he is convicted of:

1. Slothfulness; Thou wicked and slothful servant. Note, Slothful servants are wicked servants, and will be reckoned with as such by their Master; for he that is slothful in his work, and neglects the good that God has commanded, is brother to him that is a great waster, by doing the evil that God hates. v. 26, 27. He that is careless in God's work, is near akin to him that is busy in the devil's work, Satia est malis nihil frevisse bonum—To do no good is to incur very serious blame. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; slothfulness makes way for wickedness; all become filthy, for there is none that doeth good, Ps. 14. 3. When the house is empty, the unclean spirit takes possession. Those that are idle in the affairs of their souls, are not only idle, but something worse, 1 Tim. 5. 13. When men sleep, the enemy sows tares.

2. Self-contradiction; (v. 26, 27.) Thou knewest that I was hard, and yet I sent thee to be a master, etc. To ought therefore to have put my money to the exchangers. Note, The hard thoughts which sinners have of God, though false and unjust, will be so far from justifying their wickedness and slothfulness, that they will rather aggravate and add to their guilt. These ways this may be taken: (1.) "Suppose I had been so hard a Master, shouldest not thou therefore have brought mine money into my hands, that I might not be speaking to thee, that I was not for love, yet for fear, and for that reason oughtest not thou to have minded thy work?" If our God be a consuming fire, in consideration of that, let us study how to serve him. Or, thus, (2.) "If thou didst think me to be a hard Master, and therefore durst not trade with the money thyself, for fear of losing it by it, and being made to stand to the loss, yet thou mightest have put it into the hands of the exchangers, or goldsmiths, mightest have brought it into the bank, and then at my coming, if I could not have had the greater improvement, by trade and merchandise, (as of the other talents,) yet I might have had the lesser improvement, of bare interest, and should have received my own with usury," which, it seems, was a common practice at that time, and may well be lost, if we could not, or durst not, do what we would, yet that excuse will not serve, when it will be made to appear that we did not do what we could and durst. If we could not find in our hearts to venture upon more difficult and hazardous services, yet will that justifi us in shrinking from those that were more safe and easy? Something is better than nothing; if we fail of shewing our courage in bold enter tainments, God will stand by us. Note, In the day of account, wicked and slothful servants will be left quite without excuse; free-graziers will be overruled, and every mouth will be stopped; and those who now stand so much upon their own justification, will not have one word to say for themselves.

Secondly, His condemnation. The slothful serv ant is sentenced.

1. To be deprived of his talent; (v. 28, 29.) Take therefore the talent from him. The talents were first disposed of by the Master, as an absolute Owner, but this was now disposed of by him as a Judge; he takes it from the unfaithful servant, to punish him, and gives it to him that was eminently faithful, to reward him. And the meaning of this part of the parable we have in the reason of the sentence, (v. 28.) To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. (4.) To the treasures of this life worldly wealth and possessions. These we are intrusted with, to be used for the glory of God, and the good of those about us. Now he that hath these things, and useth them for these ends, he shall have abundance; perhaps abundance of the things themselves, at least, abundance of comfort in them, and of better things; but from him that hath not, that is, from those things as if he had them not, had not power to eat of them, or to do good with them, (Avraro deest, quantum habes, quanm quod non habes—The miser may be considered as destitute of what he has, as well as of what he has not,) they shall be taken away. Solomon explains this, (Prov. 11. 24.) There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty. Giving to the poor,
n trading with what we have, and the returns will be rich; it will multiply the meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse; but those that are sordid, and niggardly, and uncharitable, will find that these riches, which are so got, perish by evil travel, Excl. 16:11.5. Thus, he that knoweth not the day of his visitation, shall have the things that belong to their peace bid from their eyes. For proof of this, see what God did to Shiloh, Jer. 7. 12. (3.) We may apply it to the common gifts of the Spirit. He that hath these, and doeth good with them, shall have abundance; these gifts improve by exercise, and brighten by being used; the more we do, the more we may do, in religion; but those who stir not up the gift that is in them, who do not exert themselves according to their capacity, their gifts rust, and decay, and go out like a neglected fire. From him, that hath not a living principle of grace in his soul, shall be taken away the common gifts which he hath, as the lamps of the foolish virgins went out for want of oil, v. 8. Thus the arm of the Idle shepherd, which he had shaggily folded up in his bosom, comes to be dried up, and his right eye, which he had carelessly or wilfully shut, becomes utterly darkened, as it is threatened, Ezek. 11. 17.

2. He is sentenced to be cast into outer darkness, v. 30. Here, (1.) His character is that of an unprofitable servant. Note, Slothful servants will be reckoned with as unprofitable servants, who do nothing to the purpose of their coming into the world, nothing to answer the end of their birth or baptism, who are no way serviceable to the glory of God, the good of others, or the salvation of their own souls. A slothful servant is a withered member in the body, a barren tree in the vineyard, an idle drone in the hive, he is good for nothing. In one sense, we are all unprofitable servants; (Luke 17. 10.) we cannot profit God, Job 22. 2. But to others, and to ourselves, it is required that we be profitable; if we be not, Christ will not have us as his servants; it is not enough that we do not hurt, but we must do good, must bring forth fruit, and though thereby God is not profited, yet he is glorified, John 15. 8. (2.) His doom is, to be cast into outer darkness. Here, as in what was said to the faithful servants, our Saviour slides insensibly out of the parable into the thing intended by it, and it serves as a key to the whole; for, outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, is, in Christ's discourse, the converse of the blessings of the righteous blessed in heaven. Their state is, [1.] Very dismal; it is outer darkness. Darkness is uncomfortable and frightful, it was one of the plagues of Egypt. In hell there are chains of darkness, 2 Pet. 2. 4. In the dark no man can work, a fit punishment for a slothful servant. It is outer darkness, out from the light of heaven, out from the joy of their Lord, into which the faithful servants were admitted; out from the fairest skies. Compare ch. 19. 12.—31. doleful; there is weeping, which bespeaks great sorrow; and gnashing of teeth, which bespeaks great vexation and indignation. This will be the portion of the slothful servant.

31. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36. Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38. When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39. Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. 42. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43. I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45. Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

We have here a description of the process of the last judgment in the great day. There are some passages in it that are paradoxical; as the separating between the sheep and the goats, and the dialogues between the Judge and the persons judged; but there is no thread of similitude carried through the discourse, and therefore it is rather to be called a draught or delineation of the final judgment, than a parable; it is, as it were, the explanation of the former parables. And here we have,

1. The placing of the Judge upon the judgment-seat: (v. 30.) When the Son of man shall come. Observe here,

1. There is a judgment to come, in which every man shall be sentenced to a state of everlasting happiness, or misery, in the world of recompence or retribution, according to what he did in this world of trial and probation, which is to be judged of by the rule of the everlasting gospel.

2. The administration of the judgment of the great day is committed to the Son of man; for by him
God will judge the world, (Acts 17. 31.) and to him all judgment is committed, and therefore the judgment of that day, which is the centre of all. Here, as elsewhere, the last judgment is spoken of, Christ is called the Son of man, because he is to judge the sons of men; (and, being himself of the same nature, he is the more unexceptionable; and because his wonderful condescension to take upon him our nature, and to become the Son of man, will be recompensed by his exaltation in that day, and an honour put upon the human nature.

Rome, the church at Rome, a church opened by St. Paul, to the which the gospel was communicated by his own mission, is here celebrated; that is, the church of Rome, with temporal power in temporal things, namely, a magazine for the world, will be splendid and glorious. Agrippa and Bernice came to the judgment-seat with great pomp; (Acts 25. 23.) but that was (as the original word is) great fancy. Christ will come to the judgment-seat in real glory; the Sun of righteousness shall then shine in his meridian lustre, and the Prince of the kings of the earth shall shew the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honours of his excellent majesty; and all the world shall see what the saints only do now believe—that he is the brightness of his Father's glory. He shall come not only in the glory of his Father, but in his own glory, as Mediator: his first coming was under a black cloud of obscurity; his second will be in a bright cloud of glory. The assurance Christ gave his disciples of his future glory, might help to take off the offence of the cross, and his passion, which was the beginning of our redemption. Concerning this, see, (Rom. 8. 31.)

4. When Christ comes in his glory to judge the world, he will bring all his holy angels with him. This glorious person will have a glorious retinue, his holy myriads, who will be not only his attendants, but ministers of his justice; they shall come with him both for state and service. They must come to call the court, (1 Thess. 4. 16.) to gather the elect, (2 Thess. 2. 1.) and be witnesses of the saint's glory, (Luke 12. 8.) and of sinners' misery, Rev. 14. 10.

5. He will then sit upon the throne of his glory. He is now sat down with the Father upon his throne; and it is a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly; it is a throne of government, the throne of his father David; he is a priest upon that throne: but there he will sit on the throne of glory, the throne of judgment. See Dan. 7. 9. 10. This was his throne, though there was not its like in any kingdom, but was a dunghill to it. Christ, in the days of his flesh, was arraigned as a Prisoner at the bar; but, at his second coming, he will sit as a Judge upon the bench.

II. The appearing of all the children of men before him; (v. 32.) Before him shall be gathered all nations. Note, The judgment of the great day will be a general judgment. All must be summoned before Christ's tribunal; all of every age of the world, from the beginning to the end of time; all of every place on earth, even from the remotest corners of the world, most obscure, and distant from each other; all nations, all those nations of men that are made of one blood, to dwell on all the face of the earth. Concerning the glory that will be then made between the precious and the vile: If shall separate them one from another, as the tares and wheat are separated at the harvest, the good fish and bad at the shore, the corn and chaff in the flour. Wicked and godly here dwell together in the same kingdoms, cities, churches, families, and are not certainly distinguishable one from another; such are the infirmities of saints, such the frailty of sinners, and one event to both: but in that day they will be separated, and parted for ever; Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, Mal. 3. 18. They cannot separate themselves one from another in this world, (1 Cor. 5. 10.) nor can any one else separate them; (ch. 13. 28.) but the Lord knows them that are his, and he can separate them. This separation will be so exact, that the most inconsiderable saints shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, nor the most prominent sinner hid in the crowd of saints; (Ps. 1. 5.) but every one shall go to his own place. This is compared to a shepherd's dividing between the sheep and the goats; it is taken from Ezek. 34. 17. Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd; he now feeds his flock like a shepherd, and will shortly distinguish between his sheep and his goats; for, as God calls his sheep by name, so he will call his sheep and name his goats, (Ps. 139. 15.) and will separate them: not as Laban divided his sheep from Jacob's; but before the three days' journey between them, Gen. 30. 35. 36. 2. The godly are like sheep—innocent, mild, patient, useful: the wicked are like goats, a baser kind of animal, unsavoury and unprofitable. These sheep and goats are here feeding all day in the same pasture, but will be cotted at night in different folds; being thus divided, he will set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left, v. 33. Christ puts honour upon the godly, as we shew respect to those we set on our right hand; but the wicked shall rise to everlasting shame, Dan. 12. 2. It is not said that he shall put the rich on his right hand, and the poor on his left: the learned and noble on his right hand, and the unlearned and despised on his left; but he will judge by their works, and the wicked on his left. All the riches, goods and excellencies of men shall be abolished; but the great distinction of men into saints and sinners, sanctified and unsanctified, will remain for ever, and men's eternal state will be determined by it. The wicked took up with left-hand blessings, riches and honour, and so shall their doom be.

IV. The process of the judgment concerning each of these.

1. Concerning the godly, on the right hand. Their cause must be first dispatched, that they may be assessors with Christ in the judgment of the wicked, whose misery will be aggravated by their seeing Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, admitted into the kingdom of heaven, Luke 13. 28. Observe here,

(1.) The glory conferred upon them; the sentence by which they shall be not only acquitted, but preferred and rewarded, (v. 34.) The King shall sit upon his throne, and the Angels shall be called to bring in his strong and true worshippers, (see Hos. 3. 5.) and happily it is added, He shall speak of the cases of the Kingdom, (Mat. 6.) and he shall speak the care and tenderness wherewith he will make this disquisition,) is here the King, which speaks the authority wherewith he will then pronounce the sentence: where the word of this King is, there is power. Here are two things in this sentence:

[1.] The acknowledging of the saints to be the blessed of the Lord; Come, ye blessed of my Father. First, He pronounces them blessed; and his saying they are blessed, makes them so. The law curses them for their many discontinuances; but Christ having redeemed them from the curse of the law, and purchased a blessing for them, commands a blessing on them. Secondly, Blessed of his Father; reproached and cursed by the world, but blessed of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed of the Son is a more extensive blessing, so the Son glorifies the Father, by referring the salvation of the saints to him as the First Cause; all our blessings in heavenly things flow to us from God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 3. Thirdly, He calls them to come; this come is, in effect, "Welcome, ten thousand welcomes, to the blessed of my Father; come to me, come to be for ever with me; you that followed me, bearing the cross, now come along with me wearing the crown; The blessed of my Father are the beloved of my soul, that have been too long at a distance from me; come now, come into my bosom, come into my arms, come into my dearest embraces!" Oh with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day! We now come boldly to the throne of grace, but we
hungrier, and ye gave me meat. We cannot hence infer that the good works of ours merit the happiness of heaven, by any intrinsic worth or excellency in them, our goodness extends not unto God; but it is plain that Jesus Christ will judge the world by the same rule by which he governs it, and therefore will reward those that have been obedient to that law: and mention will be made of their obedience, not as their title, but as their evidence of an interest in Christ, and his purchase. This happiness will be adjudged to be a quantum meruit—an estimate of merit, which supposes a proportion between the work and the reward, but upon the promise of God purchased by Jesus Christ, and the benefit of it secured under certain provisos and limitations; and it is the purchase and promise that give the title, the obedience is only the qualification of the person designed. An estate made by deed or will upon condition, when the condition is performed according to the true intent of the donor or testator, becomes absolute; and then, though the title be but purely upon the deed or will, yet the performing of the condition must be given in evidence; and so it comes in here; for Christ is the Author of eternal salvation to those only that obey him, and who patiently continue in well-doing.

Now the good works here mentioned are such as we commonly call works of charity to the poor: but that mention will be found on the right hand, who never were in a capacity to feed the hungry or clothe the naked, but were themselves fed and clothed by the charity of others; but one instance of sincere obedience is put for all the rest, and it teaches us this in general, that faith working by love is all in all in Christianity; Show me thy faith by thy works: and nothing will abound to a good account hereafter, but that which is done in a good consideration now. The good works here described imply three things, which must be found in all that are saved.

[1.] Self-denial, and contempt of the world; reckoning the things of the world no further good things, than as we are enabled to do good with them: and those who have not wherewithal to do good, must shew the same disposition, by being contentedly and cheerfully poor. The united goodness of these is sufficient to be testified to the earth.

[2.] Love to our brethren; which is the second great commandment, the fulfilling of the law, and an excellent preparative for the world of everlasting love. We must give proof of this love by our readiness to do good, and to communicate; good wishes are but mockeries without good works, Jam. 2. 15, 16. 1 John 3. 17. Those that have not to give, must shew the same disposition in some other way.

[3.] A believing regard to Jesus Christ. That which is here rewarded, is the relieving the poor for Christ's sake, out of love to him, and with an eye to him. This puts an excellency upon the good work, when in it we serve the Lord Christ, which those may do, that work for their own living, as well as those that help to keep others alive. See Eph. 5. 6—7. Those good works shall then be accepted which are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col. 3. 17.

I was hungry, that is, my disciples and followers were so, either by the persecutions of enemies for well doing, or by the common dispensations of Providence; for in these things there is one even to the righteous and wicked: and you gave them meat. Note, First, Providence so variously orders and disposes of the circumstances of time, and the fruits of rich this world, that while some are in a condition to give relief, others need it. It is no new thing for those that are feasted with the dainties of heaven to be hungry and thirsty, and to want daily food; for those that are at home in God, to be strangers in a strange land;
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for those that have put on Christ, to want clothes to keep them warm; for those that have healthful souls, to have sickly bodies; and for those to be in prison, to Christ; and if they do, worthily, of charity and beneficence, according as our ability is, are necessary to salvation; and there will be more stress laid upon them in the judgment of the great day, than is commonly imagined; these must be the proofs of our love, and of our professed subscription to the gospel of Christ, 2 Cor. 9. 13. But try not to shew no mercy shall have judgment without mercy.

Now this reason is modestly excepted against by the righteous, but is explained by the Judge himself.

1. It is questioned by the righteous, v. 37—39. Not as if they were leath to inherit the kingdom, or were ashamed of their good deeds, or had not the testimony of their own consciences concerning them; but, (1.) The expressions are paradoxical, designed to introduce and impress these great truths, that Christ has a mighty regard to works of charity, and is especially pleased with kindnesses done to his people for his sake. Or, (2.) They speak the humble admiration which glorified saints will be filled with, to find such poor and worthless services, as their's are, so highly celebrated, and richly rewarded: Lord, which shall these men be blessed in? Note, Gracious souls are not so blind to think anything of so good deeds; especially as unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Far from this is the temper of those who said, Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Isa. 58. 3. Saints in heaven will wonder what brought them thither, and that God should so regard them and their services.

It even put Nathanael to the blush, to hear Christ's encomium of him: Whence knowest thou me? John 1. 47, 48. See Eph. 3. 20. "When saw we thee an hungered? We have seen the poor in distress many a time; but when saw we thee?" Note, Christ is more among us than we think he is; surely the Lord is in this place, by his word, his ordinances, his ministers, his Spirit, yea, and his poor, and we know it not; When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee, John 1. 48.

2. It is explained by the Judge himself; (v. 40.) Inasmuch as you have done it to these my brethren, to the least, to one of the least of them, ye have done it unto me. The good works of the saints, when they are produced in the great day, (1.) Shall all be remembered; and not the least, not one of the least, overlooked, no not a cup of cold water. (2.) They shall be accounted the cheapest advantage, and the best construction that can be put upon them. As Christ makes the best of their infirmities, so he makes the most of their services.

We see what recompenes Christ has for those that feed the hungry, and clothe the naked; but what will become of the godly poor, that had not wherewithal to do so? Must they be shut out? No, [1.] Christ claims them as his own, even the least of them, as his brethren; he will not in any disparagement to him, to call them brethren, Heb. 2. 11. In the height of his glory, he will not disown his poor relations; Lazarus is there laid in his bosom, as a friend, as a brother. Thus he will confess them, ch. 10. 32. [2.] He will take the kindnesses done to them, as done to himself; If have done it to one of the least of these, the least of them, he will not refer his respect to the poor that were relieved, as well as to the rich. Note, Our love is bound to all sorts of our fellow-creatures; it is a kindness to show any respect to the poor that were relieved, as well as to the rich. Note, Christ espouses his people's cause, and interests himself in their interests, and reckons himself received, and loved, and owned in them. If Christ himself were among us in poverty, how readily would we relieve him? In prison, how frequently would we visit him? We are ready to envy the honour they had, who ministered to him of his substance, Luke 8. 4. Wherever poor saints and poor ministers are, there Christ is ready to receive our kindness in them, and they shall be put to his account.

Here is the process concerning the wicked, those on the left hand. And in that we have,

(1.) The sentence passed upon them, v. 41. It was a disgrace to be set on the left hand; but that is not the worst of it, he shall say to them, Depart from me, ye cursed. Every word has terror in it, like that of the trumpet at mount Sinai, waxing louder and louder, every accent more and more doleful, and especially this (I.) Depart from me; for, (1.) In this world they were often called to come to Christ, to come for life and rest; but they turned a deaf ear to his calls; justly therefore are they bid to depart from Christ, that would not come to him. "Depart from me the Fountain of all good, from me the Saviour, and therefore from all hope of salvation: I will never have any thing more to say to you, or do with you." Here, they said to the Almighty, Depart from us; then, he will choose their delusions, and say to them, Depart from me. Note, It is the hell of hell to depart from Christ.

(2.) If they must depart, and depart from Christ, may not they be dismissed with a blessing, with one kind and compassionate word at least; No, Depart, ye cursed. They that would not come to Christ, to inherit a blessing, must depart from him under the burden of a curse, that curse of the law on every one that breaks it, Gal. 3. 10. As they loved cursing, so it shall come unto them. But observe, The righteous are called the blessed of my Father; for their blessedness is owing purely to the grace of God and his blessing, but the wicked are called only ye cursed, for their damnation is of themselves. Hath God sold them? No, they have sold themselves, have laid themselves under the curse, Isa. 50. 1.

(3.) If they must depart, and depart with a curse, may they not go into some place of ease and rest? Will it not be misery enough for them to bewail their loss? No, there is a punishment of sense as well as loss; they must depart into fire, into torment as grievous as that of fire is to the body, and much more. This fire is the wrath of the eternal God fastening upon the guilty souls and consciences of sinners that have made themselves fuel for it. Our God is a consuming fire, and sinners fall immediately into that hands, Heb. 10. 27. Rom. 1. 18.

(4.) If into fire, may it not be some light or gentle fire? No, it is prepared fire; it is a torment ordained of old, Isa. 30. 33. The damnation of sinners is often spoken of as an act of the divine power; he is able to cast into hell. In the vessels of wrath he makes his power known; it is a destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In it shall be seen what a provoked God can do to his enemies, nor a provoking picture more miserable.

(5.) If into fire, prepared fire, Oh let it be but of short continuance, let them but pass through fire! No, the fire of God's wrath will be an everlasting fire; a fire, that, fastening and preying upon immortal souls, can never go out for want of fuel; and, being kindled and kept burning by the wrath of an immortal God, can never go out for want of being fed with fresh victims; and, therefore, the grace being for ever excluded, there is nothing to extinguish it. If a drop of water be denied to cool the tongue, buckets of water will never be granted to quench this flame.

(6.) If they must be doomed to such a state of endless misery, yet may they not have some good company there? No, none but the devil and his angels, their sworn enemies, that helped to bring them
to this misery, and will triumph over them in it. They served the devil while they lived, and therefore are justly sentenced to be where he is, as those that served Christ are taken to be with him where he is. It is terrible to lie in a house haunted with devils; what will it be then to be companions with them forever? Observe here, First, Christ intimates that there is one that is the prince of the devils, the ringleader of the rebellion, and that the rest are his angels, his messengers, by whose agency he supports his kingdom. Christ and his angels will in that day triumph over them. Secondly, The fire is said to be prepared, not primarily for the wicked, as the kingdom is prepared for the righteous; but it was originally intended for the devil and his angels. If sinners make themselves associates with Satan by indulging their lusts, they may thank themselves if they become sharers in that misery which was prepared for him and his associates. Calvin notes upon this, that therefore the threatening of the damned is said to be prepared for the devil and his angels, to cut off all hope of escaping it; the devil and his angels are already made prisoners in that pit, and can worms of the earth think to escape?

(2.) The reason of this sentence assigned. God's judgments are all just, and he will be justified in them. He is Judge himself, and therefore the heavens and earth are full of his glory. Now, [1.] All that is charged upon them, on which the sentence is grounded, is, omission; as, before, the servant was condemned, not for wasting his talent, but for burying it; so here, he doth not say, "I was hungry and thirsty, for you took my meat and drink from me; I was a stranger, for you banished me; naked, for you stripped me; in prison, for you laid me there;" but, "When I was in these distresses, you did not minister to me." A man, when he is in peace, is sure to enjoy his own ease and pleasure, made so much of your labour, and were so loath to part with your money, that you did not minister, as you might have done, to my relief and succour. You were like those epicures that were at ease in Zion, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," Amos 6. 4-6. Note, Omissions are the ruin of thousands.

[2.] It is the omission of works of charity to the poor that is here condemned, and for omitting their sacrifices and burnt offerings, (they abounded in these, Ps. 50. 8.) but for omitting the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. The Ammonites and Moabites were excluded the sanctuary, because they met not Israel with bread and water, Deut. 23. 3, 4. Note, Uncharitableness to the poor is a damming sin. If we will not be brought to works of charity by the hope of reward, let us be influenced by fear of punishment: for they shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy. Observe, He doth not say, "I was sick, and you did not cure me; in prison, and you did not release me;" (perhaps that was more than they could do;) but, "You visited me not, which you might have done." Note, Sinners will be condemned, at the great day, for the omission of that good which was in the power of the hand to do. But if the doom of the uncharitable be so dreadful, how much more intolerable will the doom of the cruel be, the doom of persecutors! Now this reason of the sentence is, First, Objected against by the prisoners, (v. 44.) Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty? Condemned sinners, though they have no plea that will bear them out, will yet in vain offer at excuses. Note, 1. The mouths of their pleading bespeaks their present precipitation. They cut it short, as men in haste: When saw we thee an hungered, or thirsty, or naked? They care not to repeat the charge, as conscious to themselves of their own guilt, and im-
able to bear the terrors of the judgment. Nor will they have time allowed them to open a plea for such friends as (as we say) but "trifling with the court." 2. The matter of their plea bespeaks their former inconsideration of that which they might have known, but would not tell, now that it was too late. They, that had slighted and persecuted poor Christians, would not own that they had slighted and persecuted Christ: no, they never intended any affront to him, nor expected that so great a matter should be made of it. They imagined he was only a company of poor, weak, silly, and contemptible people, who made more ado than needed about religion, that they put those slight upon: but they who do so will be made to know, either in the day of their conversion, as Paul, or of their condemnation, as these here, that it was Jesus whom they persecuted. And if they say, Behold, we know it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? Secondly, Justified by the Judge, who will convince all the ungodly of the hard speeches spoken against him in those that are his, Jude 15. He goes by this rule; (v. 45.) Inasmuch as ye did not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. Note, What is done against the faithful disciples and followers of Christ, even the least of them, he takes as done against himself. He is concerned in what they are reproached and persecuted for his sake, and in all their afflictions he is afflicted: He that toucheth them toucheth him in a part no less tender than the apple of his eye.

Lastly, Here is the execution of both these sentences, v. 46. Execution is the life of the law, and Christ will take care that that be done according to the sentence.

1. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. Sentence will then be executed speedily, and no reprove granted, nor any time allowed to move in arrest of judgment. The execution of the wicked is first mentioned; for first the tares are gathered and burned. Note, (1.) The punishment of the wicked in the future state will be an everlasting punishment, for that state is an unalterable state. It can neither be thought that sinners should change their own natures, and that God should suddenly change his mind. When in this world the day of grace was mispent, the Spirit of grace resisted, and the means of grace abused and baffled. (2.) The wicked shall be made to go away into that punishment; not that they will go voluntarily, no, they are driven from light into darkness; but it bespeaks an irresistible conviction of guilt, and a final despair of mercy.

2. The righteous shall go away into life eternal; that is, they shall inherit the kingdom, v. 34. Note, (1.) Heaven is life, it is all happiness. The life of the soul results from its union with God by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as that of the body from its union with the soul by the animal spirits. The heavenly life consists in the vision and fruition of God, in a perfect conformity to him, and an immediate uninterrupted communion with him. (2.) It is eternal life. There is no death to put a period to the life itself, nor old age to put a period to the comfort of it, or any sorrow to imbrelter it. Thus life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, are set before us, that we may choose our way; and so shall our end be. Even the heathen had some notion of these different states of good and bad in the other world. Cicero, in his Tusculan Questions, lib. 1. brings in Socraete thus speaking, Dixit quidam, duidique cursus e corfoe executione: Abut qui se vincit! imitos omnem aetatem, et libitos et tradiderunt, idem quoddam iter et car, seclusum a consilio deorum; qui autem est integro consorte servabant; qui subito fuerit minima, cum corporibus contagio, sintoque in corporibus humanis putam im-
tati doceo, ut odillos et quibus sunt profecti facile facet reditum—Two paths open before those who depart out of the body: Such as have contaminated themselves with human vice, and yielded to their lusts, occupy a path that conducts them far from the assembly and council of the gods; but the upright and chaste, such as have been least defiled by the flesh, and have imitated, while in the body, the gods, these find it easy to return to the sublime beings from whom they came.

CHAP. XXVI.

The narrative of the death and sufferings of Christ is more particularly and fully recorded by all the four evangelists than any part of his history; for what should we determine, and direct to Christ, and him crucified? And this chapter begins that memorable narrative. The year of the redemption was now come, the seventy weeks determined were now accomplished, when transgression must be finished, reconciliation made, and an everlasting righteousness brought in, by the cutting off of the Messiah the Prince, Dan. 9. 24, 26. That awful scene is here introduced, to be read with reverence and holy fear. In this chapter, we have, 1. The preliminaries or prefaces, to Christ’s sufferings. 1. The previous notice given by him of it to his disciples, v. 1. 2. The rulers’ conspiracy against him, v. 3. 3. The anointing of his head at a supper, v. 14. 4. The bargain with the priests to betray him, v. 14. 15. 5. Christ’s eating the passover with his disciples, v. 17. 25. 6. His instituting the Lord’s supper, and his discourse with his disciples after it, v. 26. 3. 7. His entrance upon them, and some of the particulars of them. 1. His agony in the garden, v. 36. 46. 2. The seizing of him by the officers, with Judas’s help, v. 47. 56. 3. His arraignment before the chief priests, and his condemnation in his court, v. 57. 66. 4. Peter’s denying him, v. 69. 75.

1. And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, 2. Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. 3. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. 4. And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. 5. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Here is, 1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of the near approach of his sufferings, v. 1. 2. While his enemies were preparing trouble for him, he was preparing himself and his followers for it. He had often told them of his sufferings at a distance, now he speaks of them as at the door; after two days. Note, After many former notices of trouble, we still have new ones of it. Observe, (1.) The time when he gave this alarm; when he had finished all these sayings. [1.] Not till he had finished all he had to say. Note, Christ’s witnesses die not till they have finished their testimony. When Christ had gone through his undertaking as a Prophet, he entered upon the execution of his office as a Priest. [2.] After he had finished these sayings, which go immediately before; he had bid his disciples expect sad times, bonds and afflictions, and then tells them, The Son of man is betrayed; to intimate that they should face no worse than he should, and that his sufferings should take the sting out of their own. Note, Thoughts of a suffering Christ are great supports to a suffering Christian, suffering with him, and for him.

2. The thing itself he gave them notice of; The Son of man is betrayed. The thing was not only so sure, but so near, that it was as good as done. Note, It is good to make sufferings, that are yet to come, as present to us. He is betrayed, for Judas was then contriving and designing to betray him.

2. The plot of the chief priests, and scribes and elders of the people, against the life of our Lord Jesus, v. 3—5. Many consultations had been held against the life of Christ; but this plot was laid deeper than any yet, for the grandees were all engaged in it. The chief priests, who presided in ecclesiastical affairs; the elders, who were judges in civil matters; and the scribes, who were the lawyers, were directors to both—these composed the Sanhedrim, or great council, that governed the nation, and these were confederate against Christ. Observe, (1.) The place where they met; in the palace of the high priest, who was the centre of their unity in this wicked project. (2.) The plot itself; to take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him; nothing less than his blood, his life-blood, would serve their turn. So cruel and bloody have been the designs of Christ’s and his church’s enemies. (3.) The policy of the plotters; Not on the feast-day. Why not? Was it in regard to the holiness of the time, or because they would not be disturbed in the religious services of the day? No, but lest there should be an uproar among the people. They knew Christ had a great multitude, as it were his common people, of whom there was a great concourse on the feast-day, and they would be in danger of taking up arms against their rulers, if they should offer to lay violent hands on Christ, whom all held for a Prophet. They were awed, not by the fear of God, but by the fear of the people; all their concern was for their own safety, not God’s honour. They would have it done at the feast; for it was a tradition of the Jews, that malefactors should be put to death at one of the three feasts, especially rebels and impostors, that all Israel might see and fear; but not on the feast-day.

6. Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 7. There came unto him a woman having an alabaster-box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. 8. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? 9. For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. 10. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. 12. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. 13. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

In this passage of story, we have, 1. The singular kindness of a good woman to our Lord Jesus, and his converse with her. v. 6—7. It was in Bethany, a village hard by Jerusalem, famous for the house of Simon the leper. Probably, he was one who had been miraculously cleansed from his leprosy by our Lord Jesus, and he would express his gratitude to Christ by entertaining him; nor did Christ disdain to converse with him, to come in to him, and sup with him. Though he was cleansed, yet he was called Simon the leper. Those who are guilty of scandalous sins, will find, that, though the sin be
pardoned, the reproach will cleave to them, and will hardly be wiped away. The woman that did this is supposed to have been Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks it was the same that was called Mary Magdalene. She had a box of ointment very precious, which she poured upon the head of Christ as he sat at meat. This, among us, would be a strange sort of compliment. But it was his own, and for the sake of respect; for the smell was very grateful, and the ointment itself refreshing to the head. David had his head anointed, Ps. 23. 6. Luke 7. 46. Now this may be looked upon,

1. As an act of faith in our Lord Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed. To signify that she believed in him as God's Anointed, whom he had set King, and establisht for him, and made him his King. She was 'all appointed for herself one Head, vs. 1. 11. This is kissing the Son.

2. As an act of love and respect to him. Some think that this was that she who loved much at first, and washed Christ's feet with her tears; (Luke 7. 47.) and that she had not left her first love, but was now as affectionate in the devotions of a grown Christian as she was in those of a young beginner. Note, Where love is, that is the heart of Christ; nothing will be thought too good, no, nor good enough, to bestow upon him.

II. The offence which the disciples took at this. They had indignation, (v. 8, 9.) were vexed to see this ointment thus spent, which they thought might have been better bestowed.

1. See how they expressed their offence at it. They said, To what purpose is this waste? Now this bespeaks,

(1.) Want of tenderness toward this good woman, in interpreting her over-kindness (suppose it was so) to be wastefulness. Charity teaches us to put the best construction upon every thing that it will bear, especially upon the words and actions of those that are zealously affected in doing a good thing; though we may think them not altogether so discreet in it as they might be. It is true, there may be over-doing in well-doing; but then we must learn to be cautious ourselves, lest we run into extremes, but not to be censorious of others; because that which we may impute to the want of prudence, God may accept as an instance of abundant love. We must not say, Those do too much in religion, that do more than we do, but rather aim to do as much as they.

(2.) Want of respect to their Master. The best we can make of it, is, that they knew their Master was perfectly dead to all the delights of sense; he that was so much grieved for the affliction of Joseph, cared not for being anointed with the chief ointments, Amos 6. 6. And therefore they thought such pleasures ill bestowed upon one who took so little pleasure in them. But, supposing that, it did not become them to call it waste, when they perceived that he admitted and accepted it as a token of his friend's love. We must take heed to think any thing waste, which is bestowed upon our Lord Jesus, either by others or by ourselves. We must not think that time waste that is spent in the service of Christ, or that money waste which is laid out in any work of piety; for, though it seem to be cast upon the waters, to be thrown down the river, we shall find it again, to advantage, after many days, Eccl. 11. 1. 2.

2. See how they excuse their offence at it, and what pretences they made for it: This ointment might have been sold for much, as given to the poor. Note, It is no new thing for bad affections to shelter themselves under specious covers; for people to shift off works of piety under colour of works of charity.

III. The reproof Christ gave to his disciples for the offence at this good woman; (v. 10. 11.) Why trouble ye the woman? Note, It is a great trouble to good people to have their good works censured and misconstrued; and it is a thing that Jesus Christ takes very ill. He here took part with a good, honest, zealous, well-meaning, woman, against all his disciples, though they seem to have so much reason on their side; so heartily does he eschew the cause of the offended little ones, ch. 18. 16.

Observe, 1. There are some opportunities of doing and getting good, which are constant, and which we must give constant attendance to the improvement of. Bibles we have always with us, sabbaths always with us, and so the poor we have always with us. Note, Those who have a heart to do good, never need to complain of want of opportunities. The poor never ceased even out of the land of Israel, Deut. 15. 11. We cannot but see some in this world who call for our charitable assistance, who are as God's receivers, some poor members of Christ, to whom he will have kindness shown as to himself.

2. There are other opportunities of doing and getting good, which come but seldom, which are short and uncertain, and require more peculiar diligence in seeking and observing, which ought to be preferred before the other; "Me ye have not always, therefore use me while ye have me." Note, (1.) Christ's constant bodily presence was not to be expected here in this world; it was expedient that he should go away; his real presence in the eucharist is a fond and groundless conceit, and contradicts what he here said, Me ye have not always. (2.) Sometimes special works of piety and devotion should take place of common works of charity. The poor must not rob Christ; we must do good to all, but especially to the household of faith.

IV. Christ's approbation and commendation of the kindness of this good woman. The more his servants and their services are cauilled at by men, the more he manifests his acceptance of them. He calls it a good work, (v. 10.) and says more in praise of it than could have been imagined; particularly,

1. That the meaning of it was mystical; (v. 12.) She did it for my burial. (1.) Some think that she intended it so, and that the woman better understood Christ's frequent predictions of his death and sufferings than the apostles did; for which they were recompensed with the honour of being the first witnesses of his resurrection. (2.) However, Christ interpreted it so; and he is always willing to make the best, to make the most of his people's well-meaning actions. This was, as it were, the enbalming of his body; because the doing of that after his death would be prevented by his resurrection, it was therefore done before; for it was fit that it should be done some time, to shew that he was still the Messiah, even when he seemed to have triumphed over by death. The disciples thought the ointment wasted which was poured upon him; and, "But," saith he, "if I were a stone, where were peared the dead body, according to the custom of your country, you would not grudge it or think it waste. Now this is, in effect, so; the body she anoints is as good as dead, and her kindness is very seasonable for that purpose; therefore, rather than call it waste, put it upon that score."

2. That the memorial of it should be honourable; (v. 13.) This shall be held for a memorial. This act of faith and love was so seasonable, that the preacher of Christ justified, and the inspired writers of the history of his passion, could not choose but take notice of this passage, proclaim the notice of it, and perpetuate the memorial of it. And being once enrolled in these records, it was graven as with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever, and could not possibly be forgotten. None of all the trumpets of fame sound so loud and so long as the everlasting gospel.
Note. (1.) The story of the death of Christ, though a tragic one, is gospel glad-tidings, because he died for us. (2.) The gospel was to be preached in the whole world, not Judaea only, but in every nation, to every creature. Let the disciples take notice of this, for their encouragement, that their sound should go to the ends of the earth. (3.) Though the honour of Christ is principally designed in the gospel, yet the honour of his saints and servants is not altogether overlooked. The memorial of this woman was to be preserved, not by dedicating a church to her, or keeping an annual feast in honour of her, but by opening a piece of her broken box for a sacred relic; but by mentioning her faith and piety in preaching of the gospel, for example to others, Heb. 6. 12. Hereby honour redounds to Christ himself, who, in this world, as well as in that to come, will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.

14. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15. And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

I. Immediately after an instance of the greatest kindness done to Christ, follows an instance of the greatest unkindness; such mixture is there of good and bad among the followers of Christ; he hath some faithful friends and some false and feigned ones. What could be more base than this agreement which Judas here made with the chief priests, to betray Christ to them?

1. The traitor was Judas Iscariot; he is said to be one of the twelve, as an aggravation of his villany. When the number of the disciples was multiplied, (Acts 6. 1,) no marvel if there were some among them that were a shame and trouble to them; but when there were but twelve, and one of them was a devil, surely we must never expect any society perfectly pure on this side heaven. The twelve were Christ's chosen friends, that had the privilege of his special favour; they were his constant followers, that had the benefit of his most intimate converse, that upon all accounts had reason to love him and be true to him; and yet one of them betrayed him. Note, No bonds of duty or gratitude will hold those that have a devil, Mark 5. 3, 4.

2. He said unto him which he made to the chief priests: he went to them, and said, What will ye give me? v. 15. They did not send for him, nor make the proposal to him; they could not have thought that one of Christ's own disciples should be false to him. Note, there are those, even among Christ's followers, that are worse than any one can imagine them to be, and want nothing but opportunity to show themselves so.

Observe, 1. What Judas promised; "I will deliver him unto you." I will let you know where he is, and undertake to bring you to him, at such a convenient time and place, that you may seize him without noise, or danger of an uproar." In their conspiracy against Christ, this was it they were at a loss about, v. 4, 5. They durst not meddle with him in public, and knew not where to find him in private; but Judas knew him, and brought him to where he was insuperable, till Judas came, and offered them his service. Note, Those that give up themselves to be led by the devil, find him readier than they imagine to help them at a dead-lift, as Judas did the chief priests. Though the rulers, by their power and interest, could kill him when they had him in their hands, yet none but a disciple could betray him. Note, The greater profession men make of religion, and the more they are employed in the study and service of it, the greater opportunity they have of turning their profession to the service of vice. If Judas had not been an apostle, he could not have been a traitor; if men had not known the way of righteousness, they could not have abused it.

I will deliver him unto you. He did not offer himself, nor did they tamper with him, to be a witness against Christ, though they wanted evidence, v. 59. And if there had been any thing to be alleged against him, which had been said, he was an impostor, Judas was the likeliest person to have attested it; but this is an evidence of the innocence of our Lord Jesus, that his own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of his life, and was false to him, could not charge him with any thing criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery.

2. What he asked in consideration of this undertaking; What will ye give me? This was the only thing that made Judas betray his Master; he hoped to get money by it: his Master had not given him any provocation, though he knew from the first that he had a devil; yet, for aught that appears, he shewed the same kindness to him that he did to the rest, and put no mark of disgrace upon him that might disoblige him; he had placed him in a post that pleased him, and made him a purse-bearer; and though he had embezzled the common stock, for he is called a thief, (John 12. 6,) yet we do not find he was in any danger of being called to account for it; nor does it appear that he had any suspicion that the gospel was a cheat; no, it was not the hatred of his Master, nor any quarrel with him, but purely the love of the money; that, and nothing else, made Judas a traitor. What will ye give me? Why, what did he want? Neither bread to eat, nor raiment to put on; neither necessaries nor conveniences. Was not he welcome wherever his master was? Did he not fare as he fared? Had he not been but just now nobly entertained at a supper in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, and a little before at another, where no less a person than Martha herself waited at table? And yet this covetous wretch could not be content, but comes basely crimes to the priests with, What will ye give me? Note, It is not the lack of money, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil, and particularly of apostacy from Christ; witness Demas, 2 Tim. 4. 10. Satan tempted our Saviour with this bait, All this will I give thee; (ch. 4. 9.) but Judas offered himself to be tempted with it; he asks, What will ye give me? as if his Master was a commodity that stuck on his hands.

III. Here is the bargain which the chief priests made with him; they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver; thirty shekels, which, in our money, is about three pounds eight shillings, so some; three pounds fifteen shillings, so others. It should seem, Judas referred himself to them, and was willing that these to be the price of what he proposed to give; he catches at the first offer, lest the next should be worse. Judas had not been wont to trade high, and therefore a little money went a great way with him. By the law, (Exod. 21. 32.) thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave—a goodly price, at which Christ was valued! Zech. 11. 13. No wonder that Zion's sons, though comparable to fine gold, and precious stones; but even Judas, Zion's King himself was thus undervalued. They covenanted with him; 1stly—afterwiser—they hold it down; so some; gave him his wages in hand, to secure him and to encourage him.

IV. Here is the industry of Judas, in pursuance of his bargain; (v. 16.) he sought opportunity to betray him; his head was still working to find out how he might do it effectually. Note, 1. It is a
17. Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? 18. And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. 19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. 20. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. 21. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. 22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? 23. And he answered and said, He that dipps his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. 24. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. 25. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

We have here an account of Christ's keeping the passover. Being made under the law, he submitted not the law to the spirit of it, but to the letter; it was kept in remembrance of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, the birth-day of that people, it was a tradition of the Jews, that in the days of the Messiah they should be redeemed on the very day of their coming out of Egypt; and it was exactly fulfilled, for Christ died the day after the passover, in which day they began their march.

I. The time when Christ ate the passover was the usual time appointed by God, and observed by the Jews; (v. 17.) the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, which that year happened on the fifth day of the week, which is our Thursday. Some have advanced a suggestion, that our Lord Jesus celebrated the passover at this time of day sooner than other people did; but the learned Dr. Whitby has large-ly disproved it.

II. The place where, was particularly appointed by himself to the disciples, upon their inquiry; (v. 17.) they asked, Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover? Perhaps Judas was one of those that asked this question, (where he would eat the passover,) that he might know the better to lay his train; but the rest of the disciples asked it as usual, that they might do their duty.

1. They took it for granted that their Master would eat the passover, though he was at this time persecuted by the chief priests, and his life sought; they knew that he would not be put by his duty, either by frightenings without or fears within. These do not follow Christ's example, who make it an excuse for their not attending on the Lord's supper, our gospel-passover, that they have many troubles and many enemies, are full of care and fear; for, if so, they have the proper need of that en-durance, to help to silence their fears, and comfort them under their troubles, to help them in forgiving their enemies, and casting all their cares on God.

2. They knew very well that there must be preparation made for it, and that it was their business, as his servants, to make preparation; Where will thou that we prepare? Note, Before solemn ordinances there must be suitable solemn preparation. 3. They knew that he had no house of his own wherein to eat the passover; in this, as in other things, for our sakes he became poor. Among all Zion's palaces there was none for Zion's King; but his kingdom was not of this world. See John 1. 11.

4. They would not pitch upon a place without direction from him, and from him they had direction; he sent them to each a man, (v. 18.) who probably was a friend and follower of his, and to his house he invited himself and his disciples. (1.) Tell him, My time is at hand; he means the time of his death, elsewhere called his hour; (John 8. 20.—13. 1.) the time, the hour, fixed in the counsel of God, which his heart was upon, and which he had so often spoken of. He knew when it was at hand, and was busy accordingly; we know not our time, (Exod. 9. 12.) and therefore must never be off our watch; our time is always ready, (John 7. 32.) and therefore we must always be ready. Observe, Because his time was at hand, he would keep the passover. Note, The consideration of the near approach of death should quicken us to a diligent improvement of all our opportunities for our souls. Is our time at hand, and an eternity just before us? Let us then keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity. Observe, When our Lord Jesus introduced himself, and his good man's house, he sent on this intelligence, that his time was at hand. Note, Christ's secret is with them that entertain him in their hearts. Compare John 14. 21. with Rev. 3. 20.

(2.) Tell him, I will keep the passover at thy house. This was an instance of his authority, as the Master, which, it is likely, this man acknowledged; he did not beg, but command, the use of his house for this purpose. Thus, when Christ by his Spirit commanded the report, he commanded admission, as one whose own the heart is, and cannot be denied; and he gains admission, as one who has all power in the heart, and cannot be resisted; if he saith, "I will keep a feast in such a soul," he will do it; for he works, and none can hinder; his people shall be willing, for he makes them so. I will keep the passover with my disciples. Note, Whatever Christ is welcome, he expects that his disciples should be welcome also; he who makes God for our God, we take his people for our people.

III. The preparation was made by the disciples; (v. 19.) They did as Jesus had appointed. Note, Those who would have Christ's presence with them in the gospel-passover, must strictly observe his instructions, and do as he directs; They made ready the passover; they got the lamb killed in the court of the temple, got it roasted, the bitter herbs provided, bread made in the form and manner of the law, and every thing set in readiness for such a sacred solemn feast.

IV. They ate the passover according to the law; (v. 20.) He sat down, in the usual table posture, not lying on one side, for it was not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though perhaps sitting low. It is the same word that is used for his posture at other meals, ch. 9. 10. Luke 7. 37. ch. 26. 7. It was only the first passover in Egypt, as most think, that was eaten with
the worst, and asked Him, who knows us better than we know ourselves, Lord, is it I? Note. It well becomes the disciples of Christ always to be jealous over themselves with a godly jealousy, especially in trying times. We know not how strongly we may be tempted, nor how far God may leave us to ourselves, and therefore have reason, not to be high-minded, but fear. It is observable, that our Lord Jesus, just before he instituted the Lord's supper, forgave his disciples upon this trial and suspicion of themselves, to teach us to examine and judge ourselves, and so to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

3. Further information given them concerning this matter, (v. 23, 24,) where Christ tells them,

(1.) That the traitor was a familiar friend; He that despiseth his hand with me in the dish; that is, one of you that are now with me at the table. Hence indications to this make the treachery appear the more exceeding sinful. Note, External communion with Christ in holy ordinances is a great aggravation of our falseness to him. It is base ingratitude to dip with Christ in the dish, and yet betray him. (2.) That this was according to the scripture, which would take off the offence at it. Was Christ beforehand forewarned, and foretold, that he would thus betray him? It saith, "He that had eat bread with me hath lifted up the heel against me." The more we see of the fulfilling of the scripture in our troubles, the better we may bear them. (3.) That it would prove a very dear bargain to the traitor; Woe to that man by whom, the Son of man is betrayed. This he said, not only to awaken the conscience of Judas, and bring him to repent, and revoke his bargain, but for warning to all others to take heed of sinning like Judas; though God can serve his own purposes by the sins of men, that doth not make the sinner's condition the less woeful: It had been good for that man, if he had not been born. Note, The ruin that attends those who betray Christ, is so great, that it were more eligible, by far, not to be at all, than to be thus miserable.

4. The conviction of Judas, v. 25. (1. He asked, Is it I? to avoid coming under the suspicion of guilt by his silence. He knew very well that it was he, and yet wished to appear a stranger to such a plot. Note, Many, whose consciences condemn them, are very industrious to justify themselves before men, and put a good face on it, with, Lord, is it I? He could not but know that Christ knew, and yet he betrayed him so much to his favourite, because he had hitherto concealed it, that he had the impudence to challenge him to tell; or, perhaps, he was so much under the power of infidelity, that he imagined Christ did not know it, as those who said, The Lord shall not see, (Ps. 94. 7,) and asked, Can he judge through the dark clouds? (2.) Christ soon answered his question; Thou hast said, that is, as thou hast said. This is not all spoken out so plain as Nathan's, Thou art the man; but it was enough to convict him, and, if his heart had not been wretchedly hardened, to have broken the neck of his plot, when he saw it discovered to his Master, and discovered by him. Note, They who are contriving to betray Christ, will, some time or other, betray themselves, and their own tongues will fall upon them.

26. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; 28. For this is my blood of the new testament.
which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. 30. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

We have here the institution of the great gospel-ordination of the Lord's supper, which was received of the Lord. Observe,

1. The time when it was instituted—as they were eating. At the latter end of the passover-supper, before the table was drawn, because, as a feast upon a sacrifice, it was to come in the room of that ordained Passover Sacrifice, by which atonement is made; (1 Cor. 5. 8.) Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. This ordinance is to us the passover-supper, by which application is made, and commemoration celebrated, of a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt. All the legal sacrifices of propitiation being summed up in the death of Christ, and so abolished, all the legal feasts of rejoicing were summed up in this supper, and so of course did away. II. The institution itself. A sacrament must be instituted; it is no part of moral worship, nor is it dictated by natural light, but has both its being and significance from the institution, from a divine institution: it is his prerogative, who established the covenant, to appoint the seals of it. Hence the apostle, (1 Cor. 11. 22, &c.) in that discourse of his concerning this ordinance, all along calls Jesus Christ the Lord, because as Lord, as Lord of the covenant, Lord of the church, he appointed this ordinance. In which,

1. The body of Christ is signified and represented by bread; he had said formerly, (John 6. 35.) I am the bread of life, upon which metaphor this sacrament is built; as the life of the body is supported by bread, which is therefore put for all bodily nourishment, (Isa. 4. 6—8.) so the life of the soul is supported and maintained by Christ's mediation.

(1.) He took bread. In æge—loaf; some loaf that lay ready at hand, fit for the purpose; it was probably unleavened bread; but that circumstance not being taken notice of, we are not to bind ourselves to that, as some of the Greek churches do. His taking the bread was a solemn action, and was, probably, done in such a manner as to be observed by them that sat with him, that they might expect something more than ordinary to be done with it. Thus was the Lord Jesus set apart in the counsels of divine love for the working out of our redemption.

(2.) He blessed it; set it apart for this use by prayer and thanksgiving. We do not find any set form of words used by him upon this occasion; but what he said, no doubt, was accommodated to the business in hand, that New Testament ordination which by this ordinance was to be sealed and ratified. This was like God's blessing the seventh day, (Gen. 2. 3.) by which it was separated to God's honour, and made, to all that duly observe it, a blessed day; Christ could command the blessing, and we, in his name, are emboldened to beg the blessing.

(3.) He brake it; which denotes, [1.] The breaking of Christ's body for us, that it might be fitted for our partaking; for a piece would not taste as, bis fin corn is bruised; (Isa. 28. 28.) though a bone of him was not broken, (for all his breaking did not weaken him,) yet his flesh was broken with breach upon breach, and his wounds were multiplied. (John 19. 36.—11. 17.) and that pained him. God complains that he is broken with the whetstone of sinners; (Ezek. 6. 9.) his law broken, our covens with him broken; now justice requires breach for breach, (Rev. 24. 20.) and Christ was broken, to satisfy that demand. [2.] The breaking of Christ's body to us, as the father of the family breaks the bread to the children. The breaking of Christ to us is to facilitate the application; every thing is made ready to us by the grants of God's word and the operations of his grace.

4. He gave it to his disciples, as the Master of the family, and the Master of this feast; it is not said, He gave it to the apostles, though they were so, and had been often called so before this, but to the disciples, because all the disciples of Christ have a right to this ordinance; and those shall have the benefit of it who are his disciples indeed: yet he gave it to the church, for all the multiplied leaves, by them to be handed to all his other followers.

5. He said, Take, eat; this is my body, v. 26. He here tells them,

[1.] What they should do with it; 'Take, eat;' accept of Christ as he is offered to you, receive the atonement, through the apostle, [approach of it, consent to it, come up to the terms on which the benefit of it is proposed to you; submit to his grace and to his government.'

[2.] What he gave it for; "Taking our bread,' (John 1. 12.) and feeding upon him, John 6. 57, 58. Meat looked upon, or the dish ever so well garnished, will not nourish us; it must be fed upon, so must the doctrine of Christ.

[2.] What they should have with it; 'This is my body, not εσερ—this bread, but εσερ—this eating and drinking.' Believing carries all the efficacy of Christ's death to our souls. 'This is my body, spiritually and sacramentally; this signifies and represents my body. He employs sacramental language, like that, Exod. 12. 11. It is the Lord's passover. Upon a carnal and much mistaken sense of these words, the church of Rome builds the monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which makes the bread to be changed into the substance of Christ's body, only the accidents of bread remaining; which affronts Christ, destroys the nature of a sacrament, and gives the lie to our senses. We partake of the sun, not by having the bulk and body of the sun put into our hands, but the beams of it darted down upon us; so we partake of Christ by partaking of his grace, and the blessed fruits of the breaking of his body.

2. The blood of Christ is signified and represented by the wine; to make it a complete feast, here is not only bread to strengthen, but wine to make glad the heart, (v. 27, 28.) He took the cup, the grace-cup, which was set ready to be drank, all thanks returned, according to the custom of the Jews at the passover; this Christ took, and made the sacramental-cup, and so altered the property. It was intended for a cup of blessing, (so the Jews called it,) and therefore St. Paul studiously distinguished between the cup of blessing which we bless, and that which they bless. He gave thanks, to teach us, not only in every ordinance, but in every part of the ordinance, to have our eyes up to God.

This cup he gave to the disciples.

(1.) With a command; Drink ye all of it. Thus he welcomes his guests to his table, obliges them all to drink of his cup. Why should he so expressly command them all to drink, and to see that none let it pass them, and press that more expressly in this than in the other part of the ordinance? Surely it was because he foresaw how in afterward ages the ordinance would be, by the prohibition of the cup to the laity, with an express non obstante— notwithstanding to the command.

(2.) With an explication; For this is my blood of the New Testament. Therefore drink it with appetite, delight, because it is so rich a cordial. Hither the blood of Christ had been represented by
the blood of beasts, real blood; but, after it was actually shed, it was represented by the blood of grapes, metaphorical blood; so wine is called in an Old Testament prayer, a banquet of wine. (Gen. 49. 10, 11.)

Now observe what Christ saith of his blood represented in the sacrament.

[1.] It is my blood of the New Testament. The Old Testament was confirmed by the blood of bulls and goats; (Heb. 9. 16. 17. Exod. 24. 8.) but the New Testament with the blood of Christ, which is here distinguished from that; it is my blood of the New Testament. The covenant of God's pleasures to make with us, and all the benefits and privileges of it, are owing to the merits of Christ's death.

[2.] It is shed; it was not shed till next day, but it was now upon the point of being shed, it is as good as done. "Before you come to repeat this ordinance yourselves, it will be shed." He was now ready to be offered, and his blood to be poured out, as the blood of the sacrifices which made atonement.

[3.] It is shed for many. Christ came to confirm a covenant with many, (Dan. 9. 27.) and the intent of his death agreed. The blood of the Old Testament was shed for a few; it confirmed a covenant which saith Moses the Lord has made with you, Exod. 24. 8. The atonement was made only for the children of Israel; (Lev. 16. 34.) but Jesus Christ is a Propitiation for the sins of the whole world, 1 John 2. 2.

[4.] It is shed for the remission of sins, that is, to purchase remission of sins for us. The redemption, which we have through his blood, is the remission of sins, Eph. 1. 7. The new covenant, which is procured and ratified by the blood of Christ, is a charter of pardon, an act of indemnity, in order to a recovery from sin and guilt. Sin was not the only thing that made the quarrel, and without shedding of blood there is no remission, Heb. 9. 22. The pardon of sin is that great blessing which is, in the Lord's supper, conferred upon all true believers; it is the foundation of all other blessings, and the spring of everlasting comfort, ch. 9. 2, 3. A farewell is now bidden to the fruit of the vine; v. 29. Christ and his disciples had now feasted together; with a deal of comfort, in both an Old-Testament and a New-Testament festival, flaga triumque Testamenta—the connecting tie of both Testaments. How amiable were these tubercules! How good to be here! Never such a heaven upon earth as was at this table; but it was not intended for a perpetuity; he now told them, (John 16. 17.) that yet a little while and they should not see him: and again, a little while, and they should see him, which explains this here.

First, He takes leave of such communion: I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, that is, of the joys and glories of the future state, which the saints shall partake of in everlasting communion with the Lord Jesus, represented here by the pleasures of a banquet of wine. That will be the kingdom of his Father, for unto him shall the kingdom be then delivered up; the wine of consolation (Jer. 16. 7.) will there be always new, never flat or sour, as wine with long keeping; never nauseous or unpalatable, as wine to those that have drunk much, but ever fresh. Christ will himself partake of these pleasures, it was the joy set before him, which he had in himself, of the goodness of his Father and of the faithful friends and followers shall partake with him.

Lastly, Here is the close of the solemnity with a hymn; (v. 30.) They sang a hymn or psalm; whether the psalm which the Jews usually sung at the close of the passover-supper, which they called the great hallel, that is, Ps. 113. and the five that follow it, or whether some new hymn, more closely adapted to the occasion, is uncertain; I rather think the former; had it been new, John would not have omitted to record it. Note, 1. Sining of psalms is a gospel ordinance. Christ's removing the hymn from the close of the passover to the close of the Lord's supper, plainly intimates that he intended that ordinance should continue in his church, that, as it had not its birth with the ceremonial law, so it should not be continued with it. 2. It is very proper after the Lord's supper, as an expression of our joy in God through Jesus Christ, and a thankful acknowledgment of that great love wherewith God has loved us in him. 3. It is not unseasonable, no, not in times of sorrow and suffering; the disciples were in sorrow, and Christ was entering upon his sufferings, and yet they could sing a hymn together. Our spiritual joy should not be interrupted by outward afflictions.

When this was done, they went out into the mount of Olives. He would not stay in the house, to be apprehended, lest he should bring the master of the house into trouble; nor would he stay in the city, lest it should occasion an uproar; but he retired into the adjacent country, the mount of Olives, the same mount that David in his distress went up the ascent of, Ps. 60. They had the benefit of moon-light for this walk, for the passover was always at the full moon. Note, After we have received the Lord's supper, it is good for us to retire for prayer and meditation, and to be alone with God.

31. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. 32. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. 33. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. 34. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 35. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples upon the way, as they were going to the mount of Olives. Observe, I. A prediction of the trial which both he and his disciples were now to go through. He here foretells,


(1. That they should all be offended because of
Christ that very night; that is, they would all be so frightened with the sufferings, they would not have the courage to cleave to him in them, but would all basely desert him; because of me this night; in ἔστω ὅτι ἐγώ αὐτῷ—because of me, even because of this night; so it might be read; that is, because of what happens to me this night. Note. [2.] There are some temptations and offences, the effects of which are general and universal among Christ's disciples; All you shall be offended. Christ had lately discovered to them the treachery of Judas, and that Peter would deny him, Matt. 26:50, 51. But there will be but one traitor, they will be all deserters. This he saith, to alarm them all, that they might all watch. [3.] We have need to prepare for sudden trials, which may come to extremity in a very little time. Christ and his disciples had eaten their supper well together in peace and quietness; yet that very night proved such a night of offence. How soon may a storm arise! We know not what a day or an hour may bring—nor can we tell when the last may be in the trembling womb of a little time, Prov. 27. 1. [4.] The cross of Christ is the great stumbling-block to many that pass for his disciples; both the cross he bare for us, (1 Cor. 1. 23.) and that which we are called out to bear for him, ch. 16. 24. [2.] That herein the scripture would be fulfilled; I will smite the Shepherd. It is quoted from Zech. 13. 7. [1.] Here is the smiting of the Shepherd in the sufferings of Christ. God awakens the sword of his wrath against the Son of his love, and he is smitten. [2.] The scattering of the sheep, thereupon, in the flight of the disciples. When Christ fell into the hands of his enemies, his disciples ran, one one way, and another another; it was each one's care to shift for himself, and happy he that could get furthest from the cross. 

2. He gives them the prospect of a comfortable gathering together again after this storm; (v. 22.) After I am risen again, I will go before you. Though you will forsake me, I will not forsake you; though you fall, I will take care you shall not fall finally; we shall have a meeting again in Galilee, I will go before you, as the shepherd before the sheep. Some make the last words of that prophecy, (Zech. 13. 7.) a promise equivalent to this here; and I will bring my hand again to the little ones. There is no bringing them back but by bringing his hand to them. Note, The Captain of our salvation knows how to rally his troops, when, through their cowardice, they have been put into disorder.

II. The presumption of Peter, that he should keep his integrity, whatever happened; Though all men be offended, yet will I never be offended. Peter had a great stock of confidence, and was upon all occasions forward to believe the best of himself; sometimes it did him a kindness, but at other times it betrayed him, as it did here. Where observe. 1. How he bound himself with a promise, that he would never be offended in Christ; not only not this night, but at no time. If this promise had been made in a humble dependence upon the grace of Christ, it had been an excellent word. Before the Lord, Peter's discourse was so full of confidence in himself, that he would not allow himself to examine themselves with, Lord, is it? For that is our preparatory duty; after the ordinance, his discourse leads them to an engaging of themselves to close walking, for that is the subsequent duty. 2. How he fancied himself better armed against temptation than any one else, and this was his weak-
ceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? 41. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. 43. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. 44. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. 45. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Hitherto, we have seen the preparatives for Christ's sufferings; now, we enter upon the bloody scene. In these verses we have the story of his agony in the garden. This was the beginning of sorrows to our Lord Jesus. Now the sword of the Lord began to awake against the Man that was his Fellow; and how should it be quiet when the Lord had given it a charge? The clouds had been gathering a good while, and looked black. He had said, some days before, Now is my soul troubled, John 12. 27. But now the storm began in good earnest: he put himself into this agony, before his enemies gave him any trouble, to show that he was a Free-will-offering; that his life was not forced from him, but he laid it down of himself, John 10. 18. Observe, Jerusalem, the place where he underwent this mighty agony; it was in a place called Gethsemane. The name signifies, torculus uli— an olive-hill, a press for olives, like a wine-press, where they trod the olives, Mic. 6. 15. And this was the proper place for such a thing, at the foot of the mount of Olives. There our Lord Jesus began his passion, there it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and crush him, that fresh oil might flow to all believers from him, that was a partake of the root and fatness of that good olive. There he trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath, and trod it alone.

II. The company he had with him, when he was in this agony.

1. He took all the twelve disciples with him to the garden, except Judas, who was at this time otherwise employed. Though it was late in the night, near midnight, yet they kept with him, and took this walk by moon-light with him, as Elisha, who, when he was told that his master should shortly be taken from his head, declared that he would not leave him, though he led him about; so these follow the Lamb, wheresoever he goes.

2. He took only Peter, and James, and John, with him into that upper of the garden where he suffered his agony. He left the rest at some distance, perhaps at the garden door, with this charge, Sit ye here, while I go and pray ye boldly; that is, like that of Abraham to his young men, (Gen. 22. 5.) Abide ye here, and I will go yonder and worship. (1.) Christ went to pray alone, though he had lately prayed with his disciples, John 17. 1. Note, Our prayers with our families must not excuse us from our secret devotions. (2.) He ordered them to sit here. Note, We must take heed of giving any disturbance or in any way obstructing to those who retire in communion with God. He took these three with him, because they had been the witnesses of his glory in his transfiguration, (ch. 17. 1, 2.) and that would prepare them to be the witnesses of his agony. Note, Those are best prepared to suffer with Christ, that have by faith beheld his glory, and have conversed with the glorified saints upon the holy mount. If we suffer with Christ, we shall reign with him; and if we hope to reign with him, why should we not expect to suffer with him?

III. The agony itself that he was in; He began to be sorrowful, and very heavy. It is called an agony, (Luke 22. 44.) a conflict. It was not any bodily pain or torment that he was in, nothing occurred to hurt him; but, whatever it was, it was from within; he troubled himself, John 11. 18. Perhaps his heart was here used up, as some have supposed; he began to feel his separation— to be sorrowful, and in a consternation. The latter word signifies such a sorrow as makes a man neither fit for company nor desires of it. He had like a weight of lead upon his spirits. Physicians use a word near akin to it, to signify the disorder the man is in, in a fit of an ague, or beginning of a fever. Now was fulfilled Ps. 22. 14. I am poured out like water, they have taken and cast me into the dregs of the earth, and all my bones are out of joint, (Ps. 69. 1.) as the passages in the Psalms, where David complains of the sorrow of his soul, Ps. 18. 4, 6,—12. 7.—55. 4,—69. 1.—88. 3.—116. 3. and Jonah's complaint, ch. 2. 4, 5.

But what was the cause of all this? What was it that put him into this agony? Why art thou cast down, blessed Jesus, and why disturbed? Certainly, it was nothing of despair or distrust of his Father. As the Father loved him because he laid down his life for the sheep, so he was entirely subject to his Father's will in it. But

1. He engaged in an encounter with the powers of darkness; so he intimates, (Luke 22. 53.) This is in your hour, and the power of darkness; and he spoke of it just before, (John 14. 30. 31.) "The spirit in a man's body is the Lord's, and the flesh is thy own. And now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And we all, with the Lord, are made the new temple of the Spirit of the Lord." Now is the close engagement in single combat between Michael and the dragon, hand to hand; now is the judgment of the world; the great cause is now to be determined, and the decisive battle fought, in which the prince of this world will certainly be beaten and cast out, John 12. 31. Christ, when he works salvation, is described like a champion taking the field, Isa. 30. 16—18. Now therefore partake of his fiercest onset on the Seer, of the woman, and directs his sting, the sting of death, to his very heart; animamque in vulvere ponit—and the wound is mortal.

2. He was now bearing the iniquities which the Father laid upon him, and, by his sorrow and amazement, he accommodated himself to his undertaking. The sufferings he was entering into were great. Their sins; they were all made to meet upon him, and he knew it. As we are obliged to be sorry for our particular sins, so was he grieved for the sins of us all.
So Bishop Pearson, p. 191. Now, in the valley of Jehoshaphat, where Christ now was, God gathered all nations, and pitched them with his Son, Joel 3. 2, 12. He knew the malignity of the sins that were laid upon him, how provoking to God, how ruinous to man; and these being all set in order before him, and charged upon him, he was sorrowful and very heavy. Now it was that inguieties took hold on him; so that he left all and fled, as was foretold concerning him, Ps. 40. 7, 12.

3. He had a full and clear prospect of all the sufferings that were before him. He foreshawed the treachery of Judas, the unkindness of Peter, the malice of the Jews, and their base ingratitude. He knew that he should now in a few hours be scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross; death in his most dreadful appearances, death in pomp, attended with all its terrors, locked him in the furnace and this made him sorrowful, especially because it was the wages of our sin, which he had undertaken to satisfy for. It is true, the martyrs that have suffered for Christ have entertained the greatest torments, and the most terrible deaths, without any such sorrow and consternation; have called their prison their delectable orchards, and a bed of flames a bed of roses: but then, (1.) Christ was more than a Martyr, he was a Prophet; (2.) He was denied to himself, and his soul refused to be comforted, not in passion, but in justice to his undertaking. Their cheerfulness under the cross was owing to the divine favour, which, for the present, was suspended from the Lord Jesus. (2.) His sufferings were of another nature from their's. St. Paul, when he is to be offered upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith, can say, and rejoice with them all; but he is offered a sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, is quite a different case. On the saints' cross there is a blessing pronounced, which enables them to rejoice under it; (eb. 5. 10, 12.) but to Christ's cross there was a curse annexed, which made him sorrowful and very heavy under it. And 1 is sorrow under the cross was the foundation of their joy under it.

IV. His complaint of this agony. Finding himself under the arrest of his passion, he goes to his disciples, (v. 38.) and,

1. He acquaints them with his condition; My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. It gives some little ease to a troubled spirit, to have a friend ready to unburthen itself to, and give vent to its sorrows. Christ here tells them, (1.) What was the seat of his sorrow; it was his soul that was now in an agony. This inquires that Christ had a soul; for he suffered, not only in his body, but in his soul. We had sinned both against our own bodies, and against our souls; both had been used in sin, and both had been wronged by it; and therefore Christ suffered in soul as well as in body. (2.) What was the degree of his sorrow. He was exceeding sorrowful, troubled, compassed about with sorrow on all hands. It was sorrow in the highest degree, even unto death; it was a killing sorrow, such as no comfort can dispel. He was ready to die for grief; they were sorrows of death. (3.) The duration of it; it will continue even unto death. “My soul will be sorrowful as long as this is in this body; I see no outlet but death.” He now began to be sorrowful, and never ceased to be so till he said, It is finished; that grief is now finished, which began in the garden. It was prophesied of Christ, that he should be a Man of sorrows, &c. (Isa. 53. 3.) he was so all his life; it is never said that he was laughing; but all his sorrows hitherto were nothing to this.

2. He bespeaks their company and attendance; Tarry we here, and watch with me. Surely he was destitute instead of help, when he entreated their’s, who, he knew, would be but miserable comforters; but he would hereby teach us the benefit of the communion of saints. It is good to have, and therefore good to seek, the assistance of our brethren, when at any time we are in an agony; for two are better than one. What he said to them, he saith to all, Watch, Mark 13. 37. Not only watch for him, in expectation of his future coming, but watch with him, in application to our present work.

3. What passed between him and his Father when he was in this agony; Being in an agony, he prayed. Prayer is never out of season, but it is especially seasonable in an agony.

Observe, 1. The place where he prayed; He went a little further, withdrew from them, that the scripture might be fulfilled, I have trod the wine-press alone; he retired for prayer; a troubled soul finds most ease when it is alone with God, who understands the broken language of sighs and groans. Calvin's devout remark upon this is worth transcribing, Utile est seorsim orare, tunc enim magis familiariter sese demulcit fidelis animus, et simillimia sua vota, geminis, curas, favores, spes, et gaudia in Dei simul consequat.—It is useful to pray apart; for then the faithful soul develops itself more familiarly, and with greater simplicity pours forth its petitions, groans, and desires, his heart, and soul into the bosom of God. Christ hereby taught, that secret prayer must be made secretly. Yet some think that even the disciples, whom he left at the garden door, overheard him; for it is said, (Heb. 5. 7.) they were strong crie.

2. His posture in prayer; He fell on his face; his lying prostrate denotes, (1.) The agony he was in, and the extremity of his sorrow. Job, in great grief, fell on the ground; and great anguish is expressed by rolling in the dust, Mic. 1. 10. (2.) His humility in prayer. This posture was an expression of his worship—his reverential fear: (spoken of Heb. 5. 7.) with which he offered up these prayers; and it was in the days of his flesh, in his estate of humiliation, to which hereby he accommodated himself.

3. The prayer itself; wherein we may observe three things.

(1.) The title he gives to God; O my Father, thick as the cloud was, he could see God as a Father through it. Note, In all our addresses to God, we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time, my Father; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him, but to his father?

(2.) The favour he begs; If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. He calls his sufferings a cup; not a river, not a sea, but a cup, which we shall soon see the bottom of. When we are under troubles, we should make the best, the least, of them, and not aggravate them. His sufferings might be called a cup, because allotted him, as at feasts a cup was set to every mess. He begs that this cup might pass from him, that is, that he might avoid the sufferings now impending upon him; or, at least, that they might be softened. This intimates no more than that he was really and truly Man, and as a man he could not but be averse to pain and suffering. This is the first and simple act of man's will—to start back from that which is sensibly grievous to us, and to desire the prevention and removal of it. The law of self-preservation is impressed upon the innocent nature of man, and rules there, till overruled by some other law; when these pass, he is man, and expresses a reluctance to suffer, to shew that he was taken from among men, (Heb. 5. 1.) was touched with the feeling of our infirmities, (Heb. 4. 15.) and tempted as we are; yet without sin. Note, A prayer of faith, against an affliction, may very well consist with the patience of hope under an affliction. When David
and said, I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it; his very next words were, Remove thy stroke away from me, Ps. 39. 9, 10. But observe the proviso; If it be possible. If God may be glorified, man saved, and the ends of his undertakings answered, without his drinking of this bitter cup, he desires to be excused; otherwye not. What we cannot do with the securing of our great end, we must reckon to be in effect impossible; Christ did so. Lidwells, on the Word of Promise, add, a prayer we that which we can do lawfully. We can do nothing, not only we may do nothing, against the truth.

(3.) His entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of God; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Not that the human will of Christ was adverse or averse to the divine will; it was only, in its first act, diverse from it; to which, in the second act of the will, which chooses and chooses, he freely submits himself. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus, though he had a quick sense of the extreme bitterness of the sufferings he was to undergo, yet was freely willing to submit to them for our redemption and salvation, and offered himself, and gave himself, for us. [2.] The reason of Christ's submission to his sufferings, was, his Father's will; as the instrument of the world's redemption, and willingness upon the Father's will, and resolves the matter wholly into that; therefore he did what he did, and did it with delight, because it was the will of God, Ps. 40. 7. This he had often referred to, as that which put him upon, and carried him through, his whole undertaking; This is the Father's will, John 6. 39, 40. This he sought; (John 5. 30.) it was his meat and drink to do it, John 4. 34. [3.] In conformity to this example of Christ, we must put the bitter cup which God puts into our hands, be it ever so bitter; though nature struggle, grace must submit. We then are disposed as Christ was, when our wills are in every thing molten into the will of God, though ever so displeasing to flesh and blood; The will of the Lord be done, Acts 21. 14.

(4.) The repetition of the prayer; He went away again the second time, and prayed, (v. 42.) and again the third time, (v. 44.) and all to the same purport; only, as it is related here, he did not, in the second and third prayer, expressly ask that the cup might pass from him, as he had done in the first. Note, Though we may pray to God to prevent and remove an affliction, yet our chief errand, and that which we should most insist upon, must be, that he will give us grace to bear it well. It should be more our care to guard our hearts, and prepare and qualify ourselves, than to be satisfied under them, than to get them taken away. He prayed, saying, Thy will be done. Note, Prayer is the offering up, not only of our desires, but of our resignations, to God. It amounts to an acceptable prayer, when at any time we are in distress, to refer ourselves to God, and to commit our way and work to him; Thy will be done. The third time he said, the cup that is set before me, the cup that I drink; that is, the same matter or argument; he spoke to the same purport. We have reason to think that this was not all he said, for it should seem, by v. 40. that he continued an hour in his agony and prayer; but, whatever more he said, it was to this effect, awfully impressed with the thought of his approaching sufferings, and yet resigned himself to God's will in these, and the impressions of which we may be sure he was not straitened.

But what answer had he to this prayer? Certainly it was not made in vain; he that heard him always, did not deny him now. It is true, the cup did not pass from him, for he withdrew that petition, and did not insist upon it; (if he had, for aught I know, the cup had pressed away;) but he had an answer to his prayer; for, (1.) He was strengthened with strength in his soul, in the day when he cried; (Ps. 138. 3.) and that was a real answer, Luke 22. 13. (2.) He was delivered from that which he feared, which was, lest by impatience and distrust he should offend his Father, and so disable himself to go on with his undertaking, Heb. 5. 7.* In answer to his prayer, God provided that he should not fail or be discouraged.

VI. What passed between him and his three disciples at this time; and there we may observe,

That it was while he was in his agony, sorrowful and heavy, sweating, and wrestling, and praying, they were so little concerned, that they could not keep awake; he comes, and finds them asleep, v. 40. The strangeness of the thing should have roused their spirits to turn aside now, and see this great sight—the bush burning, and yet not consumed; much more should their love to their Master, and their care concerning him, who had obliged them to a more close and vigilant attendance on him; yet they were so dull, that they could not keep their eyes open. What had become of us, if Christ had been now as sleepy as his disciples were? It is well for us, that our salvation is in the hand of one who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Christ engaged them to watch with him, as if he expected some succour from them; and yet they slept; which was the unkindest thing that could be. When David wept at this mount of Olives, all his followers wept with him; (2 Sam. 13. 36.) but when the Son of David was here in tears, his followers were asleep. His enemies, who watched for him, were wakeful enough; (Mark 14. 43.) but his disciples, who should have watched with him, were asleep. Lord, what is man! What are the best men, and what is God, when he leaves them to themselves! Note, Carelessness and carnal security, especially when Christ is in his agony, are great faults in any, but especially in those who profess to be nearest in relation to him. The church of Christ, which is his body, is often in an agony, fightings without, and fears within; and shall we be asleep, like Gallio, that cared for none of these things; or those (Amos 6. 6.) that lay at ease, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph?

2. Christ's favour to them, notwithstanding. Persons in sorrow are too apt to be cross and peevish with those about them, and to lay it grievously to heart, if they but seem to neglect them; but Christ in his agony is as meek as ever, and carries it as patiently toward his followers as toward his Father, and is not apt to take things ill.

(1.) How he rebukes this slight upon him. (1.) He came to them, as if he expected to receive some comfort from them; and if they had put him in mind of what they had heard from him concerning his resurrection and glory, perhaps it might have been some help to him; but, instead of that, they added grief to his sorrow; and yet he came to them, more careful for them than they were for themselves. This made him rouse them, yet he came to look after them; for those that were given him were upon his heart, living and dying.

(2.) He gave them a gentle reproof, for as many as he loves he rebukes; he directed it to Peter, who used to speak for them; let him now hear for them. The reproof was very melting; What! could ye not watch with me one hour? He speaks as one amazed at the thought of the neglect that he had been considered, to show the aggravated nature of the case. Consider, [1.] Who they were; "Could not ye watch—ye, my disciples and followers? No wonder if others neglect me, if the earth sit still, and be at rest; (Zech. 1. 11.) but from you I expected better things." [1.] Who he was; "Watch with me. If

* It is surprising that a suggestion so dishonourable to our Lord should have been entertained for a moment by so excellent a man. — Ern.
one of yourselves was ill and in an agony, it would be very unkind not to watch with him; but it is un- 
dutiful not to watch with your Master, who has long watched over you for good, has led you, and fed 
you, and taught you, borne you, and borne with you; do ye thus require him?" He awoke out of his 
sleep, to help them when they were in distress; (ch. 8. 26) and could not they keep awake, at least 
to shew their good-will to him, especially considering 
that he was now suffering for them, in an agony 
for them? 'Jum tua res agitur—I am suffering in 
your cause.
[3.] How small a thing it was that he expected from them—only to watch with him. If he 
had bid them do some great thing, had bid them 
be in an agony with him, or die with him, they 
thought they could have done it; and yet they could 
not do it, when he only desired them to watch with 
him, 2 Kings 5. 15, 14. He, in a short time it was 
then, set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was, 
(Isa. 21. 8.) only one hour. Sometimes he con-
tinued all night in prayer to God, but did not then 
expect that his disciples should watch with him; 
only now, when he had but one hour to spend in 
prayer.
[5.] He gave them good counsel; Watch and pray, 
that ye enter not into temptation, v. 41. 
There was an hour of temptation drawing on, and 
very near; the troubles of Christ were temptations 
to his followers to disbelieve and distrust him, to 
deny and desert him, and renounce all relation to 
him. [2.] There was danger of their entering into 
the temptation, as into a snare or trap; of their 
entering into a parley with it, or a good opinion of it, 
of their being influenced by it, and inclining to 
comply with it; which is the first step toward being 
overcome by it. [3.] He therefore exhorts them 
to watch and pray; Watch with me, and pray with 
me. While they were sleeping, they lost the ben-
efit of joining in Christ's prayer. "Watch your-
selves, and pray yourselves. Watch against this present 
temptation to drowsiness and security; pray that you may watch; beg of God by his 
peace to keep you awake, now that there is oc-
cupation with it; which is the first step toward being 
overcome by it. [4.] He kindly—but one hour; we 
are not to hold to Christ in a single hour; we 
are set upon the guard whole nights, as the prophet was, 
(Isa. 21. 8.) only one hour. Sometimes he con-
tinued all night in prayer to God, but did not then 
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Behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. 52. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword. 53. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? 54. But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? 55. In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. 56. But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

We are here told how the blessed Jesus was seized, and taken into custody; this followed immediately upon his angry, exulting yet gentle, for from the beginning to the close of his passion he had not the least intermission or breathing time, but deep called unto deep. His trouble hitherto was raised within himself; but now the scene is changed, now the Philistines are upon thee, thou blessed Samson; the Breath of our nostrils, the Anointed of the Lord, is taken in their pits, Lam. 4. 20.

Now, concerning the apprehending of the Lord Jesus, they were employed in it. 1. Here was Judas, one of the twelve, at the head of this infamous guard: he was guide to them that took Jesus; (Acts 1. 16.) without his help they could not have found him in this retirement. Behold, and wonder; the first that appeared with his enemies, is one of his own disciples, who an hour or two ago was eating bread with him! 2. Here was with him a great multitude; that the scripture might be fulfilled, Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Ps. 3. 1. This multitude was made up partly of a detachment out of the guards, that were posted in the tower of Antonia by the Roman governor; these were Gentiles, sibiors, as Christ calls them, v. 45. The rest were the servants and officers of the high priest, and they were Jews; they that were at variance with each other, agreed against Christ.

II. How they were armed for this enterprise.

1. What weapons they were armed with; They came with swords and staves. The Roman soldiers, no doubt, had swords; the servants of the priests, those of them that had not swords, brought staves or clubs. Pistor arma ministras—Their rage supplied their arms. They were not regular troops, but a tumultuous rabble. But wherefore is this said? If they had been ten times as many, they could not have taken him had he not yielded; and his hour being come for him to give up himself, all this force was needless. When a butcher goes into the field to take out a lamb for the slaughter, does he raise the militia, and come armed? No, he needs not; yet is there all this force used to seize the Lamb of God?

2. What warrant they were armed with; They came from the chief priests, and elders of the people; this armed multitude was sent by them upon this errand. He was taken up by a warrant from the great Sanhedrim, as a person obnoxious to them. Pilate, the Roman governor, gave them no warrant to search for him, he had no jealousy of him; but they were men who pretended to religion, and presided in the affairs of the church, that were active in this prosecution, and were the most spirited enemies to our Lord; it was signed by a divine power, for, by all earthly powers, he was not only deserted, but opposed; Pilate upbraided him with it; Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee to me, John 18. 33.

III. The manner how it was done, and what passed at that time.

1. How Judas betrayed him; he did his business effectually, and his resolution in this wickedness may shame us who fail in that which is good. Observe,

(1.) The instructions he gave to the soldiers; (v. 48.) He gave them a sign; as commander of the party in this action, he gives the word or signal. He gave them a sign, lest by mistake they should seize one of the disciples instead of him, the disciples having so lately said, in Judas's hearing, that they would be willing to die for him. What abundance of caution was here, not to miss him—That same is he; and when they had him in their hands, not to lose him—Hold him fast; for he had sometimes escaped from those who thought to secure him; as Luke 4. 30. Though the Jews, who frequented the temple, could not but know him, yet the Roman soldiers perhaps had never seen him, and the sign was to be direct from his lips by his kiss intended not only to distinguish him, but to detain him, while they came behind him, and laid hands on him.

(2.) The desisting compliment he gave his Master. He came close up to Jesus; surely now, if ever his wicked heart will relent, surely, when he comes to look him in the face, he will either be awed by its majesty, or charmed by its beauty. Dares he, who in his very sight and presence, betray him? Peter denied Christ, but when the Lord turned and looked upon him, he relented presently; but Judas comes up to his Master's face, and betrays him. Me mihis (perfidis) Iprodus? me mihis Iprodus?—Perfidious man, betrayest thou me to myself? He said, Hail, Master; and kissed him. It should seem, our Lord Jesus had been wont to admit his disciples to such a degree of familiarity and nearness to give them his name, to kiss him. They had been any while absent, which Judas villainously used to facilitate his treason. A kiss is a token of allegiance and friendship, Ps. 2. 12. But Judas, when he broke all the laws of love and duty, profaned this sacred sign to serve his purpose. Note, There are many that betray Christ with a kiss, and Hail, Master; who, under pretence of doing him honour, betray and undermine the interests of his kingdom. Mi in ore, fel in corde—Honey in the mouth, gall in the heart. Kαρ δοσιν τι εις ειρανειν—To embrace is one thing, to love is another. Philo Judaeus. Judas's kiss and Judas's were much alike.

(3.) The entertainment his Master gave him, v. 50.

[1.] He calls him friend. If he had called him wainman and traitor race, thou fool, and child of the devil, he had not miscalled him; but he would teach us under the greatest provocation to forbear bitterness and evil-speaking, and to shew all meekness. Friend, for a friend he had been, and should have been, and seemed to be. Thus he upbraids him, as Abraham, when he called the rich man in hell, son. He calls him friend, because he furthered his sufferings, and so befriended him; whereas he called Peter & John going to hinder them.

[2.] He asks him, Wherefore art thou come? Is it peace, Judas? Explain thyself; if then comes as an enemy, what means this kiss? If as a friend, what mean these swords and staves? Wherefore art thou come? What harm have I done thee? Wherein
have I feared thee? Is it a life—Wherefore art thou fearful? Why hast thou not so much shame left thee, as to keep out of sight, which thou mightest have done, and yet have given the officers notice where I was?" This was an instance of great impudence, for him to be so forward and barefaced in this wicked transaction. But it is usual for apostates from religion to be the most bitter enemies to it; witness Julian. Thus Judas did his part.

2. How the officers and soldiers secured him; Then came they, and laid hands on him, and took him; they made him their prisoner. How were they not afraid to stretch forth their hands against the Lord's Anointed? We may well imagine what rude and cruel hands they were, which this barbarous multitude laid on Christ; and now, it is probable, they handled him the more roughly for their being so often disappointed when they sought to lay hands on him, and he had not rendered himself, and been delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, Acts 2:23. He who said concerning his anointed servants, Touch them not, and do them no harm, (Ps. 105:14, 15.) spared not his anointed Son, but delivered him up for us all; and again, gave his Strength into captivity, his Glory into the enemies' hands, Ps. 78:61. See what was the complaint of Job, (ch. 16.11.) God had given me to be the target, and apply them to other passages in the book of Job as a type of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus was made a Prisoner, because he would in all things be treated as a medefactor, punished for our crime, and as a surety under arrest for our debt. The yoke of our transgressions was bound by the Father's hand upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, Lam. 1:14. He became a Prisoner, that God's right hand should secure him, for he said, If ye seek me, let these go their way; (John 18.8.) and those are free indeed, whom he makes so.

3. How Peter fought for Christ, and was checked for his pains. It is here only said to be one of them that was with Jesus in the garden; but John 18.10. we are told that it was Peter who signalled himself upon this occasion. Observe,

(1.) Peter's mistake; (v. 51.) He drew his sword. The sword that he had two swords among them all, (Luke 22.38.) and one of them, it seems, fell to Peter's share; and now he thought it was time to draw it, and he laid about him as if he had done some great matters; but all the execution he did, was, the cutting off an ear from a servant of the high priest; designing, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, because he saw him more forward than the rest in laying hands on Christ, and missed his blow. But if he would be striking, in my mind he should rather have aimed at Judas, and have marked him for a rogue. Peter had talked much of what he would do for his Master, he would lay down his life for him; yea, that he would; and now he would be as good as his word, and venture his life to rescue his Master: and thus far was commendable, that he had a great zeal for Christ, and his honour and safety; but it was not according to knowledge, nor guided by discretion; for, [1.] He did it without warrant; some of the disciples asked indeed, Shall we smite with the sword? (Luke 22.49.) But Peter struck before they had an answer. We must see not only our cause good, but our call clear, before we draw the sword; we must shew by what authority we do it, and who gave us that authority. [2.] He indirectly exposed himself and his fellow-disciples to that rage with which men are wont to be seized when they said they would with two swords do against a band of men?

(2.) The rebuke which our Lord Jesus gave him; (v. 52.) Put up again thy sword into its place. He does not command the officers and soldiers to put up their swords that were drawn against him, left them to the judgment of God, who judges them that are without; but he commands Peter to put up his sword, does not chide him indeed for what he had done, because done out of good will, but stops the progress of his arms, and provides that it should not be drawn into a precedent. Christ's errand into the world was to make peace. Note, The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; and Christ's ministers, though they are his soldiers, do not war against the flesh, 2 Cor. 10.3, 4. Not that the law of Christ is contrary to the duties of justice or the law of nations, as far as those warrant subjects to stand up in defence of their civil rights and liberties, and their religion, when it is incorporated with them; but it provides for the preservation of public peace and order by forbidding private persons, qua tates—as such, to resist the powers that are;—may, we have a general precept that we resist not evil, (ch. 5.29.) nor will Christ have his ministers propagate his religion by force of arms. The sword is: cogi non potest; et defendenda non occidendo, sed moriendo—Religion cannot be forced; and it should be defended, not by killing, but by dying. Laetantii Institut. As Christ forbade his disciples the sword of justice, (ch. 20.25, 26.) so here the sword of war. Christ had Peter put up his sword, and never had him draw it again; yet that which Peter is here rebuked for was necessary; for the hour was come for Christ to suffer and die, he knew it, the sword of the Lord was drawn against him, (Zech. 13.7.) and for Peter to draw his sword for him, was like, Master, shah thyself.

Three reasons Christ gives to Peter for this re-buke:

[1.] His drawing the sword would be dangerous to himself, to his fellow-disciples; They that take the sword shall perish with the sword, Matt. 10.39. Violence, evil, violence; and men hasten and increase their own troubles by blustering bloody methods of self-defence. They that take the sword before it is given them, that use it without warrant or call, expose themselves to the sword of war, or public justice. Had it not been for the special care and providence of the Lord Jesus, Peter and the rest of them had, for ought I know, been cut in pieces pieces immediately. 

[2. ]This rebuke was in the premisses of what followed, as an indication, were not the sword, as a sword, used, or not, as a sword, effectually, sense of this blow, making those that take the sword to be, not Peter, but the officers and soldiers that take the swords to take Christ; They shall perish with the sword. Peter, then needest not draw thy sword to punish them. God will certainly, shortly, and severely, reckon with them. They took the Roman sword to seize Christ with, and by the Roman sword, not long after, they and their leaders, and nation were destroyed. Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because God will revenge her. (Rom. 12.19.) and therefore we must suffer with faith and patience, because persecutors will be paid in their own coin. See Rev. 13.10.

[3.] It was needless for him to draw his sword in defence of his Master, who, if he pleased, could summon into his service all the hosts of heaven; (v. 50.) Thinketh thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall send from heaven effectual succours? Peter, if I would put by these sufferings, I could easily do it without thy hand or thy sword. Note, God has no need of us, of our services, much less of our sins, to bring about his purposes; and it argues our distrust and disbelief of the power of Christ, when we go out of the way of our duty to serve his interests. God can do his work without us; if we should perish with the sword, they that use such weapons are to be righteous, he is not beholden to us, Job 55.3, 5. Though Christ was crucified through weakness, it was a voluntary weakness: he submitted to death, not because he could not, but because he would not,
contend with it. This takes off the offence of the cross, and proves Christ crucified the power of God; even now, in the depth of his sufferings, he could call in the aid of legions of angels. Now therefore, "Though the business is so far gone, I could yet with a word speaking turn the scale." Christ here lets us know,

First, What a great interest he had in the Father; I can pray to my Father, and he will send me what I desire. Therefore I can speak of my Father these succours. Christ prayed as one having authority. Note, It is a great comfort to God's people, when they are surrounded with enemies on all hands, that they have a way open heavenward; if they can do nothing else, they can pray to him that can do every thing. And who are they who are much in prayer at other times, have most comfort in praying when troublesome times come. Observe, Christ saith, not only that God could send him such a number of angels, but that, if he insisted upon it, he would do it. Though he had undertaken the work of our redemption, yet, if he had desired to be released, it should seem by this that the Father would not have held him to it. He might yet have gone out free from the service, but he loved it, and would not; so that it was only with the cords of his own love that he was bound to this business.

Secondly, What a great interest he had in the heavenly hosts; He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels, amounting to above seventy-two thousand. Observe here, 1. There is an innumerable company of angels, Heb. 12. 22. A detachment of more than twelve legions might be spared for our service, and yet there would be no need of them from about the throne. See Dan. 7. 10. They are marshalled in exact order, like the well-disciplined legions; not a confused multitude, but regular troops; all know their post, and observe the word of command. 2. This innumerable company of angels are all at the disposal of our heavenly Father, and do his pleasure, Ps. 103. 20, 21. 3. These angelic hosts were ready to come in to the assistance of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings, if he had needed or desired it. See Heb. 1. 6, 14. They would have been to him as they were to Elisha, chariots of fire, and horses of fire, not only to secure him, but to consume those that set upon him. 4. Our heavenly Father is to be eyed and acknowledged in all the services of the heavenly hosts; He shall presently give them me: therefore angels are not to be prayed to, but the Lord of the angels, Ps. 91. 11. 5. It is matter of comfort, that even those who were to destroy Christ, that there is a world of angels always in the service of the Lord Jesus, that can do wonders. He that has the armies of heaven at his beck can do what he pleases among the inhabitants of the earth: He shall presently give them me. See how ready his Father was to hear his prayer, and how ready the angels were to observe his orders; they are willing servants, winged messengers, they fly swiftly. This is matter of comfort to all Christ's tribe, the hosts of heaven, Christ, and the welfare of the church, much at heart. Think they that they have more care and concern for Christ and his church, than God and the holy angels have?

[3.] It was no time to make any defiance at all, or to offer to put by the stroke: For how shall then the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? v. 54. It was always his custom the angels to his assistance, he would not be led to the slaughter at all; should he permit his disciples to fight, he would not be led as a lamb quietly and without assistance; therefore he and his disciples must yield to the accomplishment of the predictions. Note, In all difficult cases, the word of God must be conclusive against our own counsels, and othing must be done, nothing attempted, against the fulfilling of the scripture. If the easing of our pains, the breaking of our bonds, the saving of our lives, will not consist with the fulfilling of the scripture, we ought to say, "Let God's word and will take place, let his law be magnified and made honourable, whatever becomes of us." Thus Christ checked Peter, when he set up for his champion, and captain of his life-guard.

We are next told how Christ argued the case with them that came to take him; (v. 55.) though he did not resist them, yet he did reason with them. Note, It will consist with Christian patience under our sufferings, calmly to expostulate with our enemies and persecutors, as David with Saul, 1 Sam. 24. 14.—26. 18. Are ye come out, (1.) With rage and enmity, as against a thief, as if we were an enemy to the public safety, and deservedly offered this:

Thieves draw upon themselves the common odium; every one will lend a hand to stop a thief: and thus they fell upon Christ as the offspring of all things. If he had been the Plague of his country, he could not have been prosecuted with more heat and violence. (2.) With all this power and force, as against the worst of thieves, that dare the law, bid defiance to public justice, and add rebellion to their sin; You are come as against a thief, and have not taken him; you have not bound to that, he was a chief of ten thousand; you have not bound to him, he was a thief.

He further expostulates with them, by reminding them how he had behaved himself hitherto toward them, and they toward him. [1.] Of his public appearance; I sat daily with you in the temple teaching. And, [2.] Of their public connivance; Ye had no hold on me. How comes then this change? They were very unreasonable in treating him as they did. First, He had given them no occasion to look upon him as a thief, for he had taught in the temple. And such were the matter and such the manner of his teaching, that he was manifested in the consciences of all that heard him, not to be a bad man. Such gracious words as came from his mouth, were not the words of a thief, or of one that had a devil. Secondly, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar, they that were upon him, one abscended, or fled from justice, that they should come in the night to seize him; if they had any thing to say to him, they might find him every day in the temple, ready to answer all challenges, all charges, and there they might do as they pleased with him; for the chief priests had the custody of the temple, and the command of the guards about it; but to come upon him thus clandestinely, in the dark, as this was, was a breach of all law. Thus the greatest hero may be villainously assassinated in a corner, by one that in open field would tremble to look him in the face.

But all this was done, (so it follows, v. 56.) that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. It is hard to say, whether these are the words of the sacred historian, as a comment upon this story, and a direction to the Christian reader to compare it to the scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at it; or, whether they are the words of Christ himself, as a reason why, though he could not but resent this base treatment, he yet submitted to it, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled, to which he had just now referred himself, v. 54. Note, The scriptures are in the fulfilling every day; and all those scriptures, which spake of the
Messiah, had their full accomplishment in our Lord Jesus.  
5. How he was, in the midst of this distress, shamefully deserted by his disciples; They all forsook him, and fled.  
(1.) This was their sin; and it was a great sin for them who had left all to follow him, now to leave him for they knew not what. There was unkindness in it, considering the relation they stood in to him, the favours they had received from him, and the melancholy circumstances he was now in. There was unfaithfulness in it, for they had solemnly promised to adhere to him, and never to forsake him.  
He had ventured for their safe-conduct; (John 18. 8.) yet they could not rely upon that, but shifted for themselves by an inglorious flight. What folly this, for fear of death, to flee from him whom they themselves knew and had acknowledged to be the Fountain of life? John 6. 67, 68. Lord, what is man!  
(2.) It was a part of Christ’s suffering, it added affliction to his bonds, to be thus deserted, as it did to Job; (ch. 19. 13.) He hath put my brethren far from me; and to David; (Ps. 38. 11.) Lovers and friends stand aloof from my sore. They should have staid with him, to minister to him, to countenance him, and, if need were, to be witnesses for him at his trial; but they treacherously deserted him, as, at St. Paul’s, first answer, no man stood with him. But there was a mystery in this. [1.] Christ, as a Sacrifice for sin, stood thus abandoned. The day that he was smitten with the arrow, he was hunted and run down, is immediately deserted by the whole herd. In this he was made a Curse for us, being left as one separated to evil. [2.] Christ, as the Saviour of souls, stood thus alone; as he need not, so he had not, the assistance of any other in working out our salvation; he bore all, and did all himself. He trod the wine-press alone, and when there was none to uphold, then his arm smote; Ps. 63. 3, 4. So the Lord alone did lead Israel, and they stand still, and only see this great salvation, Deut. 32. 12.  
57. And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. 58. But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest’s palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. 59. Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the counsel, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60. But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61. And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62. And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answrest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 63. But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65. Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, 68. Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?  
We have here the arrangement of our Lord Jesus, in the ecclesiastical court, before the great Sanhedrin. Observe,  
1. The sitting of the court; the scribes and the elders were assembled, though it was in the dead time of the night, when other people were fast asleep in their beds; yet, to gratify their malice against Christ, they denied themselves that natural rest, and sat up all night, to be ready to fall upon the prey which Judas and his men, they hoped, would seize.  
2. The composition of the court, the scribes, the principal teachers, and elders, the principal rulers, of the Jewish church; these were the most bitter enemies to Christ our great Teacher and Ruler, on whom therefore they had a jealous eye, as one that eclipsed them; perhaps some of these scribes and elders were not so malicious at Christ as some of others of them were; yet, in concurrence with the rest they made themselves guilty.  
3. The scene was furnished; (Ps. 22. 16.) The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me. Jeremiah complains of an assembly of treacherous men; and David of his enemies gathering themselves together against him, Ps. 35. 15.  
II. Where they were assembled; in the palace of Caiaphas the high priest; there they assembled two days before, to lay the plot, (v. 3.) and there they now convened again, to prosecute it. The high priest was Ab-beth-din—the father of the house of judgment, but he is now the patron of wickedness; his house should have been the sanctuary of oppressed innocence, but it is become the throne of iniquity; and no wonder, when even God’s house of prayer was made a den of thieves.  
11. The setting of the prisoner in the bar; they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away, hurried him, in doubt with violence, led him as a trophy of their victory, led him as a victim to the altar; he was brought into Jerusalem through which that was called the sheep-gate, for that was the way into town from the mount of Olives; and it was so called because the sheep appointed for sacrifice were brought that way to the temple; very fitly therefore is Christ led that way, who is the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world. Christ was led first to the high priest, for by the law all sacrifices were to be brought first to the priest, and delivered into his hand, Lev. 17. 5.  
III. The cowardice and faint-heartedness of Peter; (v. 58.) But Peter followed afar off. This comes in here, with an eye to the following story of his denying him. He forsook him as the rest did, when he was seized, and what is here said of his following him is easily reconcilable with his forsaking him; and following was no better than forsaking him; for, 1. He followed him, but it was after some sparks of love and concern for his Master there were in his breast, and therefore he followed him; but fear and concern for his own safety prevailed, and therefore he followed afar off. Note, It looks ill, and bodes worse, when those that are willing to be Christ’s disciples, are not willing to be known to be so. Here began Peter’s denying him; for to follow him afar off, is, by little and little, to go back from
him. There is danger in drawing back, nay, in looking back.

2. He followed him, but he went in, and sat with the servants. He should have gone up to the court, and shown himself to his Master, and appeared before his accusers; but he went in where there was a good fire, and sat with the servants, not to silence their reproaches, but to screen himself. It was presumption in Peter thus to thrust himself into temptation; he that does so, throws himself out of God's protection. Christ had told Peter that he could not follow him now, and had particularly warned him of his danger this night; and Peter was going into the midst of this wicked crew. It helped David to walk in his integrity, that he hated the congregation of evil doers, and would not sit with the wicked.

3. He followed him, but it was only to see the end, led more by his curiosity than by his conscience; he attended as an idle spectator rather than as a disciple, a person concerned. He should have gone in, to do Christ some service, or to get some wisdom and grace to himself, by observing Christ's behaviour under his sufferings: but went in, only to look about him; it is not unlikely that Peter went in, expecting that Christ would have made his escape miraculously out of the hands of his persecutors; that, having so lately struck them down, who came to seize him, he would now have struck them dead, when he would judge him; and this he had a mind to see: if so, it was following him to commit another murder; and the end than what Christ had foretold, that he should be put to death. Note, It is more our concern to prepare for the end, whatever it may be, than curiously to inquire what the end will be. The event is God's, but the duty is our's.

IV. The trial of our Lord Jesus in this court.

1. They examined witnesses against him, though they could not find any, right or wrong, to condemn him; yet, to put the better colour upon it, they would produce evidence against him. The crimes properly cognizable in the court, were, false doctrine and blasphemy; these they endeavoured to prove upon him. And observe here,

(1.) Their search for proof: They sought false witness against him; they had seized him, bound him, abused him, and after all was to seek for something to lay to his charge, and can show no cause for his commitment. They tried if any of them could allege seemingly from their own knowledge any thing against him; and suggested one calumnny and then another, which, if true, might touch his life. Thus evil men dig up mischief, Prov. 16. 27. Here they trod in the steps of their predecessors, who deceived devices against Jeremiah, Jer. 19. 18. —26. 10. They made proclamation, that, if they could obtain information against the prisoner at the bar, they were ready to receive it, and presently many bare false witness against him: (v. 60.) for if a ruler hearken to his, all his servants are wicked, and will carry false stories to him, Prov. 39. 12. This is an evil often seen under the sun, Eccl. 16. 5. If Naboth must be taken off, there are sons of Belial to swear against him.

(2.) Their success in this search; in several attempts they were baffled, they sought false testimonies among themselves, others came in to help them, and yet they found none; they could make nothing of it, could not take the evidence together, or give it any colour of truth or consistency with itself, no, not they themselves being judges. The matters alleged were such paltry suspicions, as made their own confutation along with them. This condemned much to the honour of Christ now, when they were loading him with disgrace.

But at last they met with two witnesses, who, it seems, agreed in their evidence, and therefore were heartened to, in hopes that now the point was gained.

The words they swore against him, were, that he should say, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days, v. 61. Now by this they designed to accuse him, [1.] As an enemy to the temple of God, which he says should not be destroyed, of which, they could not hear to hear of; for they valued themselves by the temple of the Lord, (Jer. 7. 4.) and, when they abandoned other idols, made a perfect idol of that. Stephen was accused for speaking against this holy place, Acts 6. 13, 14. [2.] As one that dealt in witchcraft, or some such unlawful arts, by the help of which he could rear such a temple: and the destruction of which, he was in league with Beelzebub; now, as to this, First, The words were misrecited; he said, Destroy ye this temple, (John 2. 19.) plainly intimating that he spake of a temple which his enemies would seek to destroy; they come, and swear that he said, I am able to destroy this temple, as if the design against it were his. He said, In three days I will raise it up, i.e., a word properly used of a living temple; I will raise it to life. They come and swear that he said, I am able, i.e., to build it; which is properly used of a house-temple. Secondly, The words were misunderstood; he spake of the temple of his body, (John 2. 21.) and perhaps when he said, this temple, pointed to, or laid his hand upon, his own body; but they swear that he said the temple of God, meanly understood, which is, as we see, there; there were many, and still are, such as wert the sayings of Christ to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16. Thirdly, Make the worst they could of it, it was no capital crime, even by their own law; if it had been, no question but he had been prosecuted for it, when he spake the words in a public discourse some years ago: nay, the words were capable of a laudable construction, and such as bespoke a kindness for the temple of God, and a regard for the temple of his Father, and so himself to the utmost to rebuild it. But any thing that looked criminal, would serve to give colour to their malicious prosecution. Now the scriptures were fulfilled, which said, False witnesses are risen up against me; (Ps. 27. 12.) and see Ps. 33. 11. Though I have redeemed them, they have spoken lies against me, Hos. 7. 13. We stand justly accused, the law doth; let us, Deut. 27. 26. Jer. 5. 45. Though we are, and our own consciences accuse us, 1 John 2. 20.

The creatures cry out against us. Now, to discharge us from all these just accusations, our Lord Jesus submitted to this, to be unjustly and falsely accused, that in the virtue of his sufferings we may be enabled to triumph over all challenges; Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Rom. 8. 33, 34. He was accused, that we might not be condemned: and at any time we suffer thus, have all manner of evil, not only said, but sworn, against us falsely, let us remember that we cannot expect to fare better than our Master.

(3) Christ's silence under all these accusations, to the amazement of the court, p. 62. The high priest, the judge of the court, arose in some heat, and said, Are you silent then? Come, you the prisoner, you that hear him, how do you answer him? What have you now to say for yourself? What defence can you make? Or what plea have you to offer in answer to this charge?" But Jesus held his peace, (v. 63.) not as one sullen, or as one self-confident, or as one astonished and in confusion; not because he wanted something to say, or knew not how to say it, but that the scripture might be fulfilled; Isa. 53. 7. As he was despised before the shearers, and before the butcher, so he opened not his mouth; and that he might be the Son of David, who, when his enemies spake mischievous things against him, was as a deaf man that heard not, Ps. 38. 11-14. He was silent, because his hour was come: he would not deny the charge, because he was will
ing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence and shame now, as at any time prior to this. If God had entered into judgment with us, we had been speech-
less, (ch. 22. 12.) not able to answer for one of a thousand, Job 9. 3. Therefore, when Christ was
made Sin for us, he was silent, and left it to his blood to speak, Heb. 12. 24. He stood mute at this
bar, that he might have something to say at God's bar.
Well, this way will not do; alié aggregandum est vide—cause must be had to some other experi-

2. They examined our Lord Jesus himself upon an oath like that ex officio; and, since they could
not accuse him, they will try, contrary to the law of equity, to make him accuse himself.
(1) Here is the interrogatory put to him by the high priest.
O God, art thou the Christ, the Son of God? (1.) The question itself; Whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God? That is, Whether thou pretend to be so? For they will by no means admit it into consideration, whether he be really so or no; though the Messiah was to be the consolation of Israel, and glorious things were spoken concern-
ing him in the Old Testament, yet so strangely be-
sorted were they with a jealousy of anything that threatened their exorbitant power and grandeur, that they should not have occasioned the matter, whether Jesus was the Messiah or no; never once put the case, Suppose he should be so; they only wished him to confess that he called him-
self so, that they might on that indict him as a de-
ceiver. What will not pride and malice carry men to?
(2) The solemnity of the proposal of it; I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us. Not that he had any regard to this particular, but took his name in vain; only thus he hoped to gain his point with our Lord Jesus; If thou hast any value for the blessed name of God, and reverence for his Ma-
jesty, tell us this. If he should refuse to answer when he was thus adjured, they would charge him with contempt of the blessed name of God. Thus the persecutors of good men often take advantage against them by their own consciences, as Daniel's ene-
 mies did against him in the matter of his God.
(2.) Christ's answer to his interrogator; (r. 64.) in
which,
[1.] He owns himself to be the Christ, the Son of God. Thou hast said; that is, "It is as thou hast said," for in St. Mark it is, I am. Hitherto, he sel-
dom professed himself expressly to be the Christ, the Son of God; the tenor of his doctrine bespoke it, and the miracles proved it: but now he would not omit to make a confession of it. First, Because
that would have looked like a disowning of that truth which he came into the world to hear witness to. Secondly, It would have looked like declining his sufferings, when he knew the acknowledgment of this would give his enemies all the advantage they desired against him. He thus confessed himself, for example and encouragement to his followers, as they were called to confess him before men, whatever hazards they run by it. And according to this pattern the martyrs readily confessed them-
selves Christians, though they knew they must die for it, as the martyrs at Thessals, Euseb. Hist. 1. 8.
c. 9. That Christ answered out of a regard to the adjudication which Caiaphas had profanely used by the living God, I cannot, any more than that he had any regard to the like adjudication in the death of the Lord Jesus, Matt. 26.
[2.] He refers himself, for the proof of this, to his second coming, and indeed to his whole estate of exaltation. It is probable that they looked upon him with a scornful disdainful smile, when he said, I am;
of witness against us; our own consciences are against us instead of a thousand witnesses.

VI. His sentence passed, upon this conviction, v. 66.

Here is, 1. Caiphas's appeal to the bench: What think ye? See his base hypocrisy and partiality: when he had already prejudged the cause, and pronounced him a blasphemer, then, as if he were willing to be advised, he asks the judgment of his brethren; but, like malice ever so cunningly under the robe of justice, seeking and prevailing to break them. If he should have dealt fairly, he should have collected the votes of the bench, in order, and begun with the junior, and have delivered his own opinion last; but he knew that by the authority of his place he could sway the rest, and therefore declares his judgment, and reserves they are all of his mind; he takes the crime, with regard to Christ, not confiding of crime confessed; and the judgment, with regard to the court, pro conc星座—as a judgment agreed to.

2. Their concurrence with him; they say, He is guilty of death; perhaps they did not all concur, it is certain that Joseph of Arimathea, if he was present, dissented; (Luke 23. 51.) so did Nicodemus, and it is likely, others with them; however, the majority carried it that way: but perhaps, this being an extra general council, or high council, nor had notice to be present but such as they knew would concur, and so it might be voted nemine contradicente—unanimously. The judgment was, He is guilty of death; by the law he deserves to die. Though they had not power now to put any man to death, yet by such a judgment as this they made a man an outlaw among his people; (qui causat gemitum— he carries a wolf's head; so our old law describes an outlaw,) and so exposed him to the fury either of a popular tumult, as Stephen was, or to be clamped against before the governor, as Christ was. Thus was the Lord of life condemned to die, that through him there may be no condemnation to us.

VII. The abuses and indignities done to him after sentence passed; (v. 67, 68.) Then, when he was found guilty, they spat in his face. Because they had not power to put him to death, and could not be sure that they should prevail with the governor to be his executioner, they would do him all the mischief they could, now that they had him in their hands. Condemned prisoners are taken under the special protection of the law, which they are to make satisfaction to, and by all civilículo nations have been treated with tenderness; sufficient is this punishment. But when they had passed sentence upon our Lord Jesus, he was treated as if hell had broken loose upon him, as if he were not only worthy of death, but as if that were too good for him, and he were unworthy of the compassion shewed to the worst malefactors. Thus he was made a Curse for us, and we were made partakers of this barrack. It should seem, the very same that had passed sentence upon him. They said, He is guilty of death, and then they did spit in his face. The priests began, and then no wonder if the servants, who do any thing to make sport to themselves, and curry favour with their wicked masters, carried on the humour. See how they abused him.

The truth of his face, v. 66. The scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 50. 6.) He hid not his face from shame and spitting. Job complained of this indignity done to him, and herein was a type of Christ; (Job 30. 10.) They spare not to spit in my face. It is an expression of the greatest contempt and indignation possible; looking upon him as more despicable than the very ground they spit upon. When Miriam was under the leprosy, it was looked upon as a disgrace to her, like that of her father shyness in her face, Numb. 12. 14. He that refused to raise up seed to his brother was to undergo this dishonour, Dent. 25. 9. Yet when he was raising up the deer's tail, the great family of mankind, committed to the high place that which was fairer than the children of men, which was white and ruddy, and which angels reverence, was thus filthily abused by the basest and vilest of the children of men. Thus was confusion poured upon his face, that our mists might not be filled with everlasting shame and contempt. They who now pretend to be blessed upon this word, and hate his image on his sanctified ones, what do they better than spit in his face? They would do that, if it were in their reach.

2. They buffeted him, and smote him with the palms of their hands. This added pain to the shame, for both came in with sin. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 50. 6.) I gave my cheek to them that plucked off, to be smitten, and my back to them that plucked it. (Isa. 50. 6.) He was blindfolded, and they struck him, and they beat him with rods; for so signifies, and this he submitted to.

3. They challenged him to tell which struck him, having first blindfolded him; (Prophecy unto me, thou man of God,) is it he that smote thee? (1.) They made sport with him, as the Philistines did with Samson; it is grieves to those that are in misery for people to make merry about them, but much more to make merry with them and their misery. Here was an instance of the greatest depravity and degeneracy of the human nature that could be, to show that there was need of a religion that should recover men to humanity. (2.) They made sport with his prophetic office. They had heard him called a prophet, and that he was famed for wonderful discoveries; this they upbraided him with, and pretended to make a trial of; as if the divine omniscience must stop to a piece of children's play. They put a like affront upon Christ, who profanely jest with the scripture, and make themselves merry with holy things; like Belshazzar's revels in the temple-bowls.

69. Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. 70. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou savest. 71. And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth. 72. And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man. 73. And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. 74. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. 75. And Peter remembered the words of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the story of Peter's denying his Master, and it comes in as a part of Christ's sufferings. Our Lord Jesus was now in the high priest's hall, not to be tried, but baited rather, and them it would have been some comfort to him to see his
friends near him. But we do not find any friend he had about the court, save Peter only, and it would have been better if he had been at a distance. Observe how he fell, and how he got up again by repentance.

1. His sin, which is here impartially related, to the honour of the penman of scripture, who dealt faithfully. Observe, (1.) The immediate occasion of Peter's sin. He sat not in the palace, among the servants of the high priest. Note, Bad company is to many an occasion of sin; and those who needlessly thrust themselves into it go upon the devil's ground, venture into his crowds, and may expect either to be tempted and ensnared, as Peter was, or to be ridiculed and abused, as his Master was; they scarcely can come out of such company, without guilt or grief, or both. (2.) Consider, this was a shuffling answer; and his own covenant, must say to evil-doers, Depart from me, Ps. 119. 115. Peter spake from his own experience, when he warned his new converts to save themselves from that untoward generation; for he had like to have ruined himself but by going once among them.

2. The temptation to it. He was challenged as a disciple to Jesus of Galilee. First, one maid, and then another, and then the rest of the servants, charged it upon him; Thou also art with Jesus of Galilee, v. 69. And again, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth, v. 71. And again, (v. 73.) Thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee to be a Galilean; whose dialect and pronunciation differed from that of the other Jews. Happy he whose speech bewrays him to be a disciple of Christ, by the holiness and seriousness of whose discourse it appears that he has been with Jesus! Observe how scornfully they speak of Christ—Jesus of Galilee, and of Nazareth, upbraiding him with the country he was of; and how disdainfully they speak of Peter—This fellow; as if they thought it a reproach to them to have such a man in their company, and he was well enough served for coming among them; yet they had nothing to accuse him of, but that he was with Jesus, which, they thought, was enough to render him both a scandalous and a suspected person.

3. The sin itself. When he was charged as one of Christ's disciples, he denied it, was ashamed and afraid to own himself so, and would have all about him to believe that he had no knowledge of him, nor any kindness or concern for him.

(1.) Upon the first mention of it, he said, I know not what thou sayest. This was a shuffling answer; he pretended that he did not understand the charge, that he knew not whom she meant by Jesus of Galilee, or what she meant by being with him; so making strange of that which his heart was now as full of as it could be. [1.] It is a fault thus to misrepresent our own apprehensions, thoughts, and affections, to serve a turn; to pretend that we do not understand, or did not think of, or remember, that which yet we do apprehend, and did think of, and remember; this is a species of lying which we are more prone to than any other, because in this a man is not easily disproved; for, who knows the spirit of a man, save himself? But God knows it, and we must be restrained from this wickedness by a fear of him, Prov. 24. 12. [2.] It is yet a greater fault to be shy of Christ, to dissemble our knowledge of him, and to shift off a confession of him, when we are in the company of his enemies, than if we had been alone. (2.) Upon the next attack, he said, flat and plain, I know not the man, and backed it with an oath, v. 72. This was, in effect, to say, I will not own him, I am no Christian; for Christianity is the knowledge of Christ. Why, Peter? Canst thou look upon your prisoner at the bar, and say thou dost not know him? Didst thou not quit all to follow him? And hast thou not been the man of his counsel? Hast thou not known him better than any one else? Didst thou not confess him to be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Hast thou forgotten all the kind and tender looks thou hast had from him, and all the intimate fellowship thou hast had with him? Canst thou look him in the face, and say that thou dost not know him?

3. The sin's aggravations. (3.) Upon the third assault, he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man, v. 74. This was worse of all, for the way of sin is downhill. He cursed and swore, [1.] To back what he said, and to gain credit to it, that they might not any more call it in question; he did not only say it, but swear it; and yet while he did so, he knew he had no right to take the oath, as a Christian, as he had an oath given him that he might not make known the truth of what is backed with rush oaths and imprecations. None but the devil's sayings need the devil's proofs. He that will not be restrained by the third commandment from mocking his God, will not be kept by the ninth from deceiving his brother. [2.] He designed it to be an evidence for him, that he was none of Christ's disciples, for this was none of their language. Curse, and swear, answering a man of the church of Christ; for it is the language of his enemies thus to take his name in vain. This is written for warning to us, that we sin not after the similitude of Peter's transgression; that we never, either directly or indirectly, deny Christ the Lord that bought us, by rejecting his offers, resisting his Spirit, dissembling our knowledge of him, and being ashamed of him and his words, or afraid of suffering for him, and with his suffering people.

4. The aggravations of this sin; which may be of use to take notice of, that we may observe the like transgressions in our own sins. Consider, (1.) Who he was—an apostle, one of the first three, that had been upon all occasions the most forward to speak to the honour of Christ. The greater profession we make of religion, the greater is our sin, if, in any thing, we walk unworthily. (2.) That Peter having his Master had given him of his danger; if he had regarded this as he ought to have done, he would not have run himself into temptation. (3.) How solemnly he had promised to adhere to Christ in this night of trial; he had said again and again, I will never deny thee; no, I will die with thee first! yet he brake these bonds in sunders, and his word was yea and nay. (4.) How soon he fell into this sin after the Lord's supper. There to receive such an inestimable pledge of重温, and yet the same night, before morning, to disown his Redeemer, was indeed turning aside quickly. (5.) How weak, comparatively, the temptation was; it was not the judge, or any of the officers of the court, that charged him with being a disciple of Jesus, but a silly maid or two, that probably designed him no hurt, nor would have done him any, if he had owned it. This was but running with the footprint, Jer. 12. 5. (6.) How often he repeated it; yet the cock had crowed once he continued in the temptation, and a second and third time relapsed into the sin. Is this Peter? How art thou fallen!

Thus was his sin aggravated; but, on the other hand, there is this to extenuate it—that what he said he said in his haste, Ps. 116. 11. He fell into the sin by surprise, not as Judas, with design; his heart was against it at the time, he was well aware, but it was unadvisedly and before he was aware.

II. Peter's repentance for this sin, v. 75. The former is written for our admonition, that we may not sin; but, if at any time we be overtaken, this is written for our imitation, that we may make haste to repent. Now observe,

1. What it was that brought Peter to repentance.
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(1) The cock crew; (v. 74.) a common contingency; and, Christ having mentioned the crowing of the cock that forewarning he gave him, that made it a means of bringing him to himself. The word of Christ can put a significance upon whatever sign he shall please to choose, and by virtue of that word he can make it very beneficial to the souls of his people. The crowing of a cock is to Peter, instead of a John Baptist, the voice of one calling to repentance. The cock should be to us as the cock, of the cock, to put us in mind of what we had forgotten. When David's heart smote him, the cock crew. Where there is a living principle of grace in the soul, though for the present overpowerd by temptation, a little hint will serve, only for a memorandum, when God sets in with it, to recover it from a by-path. Here was the crowing of a cock made a happy occasion of the conversion of a soul. Christ cometh sometimes in mercy at cock-crowing.

(2) He remembered the words of the Lord; this was it that brought him to himself, and melted him into tears of godly sorrow; a sense of his ingratitude to Christ, and the slight regard he had had to the gracious warning Christ had given him. Note, A serious reflection upon the words of the Lord Jesus will work a powerful induction to repentance, and will help to break down a heart grown hard: He is a penitent more than that he has sinned against the grace of the Lord Jesus, and the tokens of his love.

2. How his repentance was expressed; He went out and wept bitterly. (1.) His sorrow was secret; he went out, out of the high priest's hall, vexed at himself that ever he came into it, now that he found what a snafe he was in, and got out of it as fast as he could. He went out into the porch before, (v. 71.) and if he had gone quite off then, his second and third denial had been prevented; but then he came in again, now he went out and came in no more. He went out to some place of solitude and retirement, where he might bemoan himself, like the doves of the valleys, Ezek. 6. 9. Jer. 9. 1, 2. He went out, that he might not be disturbed in his devotions on this sad occasion. We may then be most free in our communion with God, when we are most free from the converse and business of this world. In mourning for sin, we find families apart, and their wives apart, Zech. 12. 11, 12.

(2.) His sorrow was serious; He wept bitterly. Sorrow for sin must not be slight, but great and deep. Those that have sinned sweetly, most weep bitterly; for, sooner or later, sin will be bitterness. This deep sorrow is requisite, not to satisfy divine justice, (a sea of tears would not do that;) but to evidence that there is a real change of mind, which is the essence of repentance, to make the pardon the more welcome, and sin for the future the more loathsome. Peter, who went weeping bitterly, thinking thus, I am going Christ, never denied him again, but confessed his faith to him openly, and in the mouth of danger; so far from ever saying, I know not the man, that he made all the house of Israel know assuredly that this same Jesus was Lord and Christ. True repentance for any sin will be best evidenced by our abounding in the contrary grace and office; that is a sign of our weeping, not only bitterly, but for that only sin. Those that have truly sorrowed for sin, will sorrow upon every remembrance of it; yet not so as to hinder, but rather to increase, their joy in God, and in his mercy and grace.

CHAP. XXXVII.

It is a very affecting story which is recorded in this chapter concerning the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus. Considering the thing itself, there cannot be a more tragic story told us; common humanity would melt the heart, to find an innocent and excellent person thus misused. But, considering the design and fruit of Christ's last signes for his gospel, it is good news, that Jesus Christ was thus delivered for our offences; and there is nothing we have more reason to glory in than the cross of Christ. In this chapter, observe, 1. How he was presented. 1. The council brought before Pilate, v. 1. 2. His trial before Pontius Pilate, v. 1. 3. The arraignment and trial of Christ before Pilate, v. 11. 4. The clamours of the people against him, v. 15. 5. Sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution, v. 26. 11. How he was executed. 1. He was barbarously used, v. 27. 30. 2. Led to the place of execution, v. 31. 3. There he had all possible indignities done him, and reproaches cast upon him, v. 44. 4. He was crucified, v. 50. 5. Many remarkable things attended his death, v. 50. 56. 6. He was buried, and a watch set on his grave, v. 57. 66.

1. WHEN the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took council against Jesus to put him to death. 2. And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor. 3. Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4. Saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. 5. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for us to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood. 7. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 9. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; 10. And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

We left Christ in the hands of the chief priests and elders, condemned to die, but they could only break his teeth; about two years 12. To this, the Romans had taken from the Jews the power of capital punishment; they could put no man to death, and therefore, early in the morning, another counsel is held, to consider what is to be done. And here we are told what was done in that morning-council, after they had been for two or three hours consulting with their pillows. 1. Christ is delivered up to Pilate, that he might execute the sentence they had passed upon him. Judea having been, almost one hundred years before this, conquered by Pompey, had ever since been tributary to Rome, and was lately made part of the province of Syria, and subject to the government of the president of Syria, under whom there were several procurators, who chiefly attended the business of the revenues, but sometimes, as Pilate particularly, had the whole power of the president lodged in them. This was a plain evidence that the secpfire was departed from Judah, and that therefore now
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the Shiloh must come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 10. Pilate is characterized, by the Roman writers of that time, as a man of a rough and haughty spirit, wilful and implacable, and extremely covetous and oppressive; the Jews had a great enmity to his person, and were weary of his government, and yet they made use of him as the tool of the malice against Christ.

1. They bound Jesus. He was bound when he was first seized; but either they took off these bonds when he was before the council, or now they added to them. Having found him guilty, they tied his hands behind him, as they usually do with convicted criminals. He was already bound with the bonds of love to man, and of his own undertaking, else he need not have been bound with cords.

We were fettered with the bond of iniquity, held in the cords of our sins; (Prov. 5. 22.) but God had bound the yoke of our transgressions upon the neck of the Lord Jesus, (Lam. 1. 14.) that we might be loosed by his bonds, as we are healed by his stripes.

2. They led him away in a sort of triumph, led him as a lamb to the slaughter; so was he taken from prison and from judgment, Isa. 53. 7, 8. It was not here to Calaphas's house to Pilate, but hither to the place of justice.

All that way they led him through the streets of Jerusalem, when, in the morning, they began to fill, to make him a spectacle to the world.

3. They delivered him to Pontius Pilate; according to that which Christ had often said, that he should be delivered to the Gentiles. Both Jews and Gentiles were oblivious to the judgment of God, and concluded under sin, and Christ was to be the Saviour both of Jews and Gentiles; and therefore Christ was brought into the judgment both of Jews and Gentiles, and both had a hand in his death. See how these corrupt church-rulers abused the civil magistrate, making use of him to execute their unrighteous decrees, and inflict the grievance which they had preserved, Isa. 10. 1. Thus have the kings of the earth been wretchedly imposed upon by the papal powers, and condemned to the drudgery of extinguishing with the sword of war, as well as that of justice, those whom they have marked for heretics, right or wrong, to the great prejudice of their own interests.

II. The money which they had paid to Judas, for betraying Christ, is by him delivered back to them, and Judas, in despair, hangs himself. The chief priests and elders supported themselves with this, in prosecuting Christ, that his own disciple betrayed him to them; but now, in the midst of the prosecution, that strength failed them, and even he is made to them a witness of Christ's innocence, and a monument of God's justice; which served, 1. For glory to Christ in the midst of his sufferings, and a specimen of his victory over Satan, who had entered into Judas. 2. For warning to his persecutors, and to leave them the more inexcusable. If their heart had been fully set in to do this evil, what Judas said and did, one would think, should have stopped the prosecution.

[1.] See here how Judas repented; not like Peter, who repented, believed, and was pardoned: no, he repented, despaired, and was ruined. Now observe here.

1. What induced him to repent. It was when he saw that he was condemned. Judas, it is probable, expected that either Christ would have made him a sinner, or that he would so have pleased his own cause at their bar as to have come off, and then Christ would have the honour, the Jews the shame, and he the money, and no harm done. This he had no reason to expect, because he had so often heard his Master say that he must be crucified; yet it is probable that he did expect it, and, when the event did not answer his vain fancy then he fell into this horror, when he saw the stream strong against Christ, and him yielding to it. Note, Those who make actions by the consequences of them, rather than by the divine law, will find themselves mistaken in their measures. The way of sin is down-hill; and if we cannot easily stop ourselves, and so less care for others, we are going in a sinful way. He repented himself; that is, he was filled with grief, anguish, and indignation, at himself, when reflecting upon what he had done. When he was tempted to betray his Master, the thirty pieces of silver looked very fine and glittering, like the wine, when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup. But when the thing was done, and the money paid, the silver was become dust, it bit his conscience like a beast. Now he curses the bag he carried, the money he coveted, the priests he dealt with, and the day that he was born. The remembrance of his Master's goodness to him, which he had so basely requited, the bowels of mercy he had spurned at, and the fair warnings he had slighted, steeled his convictions, and made them the more piercing. Now he found his Master's words true; It was better for that man that he had never been born. Note, Sin will soon change its taste. Though it be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, in the bowels it will be turned into the gall of asha. (Job 20. 12—14.) like John's book, Rev. 10. 9.

[2.] What were the indications of his repentance.

First, He made restitution; He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests, when they were all together publicly. Now the money burned in his conscience, and he was as sick of it as ever he had been fond of it. Note, That which is ill-gotten will never do good to those that get it, Jer. 13. 10. Job 20. 15. If he had repented, and brought the money back before he had betrayed Christ, he might have done it with comfort, then he had agreed while yet in the way; but now it was too late, now he cannot do it without horror, wishing ten thousand times he had never meddled with it. See Jam. 3. 5. He brought it again.

What is unjustly gotten must not be kept; for that is a continuance in the sin by which it was got, and such an avowing of it as is not consistent with repentance. He brought it to those from whom he had it, to let them know that he repented his bargain. Note, Those who have served and hardened others in their sin, when God gives them repentance, should let them know it, whose sins they have been partakers in, that it may be a means to bring them to repentance.

Secondly, He made confession; (v. 4.) I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood. 1. To the honour of Christ, he pronounces his blood innocent. If he had been guilty of any sinful practices, Judas, as his disciple, would certainly have known it, and, as his betrayer, would certainly have discovered it; but he, freely, and without being urged to it, acceded to it, as a confession of that of those who had now pronounced him guilty. 2. To his own shame, he confesses that he had sinned, in betraying this blood. He does not lay the blame on any one else; does not say, *You have sinned in hiring me to do it;* but takes it all to himself; *I have sinned, in doing it.* Thus far Judas went to ward his repentance, yet it was not to salvation.
He confessed, but not to God, did not go to him, and say, I have sinned, Father, against heaven. He confessed the betraying of innocent blood, but did not confess that wicked love of money which was the root of this evil. There are those who betray Christ, and yet justify themselves in it, and so come short of Judas.

[1.] See here how carelessly they speak of the betraying of Christ. Judas had told them that he was innocent of blood. politics, of the commission of the greatest wickedness. Thus light do many make of Christ crucified; what is it to them, that he suffered such things?

[2.] See here how carelessly they speak of the sin of Judas; he said, I have sinned, and they said, "What is that to us? What are we concerned in this thiny, that thou tellst us of it?" Note, It is folly for us to think that the sins of others are nothing to us, especially those sins that we are any way necessary to, or partakers in. Is it nothing to us, that God is dishonourable, souls wounded, Satan gratified, and his interest served, and that we have aided and abetteth it? If the elders of Jezreel, to please Jezebel, murder Naboth, is that nothing to Ahab? Yes, he has killed, for he has taken possession, 1 Kings 21. 19. The guilt of sin is not so easily transferred as some people think it is. If there were guilt in the matter, they tell Judas that he must look to it, he must bear it. First, Because he had betrayed him to them. His was indeed the greater sin; (John 19. 11.) but it did not therefore follow that there's was no sin. It is a common instance of the deceitfulness of our hearts, to extenuate our own sin by the aggravation of other people's sins. But the greater sin is the sin of self-deception. A man is according to truth, not according to comparison. Secondly, Because he knew and believed him to be innocent. "If he be innocent, see thou toit, that is more than we know; we have adjudged him guilty, and therefore may justly prosecute him as such." Wicked practices are beguiled by wicked principles, and particularly by his, That sin is sin only to those that think it to be so; that it is no harm to persecute a good man, if we take him to be a bad man; but those who thus think to mock God, will but deceive and destroy themselves.

[3.] See how carelessly they speak of the conviction, terror, and remorse, that Judas was under. They were glad to make use of him in the sin, and were then very fond of him; none more welcome to them. So Judas, he said, I will give me, and I will betray him? They did not say, What is that to us? But, now that his sin had put him into a fright, now they slighted him, had nothing to say to him, but turned him over to his own terrors; why did he come to trouble them with his melancholy fancies? They had something else to do than to heed him. But why so shy? First, He that was a traitor was a man of a base heart, the sparks of his conviction, brought too near, should kindle a fire in their own consciences, and lest his moans, listened to, should give an alarm to their own convictions. Note, Obstinate sinners stand upon their guard against convictions; and those that are resolvedly impudent, look with disdain upon the penitent. Secondly, However, they were in no concern to succour Judas; when they had brought him into the snare, they not only left him, but laughed at him. Note, Sinners, under convictions, will find their old companions in sin but miserable comforters. It is easier to be tempted by them, than to love the truth, and to love the company of these. (2.) Here is the utter despair that Judas was hereby driven into. If the chief priests had promised him to stay the prosecution, it would have been some comfort to him; but, seeing no hopes of that, he grew desperate, v. 5.

1. He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple. The chief priests would not take the money, for fearing their being discovered to themselves, which they were willing that Judas should bear the load of; Judas would not keep it, it was too hot for him to hold, he therefore threw it down in the temple, that, whether they would or no, it might fall into the hands of the chief priests. See what a drug money was, when the guilt of sin was tacked to it, or was thought to be.

2. Secondly, he retired. He hanged himself. First, he retired.—First, he went into some solitary place, like the possessed man that was drawn by the devil into the wilderness, Luke 8. 29. Woe to him that is in despair, and is alone. If Judas had gone to Christ, or to some of the disciples, perhaps he might have had relief, bad as the case was; but, missing of it with the chief priests, he abandoned himself to despair: and the sin of devil, that with the help of the priests, drew him to the sin, with their help drove him to despair. Secondly, He became his own executioner; He hanged himself; he was suffocated with grief, v. 10. Dr. Hammond: but Dr. Whitby is clear that our translation is right. Judas had a sight and sense of sin, but no apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, and so he fixed away in his iniquity. His was not, in its own nature, unpardonable, there were some of those saved, that had been Christ's betrayers and murderers; but he concluded, as Cain, that his iniquity was greater than could be forgiven, and would rather throw himself on the devil's mercy than God's. And some have said, that Judas sinned more in despairing of the mercy of God, than in betraying his Master's blood. Now, he had not, in his own nature, resolved to such a way: and they that draw their selves in array against him. All the curses written in God's book now came into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones, as was foretold concerning him, (Ps. 109. 18, 19.) and drove him to this desperate shift, for the escaping of a hell within him, to leap into that before him, which was but the perfection and perpetuity of this horror and despair. He throws himself into the fire, to avoid the flame; but mischie is the case when a man must go to hell for ease.

Now, in this story, 1. We have an instance of the wretched end of those into whom Satan enters, and particularly those that are given up to the love of money. This is the destruction in which many are drowned by it, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. Remember what became of the swine into which, and of the traitor into whom, this had gone at last. 2. We have an instance of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, Rom. 1. 18. As in the story of Peter we beheld the goodness of God, and the triumphs of Christ's grace in the conversion of some sinners; so in the story of Judas we behold the severity of God, and the triumphs of Christ's power and justice in the execution of sinners. When Judas, into whom Satan entered, was thus hung up, Christ made an open shew of the principalities and powers he undertook the spoiling of, Col. 2. 15. 3. We have an instance of the direful
effects of despair; it often ends in self-murder. Sorrow, even that for sin, if not according to God, worketh death, (2 Cor. 7. 10.) the worst kind of death, for a wounded spirit who can bear? Let us think as bad as we can of sin, provided we do not think it unpardonable; let us despair of help in ourselves, but not of help in God. He that thinks so, is at once self-murdering by destroying his life, doth in effect, dare God Almighty to do his worst. And self-murder, though prescribed by some of the heathen moralists, is certainly a remedy worse than the disease, how bad soever the disease may be. Let us watch against the beginnings of melancholy, and pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation.

(4.) The disposal of the money which Judas brought. It was laid out in the purchase of a field, called the potter's field; because some potter had owned it, or occupied it, or lived near it, or because broken potter's vessels were thrown into it. And this field was to be a burying-place for strangers, that is, proselytes to the Jewish religion, who were of other nations, and, coming to Jerusalem to worship, happened to die there. [1.] It looks like an instance of their humanity, that they thought of burying strangers. This were unreasonable if they should bury themselves; for they themselves allowed, (as St. Paul saith, Acts 24. 15.) that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust; for we therefore take care of the dead body, not only because it has been the habitation of a rational soul, but because it must be so again. But, [2.] It was no instance of their humanity that they would bury strangers in a place by themselves, as if they were not worthy to be laid in their burying-places; strangers must keep their distance, alive and dead, and that principle must go down to the grave, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou, Isa. 65. 5. The sons of Heth were better affected towards Abraham, though a stranger among them, when they offered him the choicest of their own sepulchres, Gen. 23. 6. But the sons of the stranger, that have joined themselves to the Lord, though buried by themselves, shall rise with all that are dead in Christ.

This burying of the potter's field did not take place on the day that Christ died; (they were then too busy to mind any thing else but hunting him down;) but it took place not long after; for Peter speaks of it soon after Christ's ascension; yet it is here recorded.

First, To shew the hypocrisy of the chief priests and elders. They were maliciously persecuting the blessed Jesus, and now,

1. They scruple to put that money into the treasury, or corban, of the temple, with which they had hired the traitor. Though, perhaps, they had taken it out of the treasury, pretending it was for the public good, and though they were great sticklers for the corban, and laboured to draw all the wealth of the nation into it, yet they would not put that money into it, which was the price of blood. The hire of a traitor they thought paralleled to the hire of a whore, and the price of a malefactor, (such a one they made Christ to be,) equivalent to the price of a dog, neither of which was to be brought into the house of the Lord, Deut. 23. 18. They would thus save their credit with the people, by possessing them with an opinion of their great reverence for the temple. Thus they that swallowed a mite for their own sake.

2. They think to alone for what they had done, by this public good act of providing a burying-place for strangers, though not at their own charge. Thus, in times of ignorance, people were made to believe that building churches and endowing monasteries would make amends for immoralities.

Secondly, To signify the favour intended by the blood of Christ to strangers, and sinners of the Gentiles. Through the price of his blood, a resting-place is provided for them after death. Thus many of the ancients apply this passage. The grave is the potter's field, where the bodies are thrown as despised broken vessels; but Christ, by his blood, purchased a burying-place for sinners on earth, seek the better country: he has altered the property of it, (as a purchaser doth,) so that now death is our's, the grave is our's, a bed of rest for us. The Germans, in their language, call burying-places God's fields; for in them God sows his people as a corn of wheat, John 12. 24. See Hos. 2. 19. 23. 18.

Thirdly, It shows the iniquity of the infamy of those that bought and sold the blood of Christ. This field was commonly called Acedam—the field of blood; not by the chief priests, they hoped in this burying-place to bury the remembrance of their own crime; but by the people; who took notice of Judas's acknowledgment that he had betrayed the innocent blood, though the chief priests made nothing of it. They fastened this name upon the field in perpetuum rei memoriam—for a perpetual memorial.

Note, Divine Providence has many ways of entailing disgrace upon the wicked practices even of great men, who, though they seek to cover their shame, are put to a perpetual reproach.

Fourthly, That we may see how the scripture was fulfilled; (v. 9, 10.) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet. The words quoted are found in the prophecy of Zechariah, ch. 11. 12. "We should not be held to be speaking of Jeremy as a difficult question; but the credit of Christ's doctrine doth not depend upon it; for that proves itself perfectly divine, though there should appear something human as to small circumstances in the penmen of it. The Syriac version, which is ancient, reads only, It was spoken by the prophet, not naming any, whence some thought that Jeremy was added by some scribe; some think that this whole volume of the prophets, being in one book, and the prophecy of Jeremiah put first, it might not be improper, currante calamo—for a transcriber to quote any passage out of that volume, under his name. The Jews used to say, The spirit of Jeremiah was in Zechariah, and so they were as one prophet. Some suggest that it was spoken by Jeremiah, but written by Zechariah; or that Jeremiah wrote the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Zechariah. This passage is the representation of the great contempt of God that was found among the Jews, and the poor returns they made to him for rich receiving from him. But here that is really acted, which was there but figuratively expressed. The sum of money is the same—thirty pieces of silver, this they weighed for his price, at this rate they valued him; a goodly price; and this was cast to the potter in the house of the Lord; which was here literally and properly so. Now, we should better understand the events of Providence, if we were better acquainted even with the language and expressions of scripture; for even those also are sometimes written upon the dispensations of Providence so plainly, that he who runs may read them. What David spake figuratively, (Ps. 42. 7.) Jonah made a literal application of; All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me, Jon. 2. 3. Thus giving due price, not for him that put for the potter's field, bespeaks, 1. The high value that ought to be put upon Christ. The price was given, not for him; no, when it was given for him, it was soon brought back again with disdain, as infinitely below his worth; he cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, nor this unspeakable gift bought with money. 2. The low value that was put upon him. They of the children of Israel
Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

We have here an account of what passed in Pilate's judgment-hall, when the blessed Jesus was brought thither betimes in the morning. Though it was no court-day, Pilate immediately took his case before him. We have here,

1. The trial Christ had before Pilate.
2. His arraignment; Jesus stood before the governor, and the people before the judge. We could not stand before God because of our sins, nor lift up our face in his presence, if Christ had not been thus made sin for us. He was arraigned that we might be discharged. Some think that this bespeaks his courage and boldness; he stood undaunted, unmoved by all their rage. He thus stood in this judgment, that we might stand in God's judgment.

2. His indictment; Art thou the king of the Jews? The Jews were now not only under the government, but under the very jealous inspection, of the Roman powers, which they were themselves to the highest degree disaffected to, and yet now pretend a concern for, to serve this turn; accusing Jesus as an enemy to the Roman government. (Luke 13:35.) This the Jewish lords could not endure; nor would they, than that he himself had newly owned he was the Christ. Now, they thought that whoever was the Christ must be the king of the Jews, and must deliver them from the Roman power, and restore to them a temporal dominion, and enable them to trample upon all their neighbours. According to this chimera of their own, they accused our Lord Jesus, as making himself king of the Jews, in opposition to the Roman yoke; whereas, though he said that he was the Christ, he meant not such a Christ as this. Note, Many oppose Christ's holy religion, upon a mistake of the nature of it; they dress it up in false colours, and then fight against it. They assuring the governor, that, if he made himself Christ, he made himself king of the Jews, the governor takes it for granted, that he goes about to pervert the nation and subvert the government.

3. Art thou a king? It was plain that he was not so de facto—actually; "But dost thou lay any claim to the government, or pretend a right to rule the Jews? Note, It has often been the hard fate of Christ's holy religion, unjustly to fall under the suspicions of the civil powers, as if it were hurtful to kings and provinces, whereas it tends mightily to the benefit of both.

4. His plea; Jesus said unto him, "Thou sayest. It is as thou sayest, though not as thou meanest; I am a king, but not such a king as thou dost suspect me to be." Thus, before Pilate, he witnessed a good confession, and was not ashamed to own himself a King, though it looked ridiculous, nor afraid, though at this time it was dangerous.

5. The evidence; (v. 12.) He was accused of the chief priests, that he was a familiar friend with Sin in him; what ever was said, nothing was proved, and therefore what was wanting in matter they made up in noise and violence, and followed him with repeated accusations, the same as they had given in before; but by the repetitions they thought to force a belief from the governor. They had learned, not only calumniari—to calumniate, but also calumniari—to calumniate stoutly. The best men have often been accused of the worst crimes.

6. The prisoner's silence as to the prosecutors' accusations; He answered nothing. (1.) Because there was no occasion; nothing was alleged but what carried its own confutation along with it. (2.) He was now taken up with the great concern that lay between him and his Father, to whom he was offering up himself a sacrifice, to answer the demands of
his justice, which he was so intent upon, that he
mined not what they said against him. 3. His hour
was come, and he submitted to his Father's
will; Not as I will, but as thou wilt. He knew
what his Father's will was, and therefore silently
committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.
We must not think that to commit ourselves to God,
for He is our Father, we are not lords of our lives, as Christ
was of his: nor can we know, as he did, when our
hour is come. But hence we must learn, not to ren-
der railing for railing, 1 Pet. 2. 23.

Now, [1.] Pilate pressed him to make some re-
ply; (v. 13.) Hearst thou not how many things they
witness against thee? What these things were, may
be gathered from Luke 23. 3, 5. and John 19. 7. Pilat
had no mind to answer; and he was not called to
shun; he should clear himself, urges him to it, and
believes he could do it; Hearst thou not? Yes, he
did hear; and still he hears all that is witnessed un-
justly against his truths and ways; but he keeps
silence, because it is the day of his patience, and
doth not answer, as he will shortly, Ps. 50. 3. [2.] He
wondered at his silence; which was not inter-
preted so much into contempt of the court, as a con-
tempt of the cause, which Pilate is not said to be
anxious about: but to have marvelled greatly at
it, as a thing very unusual. He believed him to be
innocent, and had heard, perhaps, that never man
spake like him; and therefore he thought it strange
that he had not one word to say for himself. We
have,
II. The outrage and violence of the people, in
pressing the governor to crucify Christ. The chief
priests had a great interest in the people, they call-
ed them Rabbi, Rabbi, made idols of them, and
oracles of all they said; and they made use of this,
to incense them against him, and by the power of
the mob gained the point which they could not
otherwise carry. Now, here are two instances of
their outrage.

1. Their preferring Barabbas before him, and
choosing to have him released rather than Jesus.
(1.) It seems, it was grown into a custom with the
Roman governors, for the honouring of the Jews,
to grace the feast of the passover with the release
of a prisoner, v. 15. This, they thought, did honour
to the feast, and was agreeable to the commemora-
tion of their deliverance; but it was an invention
of their own, and no divine institution; though some
think that it was ancient, and kept up by the Jewish
princes, before they became a province of the em-
phire. However, it was a bad custom, an obstruc-
tion to justice, and an encouragement to wickedness.
But our gospel-passover is celebrated with the
release of prisoners, by him who hath power on earth
to forgive sins.
(2.) The prisoner put in competition with our
Lord Jesus, was, Barabbas: he is here called a nota-
bile prisoner; (v. 16.) either because, by birth and
breeding, he was a man of note and quality, or be-
caus he had signalized himself by something re-
markable in his crimes; whether he was so notable
as to recommend himself to the more of the people,
and so the more likely to be interceded for, or whether so notable as to make himself more liable to their rage, is uncertain. Some think the
latter, and therefore Pilate mentioned him, as taking
it for granted that they would have desired any one's
release rather than he. Therefore, v. 17. (1.) Treason, murder, and
and rebellion, are three most heinous crimes, which
are usually punished by the sword of justice; and
Barabbas was guilty of all three, Luke 23. 19. John
18. 40. A notable prisoner indeed, whose crimes
were so complicated.
(3.) The proposal was made by Pilate the
governor; (v. 17.) Whom will ye that I release unto
you? It is probable that the judge had the nomi-
nation of two, one of which the people were to choose.
Pilate proposed to them to have Jesus released; he
was convinced of his innocence, and that the prose-
cution was malicious; yet had not the courage to
acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own
power, but would have him released by the people's
accusation, and so he hoped to satisfy both his con-
science, and the people too; whereas, finding no
fault in him, he ought not to have put him upon
the country, or brought him into the peril of his life.
But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim
the matter, and to keep in with conscience and
the world too, are the common practice of those
that seek more to please men than God. What shall
I do, said Pilate, who is called Christ's
servant, and of this, that this Jesus, whose release he proposed, was locked upon
by some among them as the Messiah, and had given
pregnant proofs of his being so; "Do not reject one,
of whom your nation has professed such an expecta-
tion."
The reason why Pilate laboured thus to get Jesus
discharged, was, because he knew that for only
the chief priests had delivered him up; (v. 18.) that it
was only by a small piece of good-nature, that they were
provoked at; and for this reason he hoped to bring
him off by the people's act, and that they would be
for his release. When David was envied by Saul,
he was the darling of the people; and any one that
heard the hosannam with which Christ was but a
few days ago brought into Jerusalem, would have
thought that he had been so, and that Pilate might
safely have referred this matter to the common
vote; especially when so notorious a rogue was set up as a
rival with him for their favours. But it proved
otherwise.
(4.) While Pilate was thus labouring the matter,
he was confirmed in his unwillingness to condemn
Jesus, by a message sent him from his wife, (v. 19.) by
way of caution; Have thou nothing to do with
that just Man, (together with the reason,) for I
have suffered many things this day in a dream be-
cause of him. Probably, this message was delivered
to Pilate publicly, in the hearing of all that were
present, for it was intended to be a warning not to him
only, but to the prosecutors. Observe,
[1.] The special providence of God, in sending
this dream to Pilate's wife; it is not likely that she
had heard any thing, before, concerning Christ, at
least, not so as to occasion her dreaming of him, but
it was immediately from God; perhaps, some one of
the devout and honourable women, and had some
sense of religion yet God revealed himself by
dreams to some that had not, as to Nekuchadnezzar.
She suffered many things in this dream; whether
she dreamed of the cruel usage of an innocent
person, or of the judgments that would fall upon those
that had any hand in his death, or both, it seems
that it was a frightful dream, and her thoughts
troubled her, as Dan. 2. 12, 13. The meaning of
the devouring and honourable women, and had some
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the devouring and honourable women, and had some
sense of religion yet God revealed himself by
declared he found no fault in him; when the women that loved him stood afar off, Pilate's wife, who knew little of him, shewed a concern for him. Note, God will not leave himself without witnesses to the truth and equity of his cause, even then when it seems to be most spitefully run down by its enemies, and most shamefully deserted by his friends. 

Secondly, It was a fair warning to Pilate; Have no

Note, it was a fair warning to Pilate; he was giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them. Oh do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates, is what we may hear said to us, when we are entering into temptation, if we will but regard it. Pilate would not have those warnings upon his conscience, he would not have to answer for his conduct. The love of God is given to the world, but not without price, there must be zeal and concern against sin.

2. Their pressing earnestly to have Jesus crucified, v. 22, 23. Pilate, being amazed at their choice of Barabbas, was willing to hope that it was rather from a fondness for him than from enmity to Jesus, and to make them, "What shall I do then with Jesus? Shall I release him likewise, for the greater honour of your feast, or will you leave it to me?" No, they all said, Let him be crucified. That death they desired he might die, because it was looked upon as the most scandalous and ignominious; and they hoped thereby to make his followers ashamed to own him, and their relation to him. It was absurd for them to present a case to Pilate, to judge what sentence he should pass; but their malice and rage made them forget all rules of order and decency, and turned a court of justice into a riotous, tumultuous, and sedition assembly. Now was truth fallen into the street, and equity could not enter; where one looked for judgment, behold, oppression, the worst cry that ever was.

(Acts 3. 14.) Ye desired a murderer to be granted you; yet multitudes who choose the world, rather, than God, for their ruler and portion, thus choose their own delusions.

Crucify, crucify the Lord of glory. Though they that cried thus, perhaps, were not the same persons that the other day had cried Hosanna, yet see what a change was made upon the mind of the populace in a little time: when he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, so general were the acclamations of praise, that one would have thought he had no enemies; but now, when he was led in triumph to Pilate's judgment-seat, so general were the outcries of enmity, that one would think he had no friends. Such revolutions are there in this changeable world, through which our way to heaven lies, as our Master's did, by honour and dishonour, by evil report, and good report, counterchanged; (2 Cor. 6. 8.) that we may not be lifted up by honour, as if, when we were applauded and caressed, we had made our nest among the stars, and should die in that nest; nor yet be dejected or discouraged by dishonour, as if, when we were despised and trampled upon, we were trodden to the lowest hell, from which there is no redemption. Vide tu istos qui te laudant; omnes aut sunt hostes, aut (quod in verbo est) esse possunt.—You observe those who applaud you; either they are all your enemies, or which is equal, they may not be before God and your Maker.

Now, in this demand, we are further told, (1.) How Pilate objected against it: Who, what evil has he done? A proper question to ask before we censure any in common discourse, much more for a judge to ask before he pass a sentence of death. Note, It is much for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that, though he suffered as an evil-doer, yet neither his judge nor his prosecutors could find that he had done any evil.

(2.) What was Pilate's answer: How, then? He could see nothing to condemn him. No, he always did those things that pleased him. Had he done any evil against the civil government? No, as he did himself, so he taught others, to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's. Had he done any evil against the public peace? No, he did not strive or cry, nor did his kingdom come with observation. Had he done any evil to particular persons? No, he who was for the good of the whole. No, so far from that, that he went about doing good. This repeated assertion of his unspotted innocence, plainly intimates that he died to satisfy for the sins of others; for, if it had not been for our transgressions that he was thus wounded, and for our offences that he was delivered up, and that upon his own voluntary undertaking to atone for them, I see not how these extraordinary sufferings of a person that had never thought, said, or done, any thing amiss, could be reconciled with the
justice and equity of that Providence that governs

the world, and at least permitted this to be done

in it.

(2.) How they insisted upon it; They cried out

the more, Let him be crucified. They do not go

about to shew any evil he had done, but, right or

wrong, he must be crucified. Quitting all preten-

sions to the proof of the premises, they resolve to

hold the conclusion, and what was wanting in evi-

dence to make up in clamour; this unjust judge was

wearyed by importunity into an unjust sentence, as

he in the parable into a just one (Luke 18. 4.) and

therefore no appeal was made.

III. Here is the devolving of the guilt of Christ's

bliss upon the people and priests.

1. Pilate endeavours to transfer it from himself,

v. 24.

(1.) He sees it to no purpose to contend. What

he said. 1. Would do no good; he could prevail

nothing; he could not convince them what an

unreasonable thing it was for him to condemn a

man whom he believed innocent, and whom they could

not prove guilty. See how strong the stream of lust

and rage sometimes is; neither authority nor reason

will prevail to give check to it. Nay, [2.] It was

more likely to do hurt; he saw that rather a tumult

was made. This rude and brutish people fell to

high words, and began to threaten Pilate what they

would be at him, and how great a matter might this fire

kindle, especially when the priests, those great ince-

diaries, blew the coals! Now this turbulent tumultuous

temper of the Jews, by which Pilate was awed to condemn

Christ against his conscience, contributed more than any thing to

the ruin of that nation not long after; for their frequent insurrections

provoked the Romans to destroy them, though they had reduced them, and

their inveterate quarrels among themselves made them an easy prey to the

common enemy. Thus their sin was their ruin.

Observe how easily we may be mistaken in the

inclination of the common people; the priests were

apprehensive that their endeavours to seize Christ

would have caused an uproar, especially on the feast
day; but it proved that Pilate's endeavours to save

him in the midst of an uproar, and that on the feast
day; so uncertain are the sentiments of the crowd.

(2.) This puts him into a great strait, betwixt the

peace of his own mind, and the peace of the city;

he is loath to condemn an innocent man, and yet

loath to disembarge the people, and raise a devil that

would not be so soon hied. Had he steadily and reso-

lutely adhered to the sacred laws of justice, as a

judge ought to do, he had not been in any perplexity;

the matter was plain and past dispute, that a man

in whom was found no fault, ought not to be cruci-

fied upon any pretence whatsoever, nor must an un-

just thing be done, to gratify any man, or company

of men, in the world; the cause is soon decided; Let

justice be done, though heaven and earth come togeth-
er—Thus justicia, nunc cadit. If wickedness

proceed from the wicked, then, their priests, ye shall be exorci-

ated and punished for him.

(3.) Pilate thinks it to train the matter, and to pacify

both the people and his own conscience too, by doing

it, and yet disowning it, acting the thing, and yet

acquitting himself from it at the same time. Such

absurdities and self-contradictions do they run upon,

whose convictions are strong, but their corruptions

stronger. Happy is he (saith the apostle, Rom. 14.
22.) that condeemeth not himself in that thing which

he allows; or, which is all one, that allows not him-

self in that thing which he condemns.

Now Pilate endeavours to clear himself from the

guilt,

[1.] By a sign; He took water, and washed his

hands before the multitude; not as if he thought

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thereby to cleanse himself from any guilt contracted

before God, but to acquit himself before the people,

from so much as contracting any guilt himself; he

had said, if it be done, hear witness that it is none of my doing." He borrowed the ceremony

from that law which appointed it to be used for the

clearing of the country from the guilt of an undis-

covered murder; (Deut. 21. 6.) and he used it the

more to affect the people with the conviction he

was under of the prisoner's innocence; and, proba-

bly, such was the noise of the rabble, that, if he

had not used this surprising sign, in the view of them

all, he could not have been heard.

[2.] By a saying; in which, First, He clears him

self; I am innocent of the blood of this just person;

What nonsense was this, to condemn him, and yet

protest that he is innocent of his blood! For men

to protest against a thing, and yet to practice it, is

only to proclaim that they sin against the tenents

of justice. "Here saith Pilate, and to confirm his inno-

cence, God charges him with guilt, Acts 4. 27.

Some think to justify themselves, by pleading that their hands

were not in the sin; but David kills by the sword of

the children of Ammon, and Ahab by the elders of

Jezreel. Pilate here thinks to justify himself,

by pleading that his heart was not in the action;

but this is an avowment which will never be admi-

itted. Protestations and violent pleas against the
deed which at the same time he perpetrates.

Secondly, He cast it upon the priests and people; "See ye to it; if it must be

done, I cannot help it, do you answer it before God

and the world." Note, Sin is a brat that nobody

is willing to own; and many deceive themselves with

this, that they shall bear no blame if they can but

find any to lay the blame upon; but it is not so easy

a thing to this generation, and how great a matter

this is.

The condition of him that is infected with the

plague is not the less dangerous, either for his catching

the infection from others, or his communicat-

ing the infection to others; we may be tempted to

sin, but cannot be forced. The priests threw it

upon Judas; See thou to it; and now Pilate throws it

upon them; See ye to it; for with what measure

ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

The priests he supposed to take the guilt upon themselves; they all said, "His blood

be on us, and on our children;" we are so well assured that there is neither sin nor danger in putting him
to death, that we are willing to run the hazard of it; as if the guilt would do no harm to them or their's.

They saw that it was the dread of guilt, that made

Pilate hesitate, and that he was getting over this
difficulty by a fancy of transferring it; to prevent the

return of his historian, and to confirm him in that

fancy, they, in the heat of their rage, agreed to it,

rather than lose the prey they had in their hands,

and cried, His blood be upon us. Now,

(1.) By this they designed to indemnify Pilate,

that is, to make him think himself indemnified, by

becoming bound to divine justice to save him harm-

less. But those that are themselves bankrupts and

beggars, will nearly indemnify the guilt of others

as the devil indemnified the guilt of the murderer,

the, and, in the abyss of misery it would bring them and their's! Christ had lately told them, that upon them would

come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth,

from that of the righteous Abel; but, as if that were

too little, they here imprecate upon themselves the
guilt of that blood which was more precious than all the rest, and the guilt of which would lie heavy, Oh the daring presumption of wilful sinners, that run upon God, upon his neck, and defy his justice! John 15. 25. 26. Observe,

13. How cruel they were in their imprecation. They imprecated the punishment of this sin, not only upon themselves, but upon their children too, even those that were yet unborn, without so much as limiting the entail of the curse, as God himself had been pleased to limit it, to the third and fourth generation. It was madness to pull it upon themselves, but the height of barbarity to entail it on their posterity. Surely they were like the ostrich that they were hardened against their young ones, as though they were not their's. What a dreadful conveyance was this of guilt and wrath to them and their heirs for ever, and this delivered by joint consent, nemine contradicente—unanimously, as their own act and deed; which certainly amounted to a forfeiture and defeasance of that ancient charter, I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed. Their entailing the curse of the Messiah's blood upon their nation, cut off the entail of the blessings of that blood from their families, that, according to another promise made to Abraham, in him all the families of the earth might be blessed. See what enemies wicked men are to their own children and families; those that damn their own souls, care not how many they blacken with them.

14. How righteous God was, in his retribution according to this imprecation; they said, His blood be on us, and on our children; and God said Amen to it, so shall thy doom be; as they loved cursing, so it came upon them. The wretched remains of that abandoned people feel it to this day; from the time they imprecated this blood upon them, they were followed with one judgment after another, till they were quite laid waste, and made an astonishment, a hissing, and a by-word; yet on some of them, and some of their's, this blood came, not to condemn them, but to save them; divine mercy, upon their repenting and believing, cut off this entail, and then the promise was again to them, and to their children. God is better to us and our's than we are.

26. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. 27. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. 28. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. 29. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews! 30. And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. 31. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. 32. And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

In these verses we have the preparations for, and preface to, the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. Here is,

1. The sentence passed, and the warrant signed for his execution; and this immediately, the same hour.

1. Barabbas was released, that notorious criminal if he had not been put in competition with Christ for the favour of the people, it is probable that he had died for his crimes; but John himself did the just fit to his escape; to intimate that Christ was condemned for this purpose, that sinners, even the chief of sinners, might be released; he was delivered up, that he might be delivered; whereas the common instance of Divine Providence, is, that the wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright. Prov. 21. 18.—11. 18. In this unjustified instance of Divine grace, the upright is a ransom for the transgressors, the just for the unjust. 2. Jesus was scourged; this was an ignominious cruel punishment, especially as it was inflicted by the Romans, who were not under the moderation of the Jewish law, which forbade scourgings above forty stripes; this punishment was most unreasonably inflicted on one that was sentenced to die; the rods were not to introduce the axes, but to supersede them. Thus the scripture was fulfilled, The ploughers ploughed on my back, (Ps. 129. 3.) I gave my back to the smiters, (Isa. 50. 6.) and By his stripes we are healed, Isa. 53. 5. He was chastised with whips, that we might not be for ever chastised with scorpi ons.

3. He was then delivered to be crucified; though his damnation was in order to our peace, yet there is no peace made but by the blood of his cross; (Col. 1. 20.) therefore the scourging is not enough, he must be crucified; a kind of death used only among the Romans; the manner of it is, such that it seems to be the result of wit and cruelty in combination, each putting forth itself to the utmost, to make death in the highest degree terrible and miserable. A cross was set up in the ground, to which the hands and feet were nailed, on which nails the weight of the body hung, till it died of the pain. This was the death to which Christ was condemned, that he might answer the type of the brazen serpent lifted up upon a pole. It was a bloody death, a painful, shameful, cursed death; it was so miserable a death, that merciful princes appointed those who were condemned to it by the law to be strangled first, and then nailed to the cross; so was Caesar done by pirates, Sueton. lib. 1. Constantine, the first Christian emperor, by an edict abolished the use of that punishment among the Romans, Sozomen. Hist. lib. 1. ch. 8. Ne saltare signum subversur ad perniciem—That the symbol of salvation might not be subservient to the victim's destruction.

II. The barbarous treatment which the soldiers gave him, while things were getting ready for his execution. When he was condemned, he ought to have had some time allowed him to prepare for death. There was a law made by the Roman senate, in Tiberius's time, perhaps upon complaint of this and the like precipitation, that the execution of criminals should be deferred at least ten days after sentence. Sueton. in Tiber. cap. 25. But there were scarcely twenty, or so many minutes, to our Lord, nor had he any breathing time during those minutes; it was a cruelty, and there were no lucid intervals allowed him; deep called unto deep, and the storm continued without any intermission.

When he was delivered to be crucified, that was enough; they that kill the body, yield that there is no more that they can do, but Christ's enemies will do more, and, if it be necessary, to our thousand thousand death. Though Pilate pronounced him innocent, yet his soldiers, his guards, set themselves to abuse him, being swayed more by the fury of the people against him, than by their master's testimony for him; the Jewish rabble infected the Roman soldiery, or perhaps it was not so much in spite to him, as
to make sport for themselves, that they thus abused him. They understood that he pretended to a crown; to taunt him with that gave them some diversion, and an opportunity to make themselves and one another merry. Note, It is an argument of a base, sordid spirit, to insult over those that are in misery, and to make the calamities of any, matter of sport and merriment.

II. Where this was done—in the common hall. The governor's house, which should have been a shelter to the wronged and abused, is made the theatre of this barbarity. I wonder that the governor, who was so desirous to acquire himself from the blood of this just person, would suffer this to be done in his house. Perhaps he did not order it to be done, but he connived at it; and those in authority will be accounted answerable, for their neglecting to prevent that which they do or appoint, but for that which they do not restrain, when it is in the power of their hands. Masters of families should not suffer their houses to be places of abuse to any, nor their servants to make sport with the sins, or miscarriages, or religion, of others.

2. Who were concerned in it. They gathered the whole band, the soldiers that were to attend the execution, would have the whole regiment (at least five hundred) some with two, some with three, and share in the division. If Christ was thus made a Spectacle, let none of his followers think it strange to be so used, 1 Cor. 4. 9. Heb. 10. 33.

3. What particular indignities were done him.(1.) They stripped him, v. 23. The shame of nakedness came in with sin; (Gen. 3. 7.) and therefore Christ, when he came to satisfy for sin, and take it away, was made naked, and submitted to that shame, that he might prepare for us white raiment to cover us, Rev. 3. 18.

(2.) They put on him a scarlet robe, some old red cloak, such as the Roman soldiers wore, in imitation of the scarlet robes which kings and emperors wore; thus upbraiding him with his being called a King. This sham of majesty they put upon him in his dress, when nothing but meanness and misery appeared in his countenance, only to expose him to the spectators, as the more ridiculuous; yet there was something of mystery in it: this was he that was red in his apparel, (Isa. 63. 1, 2.) that washed his garments in wine; (Gen. 49. 10.) therefore he was dressed in a scarlet robe. Our sins were as scarlet and crimson. Christ being clad in a scarlet robe, signified his bearing our sins, to his shame, in his own body upon the tree: that we might wash our robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

(3.) They flatted a crown of thorns, and put it upon his head, v. 29. This was to carry on the humour of making him a mock-king; yet, had they intended it only for a reproach, they might have flatted a crown of straw, or rushes, but they designed it to be painful to him, and to be literally, what crowns are said to be figuratively, lined with thorns; he that invented this abuse, it is likely, valued himself upon the success of it; but there was a mystery in it. [1.] Thorns came out of his head, and we are informed that that was the product of sin, Gen. 3. 18. Therefore Christ, being made a Curse for us, and dying to remove the curse from us, felt the pain and smart of those thorns, nay, and bind them as a crown to him; (Job 31. 36.) for his sufferings for us were his glory.

[2.] Now he answered to the type of Abraham's ram that was caught in the thicket, and so offered up to him, Gen. 22. 13. [3.] Thorns signify affliction, 2 Chron. 32. 31. These Christ put into a crown; so much did he alter the property of them to them, and give them cause to glory in tribulation, and made it to work for them a weight of glory. [4.] Christ was crowned with thorns, to shew that his kingdom was not of this world, nor the glory of it worldly glory, but is attended here with bonds and afflictions, while the glory of it is to be revealed. [5.] It was the custom of some heathen nations, to bring their sacrifices to the altar, crowned with garlands; these thorns were the garlands with which this great Sacrifice was crowned. [6.] These thorns, it is likely, fetched blood from his blessed head, which trickled down his face, and like the first man, (typifying him,) whose head with Christ, with which he condescended himself upon the head, which run down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, Ps. 133. 2. Thus, when he came to espouse to himself his love, his dove, his undefiled church, his head was filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night, Cant. 5. 2.

(4.) They put a reed in his right hand; this was intended for a mock sceptre, another of the insignia of authority. They made him smart of this, as if this were a sceptre good enough for such a King, as was like a reed shaken with the wind; (ch. 11. 7.) like sceptre, like kingdom, both weak and wavering, and withering and worthless; but they were quite mistaken, for his throne is for ever and ever, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre, Ps. 45. 6.

(5.) They bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! Having made him smart of the jest of doing homage to him, thus ridiculing his pretensions to sovereignty, as Joseph's brethren; (Gen. 37. 8.) Shalt thou indeed reign over us? But as they were afterward compelled to do obeisance to him, and enrich his dreams, so these here bowed the knee, in scorn to him, who was, soon after this, exalted to the right hand of God, that at his name every knee might bow, or break, before him; it is ill jesting with that which, sooner or later, will come in earnest.

(6.) They spit upon him; thus he had been abused in the high priest's hall, ch. 26. 27. In doing homage, the subject kissed the sovereign, in token of his allegiance; thus Samuel kissed Saul, and we are bid to kiss the Son; but they, in this mock-homage, instead of kissing him, spit in his face, that blessed face which outshines the sun, and before which the angels cover their's, was thus polluted. It is strange that the sons of men should ever do such a piece of vilany, and that the Son of God should ever suffer such a piece of ignominy.

(7.) They took the reed, and smote him on the head. That which they had made the mock-ensign of his royalty, they now make the real instrument of his cruelty, and his pain. They smote him, it is probable, upon the crown of thorns, and so struck them into his head, that they might wound him the deeper, which made the more sport for them, to whom his pain was the greatest pleasure. Thus was he despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. All this misery and shame he underwent, that he might purchase for us everlasting life, and joy, and glory.

III. The conveying of him to the place of execution. After they had mocked and abused him, as justly as the right fit, they then took the royal robe from him; to signify their divesting him of all the kingly authority they had invested him with, by putting it on him; and they put his own raiment on him, because that was to fall to the soldiers' share, that were employed in the execution. They took off the robe, but no mention is made of their taking off the crown of thorns, whence it is commonly supposed (though there is no certainty of it) that he was crowned with thorns and put on his head, as a Priest upon his throne, so he was a King upon his cross. Christ was led to be crucified in his own raiment, because he himself was to bear our sins in his own body upon the tree. And here,

1. They led him away to be crucified; he was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, as a Sacrifice to the alt.
We may well imagine how they hurried him on, and dragged him along, with all the speed possible, lest anything should intervene to prevent the glutting of their cruel rage with his precious blood. It is probable that they now loaded him with taunts and reproaches, and treated him as the off-souring of all things. They led him away out of the city; for Christ, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate, (Heb. 13. 12.) as if he that was the Glory of them that waited for redemption in Jerusalem, were not worthy to live among them. To this he himself had an eye, when he speaks of his being cast out of the vineyard, ch. 21. 59.

2. They compelled Simon of Cyrene to bear his cross, v. 30. It seems, at first he carried the cross himself, as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering which was to burn him. And this was intended, as other things, both for pain and shame to him. But after a while they took the cross off from him, either, (1.) In compassion to him, because they saw it was too great a load for him. We can hardly think that they had any consideration of that, yet it teaches us that God considers the frame of his people, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able; he gives them some breathing-time, but they must expect that the cross will return, and the lucid intervals only give them space to prepare for the next. (2.) Perhaps it was because he could not with the cross on his back, go forward so fast as they would have him. Or, (3.) They were afraid, lest he should faint away under the load of his cross, and die; and so prevent what their malice further intended to do against him; thus even the tender mercies of the wicked (which seem to be so) are really cruel. Taking the cross off from him, the disciples of one (ch. 16. 24.) bearing his reproach, (ch. 13. 13.) We must know the fellowship of his sufferings for us, and patiently submit to all the sufferings for him we are called out to; for those only shall reign with him that suffer with him; shall sit with him in his kingdom, that drink of his cup, and are baptized with his baptism.

33. And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, 34. They gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. 35. And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. 36. And sitting down they watched him there; 37. And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 38. Then were there two thieves crucified with him; one on the right hand, and another on the left. 39. And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40. And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross. 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42. He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. 44. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. 45. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

46. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 47. Some of them stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias. 48. And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. 49. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.

I. The place where our Lord Jesus was put to death.

1. They came to a place called Golgotha, near adjoining to Jerusalem, probably the common place of execution. Here had been one of our Lord's disciples probably, for his greater disgrace, they would have crucified him before his own door. But now, in the same place where criminals were sacrificed to the justice of the government, was our Lord Jesus sacrificed to the justice of God. Some think that it is called the place of a skull, because it was the common charnel-house, where the bones and skulls of dead men were laid together out of the way, and they that should touch them, and be defiled thereby. Here lay the trophies of death's victory over multitudes of the children of men; and, when by dying Christ would destroy death, he added this circumstance of honour to his victory, that he triumphed over death upon his own dunghill.

2. There they crucified him, (v. 35.) nailed his hands and feet to the cross, and then reared it up and him hanging on it; for so the manner of the Romans was to crucify. Let our hearts be touched with the feeling of that exquisite pain which our blessed Saviour now endured, and let us look upon him who was thus pierced, and smitten. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? And, when we behold what manner of death he died, let us in that be touched with what manner of love he had unto us.

II. The barbarous and abusive treatment they gave him, in which their wit and malice vied which should excel. As if death, so great a death, were not bad enough, they contrived to add to the bitterness and terror of it.

1. By the drunk they provided for him before he was nailed to the cross, v. 34. It was usual to have a cup of spiced wine for those to drink of, that were to be put to death, according to Solomon's direction, (Prov. 31. 6, 7.) Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish; but with that cup, which Christ was to drink of they mingled wormwood and gall, to make it sour and bitter. This signified, (1.) The sin of man, which is a root of bitterness, bearing gall and wormwood, Deut. 29. 18. The sinner perhaps rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but to God it
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is grapes of gall, Deut. 32. 32. It was so to the Lord Jesus, when he bare our sins, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner himself, bitterness at the latter end, more bitter than death, Eccl. 7. 26. (2.) It signified the wrath of God, that cup which his Father put into his hand, a bitter cup indeed, like the bitter water which caused the curse, Num. 3. 18. This drink they offered him, as was literally foretold, Ps. 69. 21. And, [1.] He tasted thereof, and so had the word of the Lord in his mouth; he accepted, and let no bitter cup go by him untouched, when he was making atonement for all our sinful tasting of forbidden fruit; now he was tasting death in its full bitterness. [2.] He would not drink it, because he would not have the best of it; would have nothing like an opiate, to lessen his sense of pain, for he would die so as to feel himself die, because he had so much work to do, as our High Priest, in his suffering work.

2. By the dividing of his garments, v. 35. When they nailed him to the cross, they stripped him of his garments, at least his upper garments; for by sin we were made naked, to our shame, and thus he purchased for us white raiment to cover us. If we be at any time stripped of our comforts for Christ, let us bear it patiently; he was stripped for us. Enemies may strip away our outward comforts, but they cannot strip us of our best comforts; cannot take from us the garments of praise. The clothes of those that are executed are the executioner's fee: four soldiers were employed in crucifying Christ, and they must each of them have a share: his upper garment, if it were divided, would be of no use to any of them, and therefore they agreed to cast lots for it. (1.) Some think that the garment was so fine and rich, that it was divided according to the costliness of the garments. Some think that the poverty Christ appeared in. (2.) Perhaps they had heard of those that had been cured by touching the hem of his garment, and they thought it valuable for some magic virtue in it. Or, (3.) They hoped to get money of his friends for such a sacred relic. Or, (4.) Because, in derision, they seemed to put a value upon it, as a royal clothing. Or, (5.) It was for diversion; to pass away the time while they waited for his death, they would play a game at dice for the clothes; but, whatever they designed, the word of God is herein accomplished. In that famous psalm, the first words of which Christ made use of upon the cross, it was said, they parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture, Ps. 22. 18. This was never true of David, but looks primarily at Christ, of whom David, in spirit, spake. Then is the offence of this part of the cross ceased; for it appears to have been by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Christ stripped himself of his glories, to divide them among us.

They now sat down and watched him, v. 36. The chief priests were careful, no doubt, in setting this guard, lest the people, whom they stood still in awe of, should rise, and rescue him. But providence so ordered it, that those who were appointed to watch him were so overpowered by the approach of theSoldier-with-him; having the opportunity to see and hear that which extorted from them that noble confession, (v. 54.) Truly this was the Son of God.

3. By the title set up over his head, v. 37. It was usual, for the vindicating of public justice, and putting the greater shame upon malefactors that were executed, not only by a crier to proclaim before them, but by a writing also over their heads to notify, what was the crime for which they suffered; so they set up over Christ's head his accusation written, to give public notice of the charge against him; This is Jesus the King of the Jews. This they designed for his reproach, but God so overruled, that even his accusation redounded to his honour. For, (1.) Here was no crime alleged against him. It is not said that he was a pretended Saviour, or an usurping King, though they would have it thought so; (John 19. 21.) but, This is Jesus, a Saviour; surely that was no crime; and, This is the King of the Jews; nor was that a crime; for they expected that the Messiah should be so: so that, his enemies themselves being judges, he did no evil. Nay, (2.) Here was a very glorious truth asserted concerning him—that he is Jesus the King of the Jews, that King whom the Jews longed for, and waited for, and ought to have submitted to; so that his accusation amounts to this, That he was the true Messiah and Saviour of the world; as Balaam, when he was sent for to curse Israel, blessed them altogether, and that three times, (Num. 24. 10.) so Pilate, instead of accusing Christ as a criminal, proclaimed him a King, and that three times, in three inscriptions. Thus God makes men to serve his purposes, quite beyond their designing.

4. By his companions with him in suffering, v. 38. There were two thieves crucified with him at the same time, in the same place, under the same guard; two highwaymen, or robbers upon the road, as the word properly signifies. It is probable that this was appointed to be execution-day; and therefore they hurried the prosecution of Christ in the morning, that they might have him ready to be executed with them. Some think that Pilate feared that it was thus, that this piece of necessary justice, in executing these thieves, might arise for his injustice in condemning Christ; others that the Jews contrived it, to add to the ignominy of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus; however it was, the scripture was fulfilled in it, (Is. 53. 12.) He was numbered with the transgressors.

(2.) It was a reproach to him, that he was crucified with them. Though, while he lived, he was separate from sinners, yet in their deaths they were not divided, but he was made to partake with the vilest malefactors in their plagues, as if he had been a Partner with them in their sins; for he was made Sin for us, and took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh. He was, at his death, numbered among the transgressors, and had his lot with the wicked, that we, at our death, might be numbered among the saints, and have our consolations among the chosen.

(2.) It was an additional reproach, that he was crucified in the midst, between them, as if he had been the worst of the three, the principal Malefactor; for among three the middle is the place for the chief. Every circumstance was contrived to his dishonour, as if the great Saviour were of all others the greatest sinner. It was also intended to ruffle and discomfit him, in his last moments, with the accursed shrinks, and groans, and blasphemies, of these malefactors, who, it is likely, made a hideous outcry when they were nailed to the cross; but thus would Christ affect himself with the miseries of sinners, when he was suffering for their salvation. Some of Christ's apostles were afterward crucified, as Peter, and Andrew, but none of them were crucified with him, lest it should have looked as if they had been joint-purchasers with him, in satisfying for and making atonement for the sins of the joint-purchasers of life and glory; therefore he was crucified between two malefactors, who could not be supposed to contribute any thing to the merit of his death; for he himself bare our sins in his own body.

5. By the blasphemies and revilings with which they loaded him when he was hanging upon the cross; though we read not that they cast any reflections on the thieves that were crucified with him. One would have thought, that, when they had nailed him to the cross, they had done their worst, and malice itself had been exhausted: indeed, if a criminal be put into the pillory, or carted, because it is a punishment less than death, it is usually attended with such expressions of abuse; but a dying man,
though an infamous man, should be treated with compassion. It is an insatiable revenge indeed, which will not be satisfied with death, so great a death. But, to complete the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, and to show that, when he was dying, he was bearing inequality, he was then loaded with reproachs, and, for aught that appears, not one of his friends, who the other day cried Hosanna to him, durst be seen to own him.

(1.) The common people, that passed by, reviled him. His extreme misery, and exemplary patience under it, did not mollify them, or make them to relent; but they who by their outrages brought him to this, now think to justify themselves in it by their reproaches, as if they did well to condemn him. They reviled him: blasphemed him: this is the strictest sense of speaking evil of him who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Observe here,

[1.] The persons that reviled him; they that passed by, the travellers that went along the road, and it was a great road, leading from Jerusalem to Gibeon; they were possessed with prejudices against him by the reports and clamours of the high priest's creatures, and by the sacrificial, and they contemn it, and require more application and resolution than is ordinarily met with, to keep up a good opinion of persons and things that are every where run down, and spoken against. Every one is apt to say as the most say, and to throw a stone at that which is put into an ill name. Turbo Remi sequitur fortam semper, et odit damnatos—The Roman rabble fluctuate with a man's fluctuating fortunes, and fall not to press those that are sinking. Juv.

[2.] The gesture they used, in contempt of him—wagging their heads; which signifies their triumph in his fall, and their insulting over him, Isa. 37. 22. Jer. 18. 16. Lam. 2. 15. The language of it, was, Ah, so would we have it, Ps. 35. 23. Thus they insulted over him that was the Saviour of their country, as the Philistines did over Simeon the deliverer of their country. This very gesture was prophesied of; (Ps. 22. 8.) They shake the head at me. And Ps. 109. 25.

[3.] The taunts and jeers they uttered. These are here recorded.

First, They upbraided him with his destroys of the temple. Though the judges themselves were sensible that what he had said of that was misrepresentation, yet, being thus taunted, they actually spread it among the people, to bring an odium upon him, that he had a design to destroy the temple; than which nothing would more incense the people against him. And this was not the only time that the enemies of Christ had laboured to make others believe that of religion, and the people of God, which they themselves have known to be false, and they caused it to be communicated with the former of the Messiah; he was crucified in weakness, (2 Cor. 13. 4.) so it seemed to them; but indeed Christ crucified is the Power of God.

Secondly, They upbraided him with his saying that he was the Son of God; If thou be so, say they, come down from the cross. Now they take the devil's words out of his mouth, with which he tempted him in the wilderness, (ch. 4. 3, 6.) and renew the same assault; If thou be the Son of God, They think that now, or never, he must prove himself to be the Son of God; forgetting that he had proved it by the miracles he wrought, particularly his raising of the dead; and unwilling to wait for the complete proof of it by his own resurrection, to which he had so often referred himself and them; which, if they had observed it, would have anticipated the offence of the cross. This comes of judging things by the present aspect of them, without a due remembrance of what is past, and a patient expectation of what my future Providence will produce.
III. We have here the frowns of Heaven, which our Lord Jesus was under, in the midst of all these injuries and indignities from men. Concerning which, observe,

1. How this was signified—by an extraordinary and miraculous eclipse of the sun, which continued for three hours, v. 45. There was darkness

<sup>1</sup>over all the earth; so most interpreters understand it, though our translation confines it to that land. Some of the ancients are led to think of the extraordinary eclipse at the death of Christ, as a thing well known, and which gave notice to those parts of the world of something great then in doing; as the sun's going back in Hezekiah's time did. It is reported that Dionysius, at Helipopolis in Egypt, took notice of this darkness, and said, *Aut Deus naturae patitur, aut mundi machina dissolutur.* Either the God of nature is suffering, or the machine of the world is tumbling into ruin. An extraordinary light gave intelligence of the birth of Christ, (ch. 2.2.), and therefore it was proper that an extraordinary darkness should notify his death, for he is the Light of the world. The indignities done to our Lord Jesus made the heavens astonished, and horribly afraid, and even put them into disorder and confusion; such wickedness as this the sun and moon did never before see, and we could not see this. This surprising, amazing, darkness was designed to stop the mouths of these blasphemers who were reviling Christ as he hung on the cross; and it should seem that, for the present, it struck such a terror upon them, that though their hearts were not changed, yet they were silent, and stood doubting what this should mean, till after three hours the darkness scattered, and then, (as appears by, &c.) like Pharaoh, when the plague was over, they hardened their hearts. But that which was principally intended in this darkness, was, (1.) Christ's present conflict with the powers of darkness. Now the prince of this world, and his forces, the rulers of the darkness of this world, were to be cast out, to be spoiled and vanished; and to make his victory the more illustrious, he fights them on their own ground; gives them all the advantage they could have, and makes this darkness so terrible, that the wind and sun, and yet baffles them, and so becomes more than a conqueror. (2.) His present want of heavenly comforts. This darkness signified that dark cloud which the human soul of our Lord Jesus was now under. God makes his sun to shine upon the just and upon the unjust; but even the light of the sun was withheld from our Saviour, when he was made Sin for us. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun; but behold now how his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and the cup of divine displeasure was filled to him without mixture, even the light of the sun was suspended. When earth denied him a drop of cold water, heaven denied him a beam of light; being to deliver us from utter darkness, he did himself, in the depth of his sufferings, walk in darkness, and had no light, Isa. 30.16. During the three hours that this darkness continued, and we do not find that he said one word, but passed this time in a silent retirement into his own soul, which was now in agony, wrestling with the powers of darkness, and taking in the impressions of his Father's displeasure, not against himself, but the sin of man, which he was now making his soul an offering for. Never were there three such hours since the day that God created man upon the earth, never such a dark and awful scene; the crisis of that great affair of man's redemption and salvation.

2. How he complained of it; (v. 46.) *About the ninth hour,* when it began to clear up, after a long and silent conflict, Jesus cried, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? The words are related in the Syriac

* But surely without the shadow of a reason.—Ed.
tongue, in which they were spoken, because worthy of double remark, and for the sake of the perverseness of construction which his enemies put upon them, in putting Elias for El. Now observe here,

(1.) Whence he borrowed this complaint— from Ps. 27, 21. It is not probably (as some have thought) that he repeated the whole psalm; yet hereby he intimated that the whole was to be applied to him, and that David, in spirit, there spake of his humiliation and exaltation. This, and that other word, Into thy hands I commit my spirit, he fetched from David’s psalms, (though he could have expressed himself in his own words,) to teach us of what use the word of God is to us, to direct our prayer, and to recommend to us the use of scripture expressions in prayer, which will help our infirmities.

(2.) How he uttered it—with a loud voice; which bespeaks the extremity of his pain and anguish, the strength of nature remaining in him, and the great earnestness of his spirit in this expostulation. Now the scripture was fulfilled; (Joel 5. 15, 16.) The sun and the moon shall be darkened. The Lord shall also roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem. David often speaks of his crying aloud in prayer. Ps. 55. 17.

(3.) What the complaint was— My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? A strange complaint to come from the mouth of our Lord Jesus, who, we are sure, was God’s Elect, in whom his soul delighteth; (Isa. 42. 1.) one in whom was always well pleased. The Father now loved him, nay, he knew that therefore he loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep; what, and yet forsaken of him, and in the midst of his sufferings too! Surely never sorrow was like unto that sorrow which exerted such a complaint as this from one who, being perfectly free from sin, could never be a Terror to himself, but the heart knows its own thieves. No wonder that such a complaint as this made the earth to quake, and rent the rocks; for it is enough to make both the ears of every one that hears it, to tingle, and ought to be spoken of with great reverence.

Note, [1.] That our Lord Jesus was, in his sufferings, for a time, forsaken by his Father. So he saith himself, who are sure, was under no mistake concerning his own case. Not that the union between the divine and human nature was in the least weakened or shocked; no, he was now by the eternal Spirit offering himself; nor as if there were any abatement of his Father’s love to him, or his to his Father; we are sure that there was upon his mind no horror of God, or despair of his favour, nor any thing of the torments of hell; but his Father forsook him; that is, First, He delivered him up into the hands of his enemies, and did not appear to deliver him out of their hands. He let loose the powers of darkness against him, and suffered them to do their worst, worse than against Job. Now was that scripture fulfilled, (Job 16. 9.) God has turned me over into the hands of the wicked; and no angel is sent from out of heaven for him, no Friend on earth raised up to appear for him. Second, He withdrew the present comfortable sense of his complicity in heaven. When his soul was first troubled, he had a voice from heaven to comfort him; (John 12. 27, 28.) when he was in his agony in the garden, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him; but now he had neither the one nor the other. God was not his face from him, and for a while he was not. It is not his rod and staff, but his darksome valley, God forsook him, not as he forsook Saul, leaving him to an endless despair, but as sometimes he forsook David, leaving him to a present despondency. Thirdly, He let out upon his soul an afflictive sense of his wrath against man for sin. Christ was made Sin for us, a Curse for us; and therefore, though God loved him as a Son, he frowned upon him as Surety. These impressions he was pleased to admit, and to wave that resistance of them which he could have made; because he would accommodate himself to this part of his undertaking, as he had the rest, when it was in his power to have avoided it.

[2.] That Christ’s being forsaken of his Father, was the most grievous of his sufferings, and that which he complained most of. Here he laid the most dolorous accents; he did not say, ‘Why am I scourged? And why spit upon? And why nailed to the cross?’ Nor did he say to his disciples, when they turned their back upon him, Why have ye forsaken me? But when his Father stood at a distance, he cried out thus; for this was that put wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. This brought the waters into the soul. Ps. 69. 1—3.

[3.] That our Lord Jesus, even when he was thus forsaken of his Father, kept hold of him as his God, notwithstanding; My God, my God, though forsaking me, yet mine. Christ was God’s servant in carrying on the work of redemption, to him he was to make satisfaction, and by him to be carried through and crowned, and upon that account he calls him his God; for he was now doing his will. See Isa. 49. 4, 9. This supported him, and bore him up, that even in the depth of his sufferings God was his God, and this he resolves to keep fast hold of.

(4.) See how his enemies impiously bantered and ridiculed this complaint; (v. 47.) They said, This man calleth for Elias. Some think that this was the ignorant mistake of the Roman soldiers, who had heard talk of Elias, and of the Jews’ expectation of the coming of Elias, but knew not the signification of Eli, Eli, and so made this blundering comment on these words of Christ, perhaps not hearing the latter part of what he said, for the noise of the people. Note, Many of the reproaches cast upon the word of God, and the people of God, take rise from gross mistakes. Divine truths are often corrupted by ignorance of the language and style of the scripture. Those that hear by the knives, pervert what they hear. But others think that it was the wilful malice of his own companions, who either perverted what he said, or were disposed to abuse him, and make themselves and their companions merry, and to misrepresent him as one who, being forsaken of God, was driven to trust in creatures; perhaps hinting also, that he who had pretended to be himself the Messiah, would now be glad to be beholden to Elias, who was expected to be not only the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah, but also, It is no new thing for the most pious devotions of the best men to be ridiculed and abused by profane scoffers; nor are we to think it strange, if what is well said in praying and preaching be misconstrued, and turned to our reproach; Christ’s words were so, though he spake as never man spake.

IV. The cold comfort which his enemies ministers to him in this agony, which was like all the rest.

1. Some gave him vinegar to drink; (v. 48.) instead of some cordial-water to revive and refresh him under this heavy burden, they tantalized him with that which did not only add to the reproach they were loading him with, but did too sensibly represent that cup of trembling which his Father had put into his hand. One of the most natural things in the case of the Roman to fetch it is, seeming to be officious to him, but really glad of an opportunity to abuse and affront him, and afraid lest one should take it out of his hands.

2. Others, with the same purpose of disturbing and abusing him, refer him to Elias; (v. 49.) Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Come, let him alone, his case is desperate, neither
neither nor earth can help him; let us do nothing either to hasten his death, or to retard it; he has appealed to Elias, and to Elias let him go."

50. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51. And, behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, 52. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53. And came out of the graves, after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. 54. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. 55. And many women there beholding afar off which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: 56. Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

We have here, at length, an account of the death of Christ, and several remarkable passages that attended it.

1. The manner how he breathed his last; (ver. 50.) between the third and the sixth hour, that is, between nine and twelve o'clock, as we reckon, he was nailed to the cross, and soon after the ninth hour, that is, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, he died. That was the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and the time when the paschal lamb was killed, and Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, and offered himself in the evening of the world a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour. It was at that time of the day, that the angel delivered to Daniel that glorious prediction of the Messiah, Dan. 9, 21, 24. And some think, that from that very time when the angel spake it, to this time when Christ died, was just seventy weeks, that is, four hundred and ninety years, to a day, to an hour; as the departure of Israel out of Egypt was at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self-same day, Exod. 12, 41.

Two things are here noted concerning the manner of Christ's dying.

1. That he cried with a loud voice, as before, ver. 46. Now,

(1.) This was a sign, that, after all his pains and fatigues, his life was whole in him, and nature strong. The voice of dying men is one of the first things that fails; with a panting breath and a faltering tongue, a few broken words are hardly spoken, and more hardly heard. But Christ, just before he expired, spoke like a man in his full strength, to show that his life was not forced from him, but was freely delivered by him into his Father's hands, as his own act and deed. He that had strength to cry thus when he died, could have got loose from the arrest he was under, and have bid defiance to the powers of death; but to shew that by the eternal Spirit he offered himself, being the Priest as well as the Sacrifice, 2 Cor. 3. 13. It was the same voice.

(2.) It was significant. This loud voice shews that he attacked our spiritual enemies with an undaunted courage, and such a bravery of resolution as he speaks him hearty in the cause, and daring in the encounter. He was now spoiling principalities and powers, and in this loud voice he did, as it were, shout for mercy, as one mighty to save, Isa. 63. 1. Compare with this, Isa. 42, 13, 14. He now bowed himself with all his might, as Samson did, when he said, Let me die with the Philistines, Judg. 16. 30. As unwilling as any man, that had ever cried for mercy, to die, he now yielded up his soul, that his body might be separated from his soul, and was left really and truly dead. It was certain that he did die, for it was requisite that he should die; thus it was written, both in the close rolls of the divine counsels, and in the letters patent of the divine predictions, and therefore thus it behoves him to suffer. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, (This shall surely die,) the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission, Heb. 9. 15. He had undertaken to make his soul an offering for sin; and he did it, when he yielded up the ghost, and voluntarily resigned it.

11. The miracles that attended his death. So many miracles being wrought by him in his life, we might well expect some to be wrought concerning him at his death, for his name was called Wonderful. Had he been fetched away as Elijah in a fiery chariot, that had itself been miracle enough; but, being sent for away by an ignominious cross, it was requisite that his humiliation should be attended with some signal emanations of the divine glory.

1. Behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain. This relation is ushered in with Behold; "Turn aside, and see this great sight, and be astonished at it." Just as our Lord Jesus expired, at the time of the offering of the evening-sacrifice, and upon a solemn day, when the priests were officiating in the temple, and of themselves were eye-witnesses of it, the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom; that vail which parted between the holy place and the most holy. They had condemned him for saving, I will destroy this temple, understanding it literally; now, by this specimen of his power, he let them know that, if he had pleased, he could have made his words good. In this, as in others of Christ's miracles, there was a mystery.

(1.) It was in correspondence with the temple of Christ's body, which was now in the dissolving. This was the true temple, in which dwelt the fullness of the Godhead; when Christ cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to that cry, and answer the stroke, by rending its vail. Note, Death is the rending of the vail of flesh which interpose between us and the holy of holies; the death of Christ was so, the death of true Christians is so.

(2.) It signified the revealing and unfolding of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The vail of the temple was for concealment, as was that on the face of Moses, therefore it was called the vail of the covering; for it was highly penal for any person to see the furniture of the most holy place, except the high priest, and he but once a year, with great ceremony and through a vail. But he was signified the darkness of that dispensation, 2 Cor. 3. 13. It was now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open, the mysteries were unveiled, so that now he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see that the mercy-seat signified Christ the great Priestia-
tion; the pot of manna signified Christ the Bread of life. Thus we all with open face beheld, as in a glass, (which helps the sight, as the vail hindered it,) the glory of the Lord. Our eyes see the salvation.

(3.) It signified the uniting of Jew and Gentile, by the removing of the partition-wall between them, which was the ceremonial law, by which the Jews were separated from all other nations, (as Abraham's descendants, as his den unclosed,) were brought near to God, while others were made to keep their distance. Christ, in his death, repealed the ceremonial law, cancelled that hand writing of ordinances, took it out of the way, nailed it to his cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition; and, by abolishing those institutions, abolished the enmity, and made in himself of them all, (2 Cor. 11, 18, 20.) Those rooms were made one, and that large and lightsome, by taking down the partition, so making peace, Eph. 2. 14—16.

Christ died, to rend all dividing vails, and to make all his one, John 17. 21.

(4.) It signified the consecrating and laying open of a new and living way to God. The vail kept people off from drawing near to the most holy place, where the Shechinah was. But the rending of it signified that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God for himself. This was the great door of atonement, when our Lord Jesus, as the great High Priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, entered once for all into the holy place, in token of which the vail was rent, Heb. 9. 7, 8&c. Having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was now to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat within the vail; wherefore lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; for the King of glory, the Lord of hosts, is come in. Now was he caused to draw near, and made to approach, Jer. 30. 21. Though he did not personally ascend into the holy place not made with hands till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission.

[2.] For us in him: so the apostle applies it, Heb. 10. 19, 20. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by that new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the vail. He died, to bring us to God, and, in order thereunto, to rend that vail of guilt and wrath which interposed between us and him, to take away the cherubim and flaming sword, and to open the way to the tree of life. We have free access through Christ to the throne of grace, or mercy-seat, now, and to the throne of glory hereafter, Heb. 4. 15, 16. The opening of the vail signified, (as that ancient hymn excellently expresses it,) that when Christ had overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to heaven, for the vail is rent; a door is opened in heaven, Rev. 4. 1.

2. The earth did quake; not only mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified, but the whole land, and the adjacent countries. This earthquake signified the three things.

(1.) The horrible wickedness of Christ's crucifiers. The earth, by trembling under such a load, bore its testimony to the innocency of him that was persecuted, and against the impiety of those that persecuted him. Never did the whole creation, before, groan under such a burthen as the Son of God crucified, and the guilty wretches that crucified him. The earth quaked, as if it feared to open its mouth to receive the body of Christ, so much more preciously than the wilderness of Arabia the bear, and was cursed for it; (Gen. 4. 11, 12,) and as if it would often open its mouth to swallow up those rebels that put him to death, as it had swallowed up Dathan and Abiram for a much less crime. When the prophet would express God's great displeasure against the wickedness of the wicked, he asks, Shall not the land tremble for this? Amos 8. 8.

(2.) The glorious achievements of Christ's cross. This earthquake signified the mighty shock, nay, the fatal blow, now given to the devil's kingdom. So when God's fury assails Christ, now made upon the internal powers, that (as of old, when he went out of Sion, when he marched through the field of Edom) the earth trembled, Judg. 5. 4. Ps. 68. 7, 8. God shakes all nations, when the Desire of all nations is to come; and there is a yet once more, which perhaps refers to this shaking, Hag. 2. 7, 21.

3. The rocks rent; the hardest and firmest part of earth, is thus made to yield to the mighty shock. Christ had said, that if the children should cause to cry Hosanna, the stones would immediately cry out; and now, in effect, they did so, proclaiming the glory of the suffering Jesus, and themselves more sensible of the wrong done him than the hard-hearted Jews were, who yet will shortly be glad to find a hole in the rocks, and a cleft in the rugged rocks, to hide them from the face of him that siteth upon the throne. See Rev. 6. 15. Isa. 2. 22. But when God's fury is poured out like fire, the rocks are thrown down by him, Nah. 1. 6. Jesus Christ is the Rock; and the rending of these rocks, signified the rending of that Rock. (1.) That in the clefts of it we may be hid, as Moses in the cleft of the rock at Horeb, that there we may behold the glory of the Lord, as he did, Exod. 33. 22. Christ's dove is said to be hid in the cleft of the lofty rock, as he is now hid, the latter, and not the former. That heart is harder than a rock, that will not yield, that will not melt, where Jesus Christ is evidently set forth crucified.

4. The graves were opened. This matter is not related so fully as our curiosity would wish; for the scripture was not intended to gratify that; it should seem, the same earthquake that rent the rocks, opened the graves, and many bodies of saints which had been death to the earth, was but the shelter of the body, and the grave the bed it sleeps in; they arose by the power of the Lord Jesus, and (v. 53.) came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into Jerusalem, the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now here,

(1.) We may raise many inquiries concerning it, which we cannot resolve; as, [1.] Who these saints were, that did arise. Some think, the ancient patriarchs, that were in such care to be buried in the land of Canaan, perhaps in the believing foresight of the advantage of this early resurrection. Christ had lately proved the doctrine of the resurrection from the instance of the patriarchs, (ch. 22. 32,) and here was a speedy confirmation of his argument. Others think, those that rose were modern saints, such as those seen Christ in the flesh, but died before him; as his father Joseph, Zacharias, Simeon, John Baptist, and others, that had been known to the disciples, while they lived, and therefore were the fitter to be witnesses to them in an afterpart after. What if we should suppose that they were the martyrs, who in the Old-Testament times had sealed the truths of God with their blood, that were thus dignified and distinguished? (ch. 15. 14.) It is received by all the New Testament writers, ch. 23. 33. And we find, (Rev. 20. 4, 5,) that those who were behended for the testimony of Jesus, rose before the rest of the dead. Sufferers with Christ shall first reign with him. [2.] It is uncertain whether (as some think) they arose
open their eyes. Here were the Gentiles softened, and the Jews hardened. (5.) They were the per-secutors of Christ, and those that but just before had reviled him, as appears, Luke 23. 56. How soon can God, by the power he has over every creature, with his love, alter their language, and make the penitent confessions of his faults, to his mercy, humble, out of the mouths of those that have breathed nothing but threatenings and slaughter, and blasphemies!

2. The means of their conviction; they perceived the earthquake, which frightened them, and saw the other things that were done. These were designed to assert the honour of Christ in his sufferings, and had their end in glorifying the Father. Now the dreadful appearances of God in his providence sometimes work strangely for the conviction and awakening of sinners.

3. The expressions of this conviction, in two things:

1. The terror that was struck upon them; they feared greatly; feared lest they should have been buried in the darkness, or swallowed up in the earthquake. Note, God can easily frighten the most daring of his adversaries, and make them tremble. Guilt puts men into fear. He that, when iniquity abounds, doth not fear always, with a fear of caution, when judgments are abroad, cannot but fear greatly, with a fear of amazement; whereas there are those who will not fear, though the earth be removed, Ps. 46. 1, 2.

2. The testimony that was extorted from them; they said, Truly this was the Son of God; a noble confession; Peter was blessed for it, ch. 16. 16, 17. It was a great matter now in dispute, the point upon which he and his enemies had joined issue, ch. 26. 63, 64. His disciples believed it, but at this time durst not confess it; our Saviour himself was tempted to question it, when he said, Why hast thou forsaken me? The Jews, now that he was dying upon the cross, looked upon it as plainly determined against him, that he was not the Son of God, because he did not come down from the cross; nor can we now say this crucifixion and the soldiers make this voluntary confession of the Christian faith, Truly this was the Son of God. The best of his disciples could not have said more at any time, and at this time they had not faith and courage enough to say thus much. Note, God can maintain and assert the honour of a truth then, when it seems to be crushed, and run down; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

IV. The use of this miracle, and the testimony of the friends, that were witnesses of his death, ver. 55, 56. Observe,

1. Who they were; many women, which followed him from Galilee. Not his apostles, (only elsewhere we find John by the cross, John 19. 26.) their hearts failed them, they durst not appear, for fear of coming under the same condemnation. But here were a company of women, some would have called them silly women, that boldly stuck to Christ, and the marks of his desertion he. Note, Even those of the weaker sex are often, by the grace of God, made strong in faith, that Christ's strength may be made perfect in weakness. There have been women martyrs, famous for courage and resolution in Christ's cause. Now of these women it is said, (1.) That they had followed Jesus from Galilee, out of the great love they had to him, and a desire to hear him preach on the mount, and to rise up, to worship at the feast. Now having followed him such a long journey as from Galilee to Jerusalem, eighty or a hundred miles, they resolved not to forsake him now. Note, Our former services and sufferings for Christ should be an argument with us, faithfully to persevere to the end in our attendance on him. Have we followed him so far and so long, done so much, and laid out so much for him, and shall we forsake him now? Gal. 3. 3. (2.) That they ministered to him
of their substance, for his necessary subsistence. How gladly would they have ministered to him now, if they might have been admitted! But, being forbidden that, they resolved to follow him. Note: When we are restrained from doing what we would, we must do what we can, in the service of Christ. Now that he is in heaven, though he is out of the reach of our ministration, he is not out of the reach of our believing views. (3.) Some of them were particularly named; for God will honour those that honour Christ. They were such as we have several times met with before, and it was their praise, that we would join with them to the last.

2. What they did; they were beholding afar off. (1.) They stood afar off. Whether their own fear or their enemies' fury kept them at a distance, is not certain; however, it was an aggravation of the sufferings of Christ, that his lovers and friends stood aloof from his sore, Ps. 38. 11. Job 19. 13. Perhaps they might have come nearer, if they would; but good people, when they are in sufferings, must not think it strange, if some of their best friends be shy of them. When Paul's danger was imminent, no man stood by him, 2 Tim. 4. 16. If we be thus looked strangely upon, remember, our Master was so before us. (2.) They were there beholding, in which they shewed a concern and kindness for Christ; when they were beholding, their eye was fixed on him. But, if they have love to him, they looked a look of love toward him. [1.] It was a sorrowful look; they looked upon him who was now pierced, and mortured; and, no doubt, were in bitterness for him. We may well imagine how it cut them to the heart, to see him in this torment; and what floods of tears it brought from their eyes. Let us with an eye of faith behold Christ and him crucified, and be affected with that great love where with he loved us. But, [2.] It was no more than a look; they beheld him, but they could not help him. Note, When Christ was in his sufferings, the best of his friends were but spectators and lookers on, even the angelic guards stood trembling by, saith Mr. Norris; for he trud the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him; so his own arm wrought salvation.

57. When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: 58. He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. 59. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60. And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. 61. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. 62. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, 63. Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. 64. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. 65. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way; make it as sure as you can. 66. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

We have here an account of Christ's burial, and the manner and circumstances of it, concerning which observe, 1. The kindness and good will of his friends, that laid him in the grave. 2. The malice and ill will of his enemies, that were very solicitous to keep him there.

1. His friends gave him a decent burial. Observe, 1. In general, that Jesus Christ was buried; when his precious soul was gone to paradise, his blessed body was deposited in the chambers of the grave, that he might answer the type of Jonas, and fulfil the prophecy of Isaias; he made his grave with the wicked. Thus in all things he must be made like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and, like us, unto dust he must return. He was buried, to make his death the more certain, and his resurrection the more illustrious. Pilate would not deliver his body to be buried, till he was well assured that he was really dead; while the witnesses lay unaburied, there were some hopes concerning them, Rev. 11. 8. But Christ, the great Witness, is as one free among the dead, like the sun that rises in the grave. He was buried, that he might take off the terror of the grave, and make it easy to us, might warm and perfume that cold noisome bed for us, and that we might be buried with him.

2. The particular circumstances of his burial here related.

The time when he was buried; when the even was come; the same evening that he died, before sun-set, as is usual in burying malefactors. It was not deferred till the next day, because it was the sabbath; for, burying the dead is not proper work either for a day of rest, or for a day of rejoicing, as the sabbath is.

[2.] The person that took care of the funeral, was, Joseph of Arimathea. The apostles were all fled, and now the dead was delivered up to their Master, which the disciples of John shewed to him after he was beheaded, who took up his body, and buried it, ch. 14. 12. The women that followed him, durst not move in it; then did God stir up this good man to do it; for Joseph was a fit man, for, [1.] He had wherewithal to do it, being a rich man. Most of Christ's disciples were poor men, such were most fit to go about the country to preach the gospel; but here was one that was a rich man, ready to be employed in a piece of service which required a man of estate. Note, Worldly wealth, though it is to many an objection in religion's way, yet, in some services to be done for Christ, it is an advantage and an opportunity, and it is well for those who have it, if withal they have a heart to use it for God's glory. [2.] He was a disciple of our Lord, and of himself his disciple, believed in him, though he did not openly profess it. Note, Christ has more secret disciples than we are aware of; seven thousand in Israel, Rom. 11. 4.

[3.] The grant of the dead body procured from Pilate, v. 58. Joseph went to Pilate, the proper person to be applied to on this occasion, who had the disposal of the body; for in things wherein the matter of a magistrate concurred, he must be had to that power, and nothing done to break in upon it. What we do that is good, must be done peaceably, and not tumultuously. Pilate was willing to give the body to one that would inter it decently, that he might do something towards atoning for the guilt his conscience charged him with
in condemning an innocent person. In Joseph's petition, and Pilate's ready grant of it, honour was done to Christ, and a testimony borne to his integrity.

(4.) The dressing of the body in its grave-clothes; (v. 59,) though he was an honourable counsellor, yet he himself took the body, as it should seem, into his own arms, from the luminous and accursed tree; (Acts 13: 29,) for where there is true love to Christ, no service will be thought too mean to stop for him. His dress was a white linen cloth; for burying in linen was then the common usage, which Joseph complied with. Note, Care is to be taken of the dead bodies of good men, for there is a glory intended for them at the resurrection, which we must hereby testify of, and wind up the dead body, as designed for a better place. This common act of humanity, if done after a holy way, may be made an acceptable piece of Christianity.

(5.) The depositing of it in the sepulchre, v. 60. Here was nothing of that pomp and solemnity with which the grandees of the world are brought to the grave, and laid in the tomb, Job 21: 32. A private funeral did best befit him whose kingdom came not with observation.

[1.] He was laid in a borrowed tomb, in Joseph's house; he had no place of his own, as he had not a house of his own, wherein to lay his head while he lived, so he had not a grave of his own, wherein to lay his body when he was dead, which was an instance of his poverty; yet in this there might be somewhat of a mystery. The grave is the peculiar heritage of a sinner, Job 24: 19. There is nothing we can truly call our own but our sins and our graves; he returneth to his earth, Ps. 146: 4. When we go to the grave, we go to our own place; but our Lord Jesus, who had no sin of his own, had no grave of his own: dying under imputed sin, it was fit that he should be buried in a borrowed grave; the Jews designed that he should have made his grave with the wicked, should have been buried with the thieves with whom he was crucified, but God overruled it so, as that he should make it with the rich in his death, Isa. 53: 9.

[2.] He was laid in a new tomb, which Joseph, it is likely, designed for himself; it would, however, be never the worse for his lying in it, who was to rise so quickly, but a great deal the better for his lying in it, who has altered the property of the grave, and made it anew indeed, by turning it into a bed of rest, nav, into a bed of spices, for all the saints.

[3.] In a tomb that was hewn out in a rock, the ground about Jerusalem was very rocky. Sheb- na had his sepulchre hewn out thereabouts in a rock. Is. 22: 16. Providence ordered it that Christ's sepulchre should be in a solid entire rock, that no room might be left to suspect his disciples had access to it by some under-ground passage, or broke through the back wall of it, to steal the body; for there was no access to it but by the door, which was watched.

A great stone was rolled to the door of his sepulchre; this also was according to the custom of the Jews in burying their dead, as appears by the description of the grave of Lazarus, (John 11: 38,) signifying that those who are dead are separated and cut off from all the living; if the grave were his prison, now was the prison door locked and bolted. The rolling of the stone to the grave's mouth, was, with them, as filling up the grave is with us, it completes the sepulchre. The silence and sorrow, deposited the precious body of our Lord Jesus in the grave, the house appointed for all living, they departed without any further ceremony. It is the most melancholy circumstance in the funerals of our Christian friends, when we have laid their bodies in the dark and silent grave, to go home, and leave them behind; but, alas, it is not we that go home, and leave them behind, no, it is they that are gone to the better home, and left us behind.

(6.) The company that attended the funeral; and that was very small and mean. Here were none of the relations in mourning, to follow the corpse, no formalities to grace the solemnity, but some good women that were true mourners— Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, v. 6. These, as they had attended him in all his miseries, followed him to the grave; as if they composed themselves to sorrow, they sat over against the sepulchre, not so much to fill their eyes with the sight of what was done, as to empty them in rivers of tears. Note, True love to Christ will carry us through, to the utmost, in following him. Death itself cannot quench that divine fire, Cant. 8: 6, 7.

11. His enemies did what they could to prevent his resurrection; what they did herein was the next day that followed the day of the preparation, v. 62. That was the seventh day of the week, the Jewish sabbath, yet not expressly called so, but described by this periphrasis, because it was now shortly to give way to the Christian sabbath, which began the day after. Now, 1. All that day, Christ lay dead in the grave; having for six days laboured and done all his work of redemption, and was not refreshed. 2. On that day, the chief priests and Pharisæes, when they should have been at their devotions, asking pardon for the sins of the week past, were dealing with Pilate about securing the sepulchre, and so adding rebellion to their sin. They that had so often quarrelled with Christ for works of the greatest mercy on that day, were themselves busied in a work of the greatest malice. Observe here,

[1.] Their address to Pilate: they were vexed that the body was given to one that would bury it decently; but, since it must be so, they desire a guard may be set on the sepulchre.

[2.] It further sets forth their jealousy; lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say, He is risen.

First, That which really they were afraid of, was, his resurrection; that which is most Christ's honour, and his people's joy, is most the terror of his enemies. That which exasperated Joseph's brethren against him, was the presages of his rise, and of his having dominion over them; (Gen. 37: 8,) and all they aimed at, in what they said against him, was to prevent that. Come, say they, let us see him, and see what will become of his dreams. So the chief priests and Pharisæes laboured to defeat the predictions of Christ's resurrection, saying, as David's enemies of him, (Ps. 41: 8,) Now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more; if he should rise, that would break all their measures. Note, Christ's enemies, even when they have gained their point, are still in dread of something more. The disciples were surprised at the respect shewed to Christ's dead body by Joseph and Nicodemus, two honourable counsellors, and looked upon it as an ill pressure; nor can they forget his raising of Lazarus from the dead, which so confounded them.

Secondly, That which they took on them to be afraid of, was, lest his disciples should come by night,
and steal him away, which was a very improbable thing; for, 1. They had not the courage to own him while he lived, when they might have done him and themselves real service; and it was not likely that his death should put courage into such cowards. 2. What could they promise themselves by stealing away his body, and making people believe he was risen; when, if he should not rise, and so prove himself a false and liar, he had only lived for him in this world, in dependence upon a recompense in the other world, would of all others suffer most by the imposition, and would have had reason to throw the first stone at his name? What good would it do them, to carry on a cheat upon themselves, to steal away his body, and say, He is risen; when, if he were not risen, their faith was vain, and they were as guilty as were their enemies, who had crucified him? The priests apprehend that if the doctrine of Christ's resurrection be once preached and believed, the last error will be worse than the first; a proverbial expression, intimating no more than this, that we shall all be routed, all undone. They think that it was their error, that they had so long connived at his preaching and miracles, which error they thought they could atone for: if people should be persuaded of his resurrection, that would spoil all again, his interest would revive with him, and their must needs sink, who had so barbarously murdered him. Nee, Those that oppose Christ and his kingdom, will see not only their attempts baffled, but themselves miserably plunged and embarrassed, their errors worse than other, and the lust worst of all, Ps. 2. 4. 5.

3. In consideration hereof, they humbly move to have a guard set upon the sepulchre till the third day: Command that the sepulchre be made sure. Pilate must still be their drudge, his civil and military power must both be engaged to serve their malice; one would think that death's prisoners needed no other guard, and that the grave were security enough to itself; but what will not these fear, who are conscious to themselves both of guilt and iniquity, in opposing the Lord and his Anointed?

(2.) Pilate's answer to this address; (v. 63.) Ye have a watch, make it sure, as sure as you can. He was ready to gratify Christ's friends, in allowing them the body, and his enemies, in setting a guard upon it, being desirous to please all sides, while, perhaps, he laughed in his sleeve at both for making such ado about a dead body of a man, looking upon the hopes of one side and the fears of the other to be alike ridiculous. Ye have a watch; he means the constant guard that was kept in the tower of Antonia, out of which he allows them to detach as many as they pleased for that purpose, but, as if ashamed to be himself seen in such a thing, he leaves the management of it wholly to them. Methinks that word, Make it as sure as you can, looks like a banter, either, [1.] Of their fear; Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man; or rather, [2.] Of their hopes; Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost; but, if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards. I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, and Mithridates that word, Make it as sure as you can, looks like a banter, either, [1.] Of their fear; Be sure to set a strong guard upon the dead man; or rather, [2.] Of their hopes; Do your worst, try your wit and strength to the utmost, but, if he be of God, he will rise, in spite of you and all your guards. I am apt to think, that by this time Pilate had had some talk with the centurion, his own officer, and Mithridates; he would be apt to inquire how that just man died, and if the centurion had anything in any reluctance: and that he gave him such an account of those things as made him conclude that truly he was the Son of God; and Pilate would give more credit to him than to a thousand of those spittle priests that called him a Deceiver; and, if, so no marve, that he tacitly derides their project, in thinking that the sepulchre upon him who had so lately rent the rocks, and made the earth to quake.

Tertullian, in speaking of Pilate, saith,ipsa jam pro sua conscientiâ Christianus—in his conscience he was a Christian; and it was possible that he might be under such convictions at this time, upon the centurion's report, and yet never be thoroughly persuaded, any more than Agrippa or Felix was, to be a Christian.

(3.) The wonderfull care they took, hereupon, to secure the sepulchre; (v. 66.) They sealed the stone; probably, with some of the ears of corn, as Joseph and Sacherem, where they interposed their authority, for who durst break the public seal? But not trusting too much to that, wittal they set a watch, to keep his disciples from coming to steal him away, and, if possible, to hinder him from coming out of the grave. So they intended, but God brought this good out of it, that they who were set to oppose his resurrection, thereby had some use of Pilate's orders, and the chief priests what they observed, who were thereby rendered the more inexcusable. Here was all the power of earth and hell combined to keep Christ a prisoner, but all in vain, when his hour was come; death, and all these sons and heirs of death, could then no longer hold him, no longer have dominion over him. To guard the sepulchre against the poor weak disciples was folly, because useless, and to try to guard it against the power of God was folly, because fruitless, and to no purpose; and yet they thought they had dealt wisely.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapters, we saw the Captain of our salvation engaged with the powers of darkness, attacked by them, and vigorously attacking them; victory seemed to hover between the combatants; nay, at length, it inclined to the enemies' side, and our Champion fell before them; behold, God has delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemies hand. Christ in the grave is like the ark in Dagon's temple; the powers of darkness seemed to ride masters, but then the Lord awoke as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that should it by reason of wine, Ps. 78. 61, 65. The Prince of our peace is in this chapter rallying again, coming out of the grave, a Conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror, leading captivity captive; though the ark be a prisoner, Dagon falls before it, and it proves that none is able to stand before the holy Lord God. Now the resurrection of Christ being one of the main foundations of our religion, it is requisite that we should have infallible proofs of it; four of which proofs we have in this chapter. We have seen how Luke and John give a larger account of the proofs of Christ's resurrection than Matthew and Mark do. Here is, I. The testimony of the angel to Christ's resurrection, v. 1., 8. II. His appearance himself to the women, v. 9, 10. III. The confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard, v. 11. 15. IV. Christ's appearance to the disciples in Galilee, and the commission he gave them, v. 16. 20.

1. In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. 2. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. 3. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: 4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. 5. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. 6. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay: 7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from
the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo! I have told you. 3. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. 9. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. 40. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

For the proof of Christ's resurrection, we have here the testimony of the angel, and of Christ himself, concerning his resurrection. Now we may think that it would have been better, if the matter had been so ordered, that a competent number of witnesses should have been present, and have seen the stone rolled away by the angel, and the dead body reviving, as people saw Lazarus come out of the grave, and the first fruit of the resurrection as corroborated by the scriptures, and by the word which he had spoken; (Luke 24. 6, 7, 44. Mark 16. 7.) for here we must walk by faith, not by sight. We have here, 1. The coming of the good women to the sepulchre.

Observe, 1. When they came; in the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, v. 1. This fixes the time of Christ's resurrection.

(1.) He rose the third day after his death; that was the time which he had often prefixed, and he kept within it. He was buried in the evening of the sixth day of the week, and arose in the morning of the first day of the following week, so that he lay in the grave about thirty-six or thirty-eight hours. He lay so long, to show that he was really and truly dead; and no longer, that he might appear before his followers, to answer the type of the prophet Jonas, (ch. 12. 40.) and to accomplish that prediction, (Hos. 6. 2.) The third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

(2.) He arose after the Jewish sabbath, and it was the passover-sabbath; all that day he lay in the grave, to signify the abolishing of the Jewish feasts and the other parts of the ceremonial law, and that his people must be dead to such observances, and take no more pleasure in them than he did when they lay in the grave. Christ on the sixth day finished his work, he said, It is finished; on the seventh day he rested, and then on the first day of the next week did as it were begin a new world, and enter upon new work. Let no man therefore judge us now in respect of the new moons, or of the Jewish sabbaths, which were indeed a shadow of good things to come, but the sabbath of Christ. We may further observe, that the time of the saints' lying in the grave is a sabbath to them, (such as the Jewish sabbath was, which consisted chiefly in bodily rest,) for there they rest from their labours; (Job 3. 17.) and it is owing to Christ.

(3.) He rose upon the first day of the week; on the first day of the first week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; on this day therefore did He, who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the first of the darkness of the grave; and the seventh-day sabbath being buried with Christ, it rose again in the first day of sabbath, called the Lord's day, (Rev. 1. 10.) and no other day of the week is henceforward mentioned in all Church history as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies, to the honour of Christ, John 20. 19, 26. Acts 20. 7. 1 Cor. 16. 2. If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt, (Jer. 23. 7, 8.) much more doth our redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God's former works. The sabbath was instituted in remembrance of the former week, (Gen. 2. 3.) and this one of every seven, Gen. 2. 1. Man by his revolt made a breach upon that perfect work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ rose from the dead, and the heavens and the earth were again finished, and the disordered hosts of them modelled anew, and the day on which this was done was justly blessed and sanctified, and the seventh day from that. He, who on that day rose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now renewed.

(4.) He rose as it began to dawn toward that day; as soon as it could be said that the third day was come, the time prefixed for his resurrection, he rose; after his withdrawals from his people, he returns with all convenient speed, and cuts the work as short in righteousness as may be. He had said to his disciples, that though within a little while they should not see him again, a little while, and they should see him, and accordingly he made it as little a while as possible, Isa. 54. 7, 8. Christ rose when the day began to dawn, because then the day-spring from on high did again visit us, Luke 1. 78. His passion began in the night; when he hung on the cross the sun was darkened; he was laid in the grave in the dusk of the evening, but he rose from the grave when the sun was rising, and he is the bright and morning Star, (Rev. 22. 16.) the true Light. Those who address themselves early in the morning to the religious services of the Christian sabbath, that they may take the day before them, therein follow this example of Christ, and that of David, Early will I seek thee.

2. Who they were that came to the sepulchre; Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, the same that attended the funeral, and sat over against the sepulchre, as before they sat over against the cross; still they stand to express their love to Christ, still they were inquiring after him. Then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know. No mention is made of the virgin Mary being with them; it is probable that the beloved disciple, who had taken her to his own house, hindered her from going to the grave to weep there. Their attendance on Christ not only to the grave, but in the grave, represents his life, and care for them, that this is his own grave, and they are there but in the darkness. As Christ in the grave was beloved of the saints, so the saints in the grave are beloved of Christ; for death and the grave cannot slacken that bond of love which is between them.

3. What they came to do; the other evangelists say that they came to anoint the body; Matthew saith that they came to see the sepulchre, whether it was as they left it; he added, that the chief priests had set a guard upon it. They went, to show their good-will in another visit to the dear remains of their beloved Master, and perhaps not without some thoughts of his resurrection, for they could not have quite forgotten all he had said of it. Note, Visits to the grave are of great use to Christians, and will help to make it familiar to them, and to take off the terror of it, es-
especially visits to the grave of our Lord Jesus, where
we may see sin buried out of sight, the pattern of
our sanctification, and the great proof of redeeming
love shining illustriously even in that land of dark-
ness.

II. The appearance of an angel of the Lord to
them, v. 2–4. We have here an account of the
manner of the resurrection of Christ, as far as it was
fit for us to know.

1. There was a great earthquake. When he died,
the earth, that received him, shook for fear; now
that he rose, the earth, that resigned him, leaped
for joy in his exaltation. This earthquake did as it
were loose the bond of death, and shake off the
letters of the grave, and introduced the Desires of all
nations, Hag. 2. 6, 7. It was the signal of Christ's
victory over death. It became him that, when the
heavens rejoiced, the earth also might be glad.
It was a specimen of the shake that will be given
to the earth at the general resurrection, when moun-
tains and islands shall be removed, that the earth
may no longer cover her stain. There was a noise
and a shaking in the valley, when the bones were
to come together, bone to his bone, Ezek. 37. 7. The
kingdom of Christ, which was now to be seat
made the earth to quake, and terribly shook it.
Those are sanctified, and thereby raised to a
spiritual life, while it is in the doing, find a
earthquake in their own bosoms, as Paul, who trembled
and was astonished.

2. The angel of the Lord descended from heaven.
The angels frequently attended our Lord Jesus,
at his birth, in his temptation, in his agony, in
the cross to find no angel to help him; but when his
Father forsook him, the angels withdrew from him;
but now that he is resuming the glory he had before
the foundation of the world, now, behold, the angels
of God worship him.

3. He came, and rolled back the stone from the
door, and sat upon it. Our Lord Jesus could have
rolled back the stone himself by his own power, but
he chose to have it done by an angel, to signify that,
having undertaken to make satisfaction for our sin,
imputed to him, and being under arrest pursuant to
that imputation, he did not break prison, but had a
fair and legal discharge, obtained from Heaven; he
did not break prison, but an officer was sent on pur-
pose to roll away the stone, and so to open the prison
door, which would never have been done, if he had not
made a full satisfaction, but the immediate
work of our redemption, the complete the deliverance, he
was raised again for our justification; he died to pay
our debt, and rose again to take out our acquittance.
The stone of our sins was rolled to the door of the
grave of our Lord Jesus; (and we find the rolling of
a great stone to signify the contracting of guilt, 1
Sami, 14: 33.) but, to demonstrate that divine justice
was satisfied, an angel was commissioned to roll
back the stone, that the angel raised him from
the dead, any more than those that took away the
stone from Lazarus's grave, raised him, but thus he
intimated the consent of Heaven to his release, and
the joy of Heaven in it. The enemies of Christ had
sealed the stone, resolving, like Babylon, not to open
the house of his prisoners, shall the prey be taken
from the mighty? For this was their hour, but all
those that are bound are freed; and darkness are
dispelled, and the God of light and life. An angel from
heaven has power to break the seal, though it were
the great seal of Israel, and is able to roll away the
stone, though ever so great. Thus the captives of
the mighty are taken away. The angel's sitting
upon the stone, when he had rolled it away, is very
observable, and bespeaks a secure triumph over all
the obstructions of Christ's resurrection. There he
sat, defying all the powers of hell to roll the
stone to the grave again. Christ erects his seat of rest,
and seat of judgment, upon the opposition of his
enemies; the Lord stiseth upon the flood. The
angel sat as a guard to the grave, having frightened
away the enemies' black guard; he sat, expecting
the women, and ready to give them an account of his
resurrection.

4. That his countenance was like lightning, and
his garments white as snow, v. 3. This was a visible
representation, by that which we call splendid and
illustrious, of the glories of the invisible world, which
know no difference of colours. His look upon the
keepers was like flashes of lightning, he cast forth
lightning, and scattered them, Ps. 144. 6. The
whiteness of his raiment was an emblem not only of
purity, but of joy and triumph. When Christ died,
the guards thought they were seen; they were deluged,
signified by the darkening of the sun; but when they
thereafter, they again put on the garments of praise.
The glory of this angel represented the glory of Christ,
to which he was now risen, for it is the same de-
scription that was given of him in his transfiguration;
(ch. 17. 2.) but when he conversed with his disci-
iples after his resurrection, he drew a veil over it,
and it bespeaks the glory of the saints in their resur-
rection, when they shall be as the angels of God in
heaven.

5. That for fear of him the keepers did shake, and
became as dead men, v. 4. They were soldiers,
that thought themselves hardened against fear, yet
the very sight of an angel struck them with terror.
Thus when the Son of God arose to judgment, the
stout-hearted were spoiled, Ps. 76. 5, 9. Note, The
angels of God are glorious and terrible; there is no
sin that is not a terror to God's saints, so it is the
terror and confusion of his enemies. They did shake;
the word is his, is the same with that which was used for the earthquake, v. 2.

When the earth shook, these children of the
earth, that had their portion in it, shook too;
whereas, those that have their happiness in things
above, though the earth be removed, yet are without
fear. The keepers became as dead men, when he
whom they kept guard upon became alive, and they
whom they kept guard against revived with him.
It struck a terror upon them, to see themselves
baffled in that which was their business here. They
were posted here, to keep a dead man in his grave—as
easy a piece of service surely as was ever assigned
them, and yet it proves too hard for them. They
were told that they must expect to be assaulted by
him. They thought they were invincible; but for
fear of him, would soon shake, and become as
dead men, but are amazed when they find them-
selves attacked by a mighty angel, whom they dare
not look in the face. Thus doth God frustrate
his enemies by frightening them, Ps. 9. 20.

III. The message which this angel delivered to
the women, v. 5–7.

1. He encourages them against their fears, v. 5.
To come near to graves and tombs, especially in
silence and solitude, has something in it frightful,
much more was it so to these women, to find an
angel at the sepulchre; but he soon makes them easy
with the word, Fear not ye. The keepers shook,
and became as dead men, but, Fear not ye. Let
the sinners in Zion be afraid, for there is cause for it;
but, Fear not, Abraham, nor any of the faithful seed
of Abraham; why should the daughters of Sarah
that do well, be afraid with any amazement? 1 Pet.
3. 6. "Fear not ye. Let not the news I have to
tell you, be any surprise to you, for you were told
before that your Master would rise: let it be no ter-
or to you, for his resurrection will be your consola-
tion; fear not any hurt that I will do you, nor any
evilk tidings I have to tell you. Fear not ye, for I
know that ye seek Jesus. I know you are friends to
the cause, I do not come to frighten you, but to en-
courage you." Note, Those that seek Jesus, have
no reason to be afraid; for, if they seek him diligently, they shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder. All our believing inquiries after the Lord Jesus are observed, and taken notice of; and if good queries are propounded, they certainly be answered, as these were, with good words, and comfortable words. Y. seek Jesus that was crucified. He mentions his being crucified, the more to commend their love to him: "You seek him still, though he was crucified; you retain your kindness for him notwithstanding." Note, True believers love and seek Christ, not only though he was crucified, but because he was so. 

He is risen, and of the resurrection of Christ; and there was enough in that to silence their fears: (v. 6.) He is not here, for he is risen. To be told, He is not here, would have been no welcome news to those who sought him, if it had not been added, He is risen. Note, It is matter of comfort to those who seek Christ, and miss of finding him where they expected, that he is risen: if we find him not in sensible comfort, yet he is risen. We must not hearken to those who say, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, for he is not here, he is risen. In all our inquiries after Christ, we must remember that he is risen; and we must seek him as one risen. (1.) Not with any gross, carnal, thoughts of him. There were those that knew Christ after the flesh; but now henceforth know him so no more, 2 Cor. 5. 16. It is true, he had a body; but it is now a glorified body. They that make pictures and images of Christ, forget that he is not here, he is risen; our communion with him must be spiritual, by faith in his word, Rom. 10. 6—8. (2.) We must seek him with great reverence and humility, and an awful regard to his glory, for he is risen. God has highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, and therefore every knee and every soul must bow before him. (3.) We must seek him with a heavenly mind; when we are ready to make this world our home, as soon as it is good to be here, let us remember our Lord Jesus is not here, he is risen, and therefore let not our hearts be here, but let them rise too, and seek the things that are above, Col. 3. 1—3. Phil. 3. 20. Two things the angel refers these women to, for the confirmation of their faith, touching Christ's resurrection. [1.] The words now fulfilled, which they might read, He is risen, as he said. This he vouches as the proper object of faith: "He said that he would rise, and you know that he is the Truth itself, and therefore have reason to expect that he should rise; why should you be backward to believe that which he told you would be?" Let us never think that strange, of which the word of Christ has raised our expectations, whether the sufferings of this present time, or the glory that is to be revealed. If we remember that the word of God is true, we shall be the less surprised at what he doth with us. This angel, when he said, He is not here, he is risen, makes it to appear that he preaches no other gospel than what they had already received, for he refers himself to the word of Christ as sufficient to bear him out; He is risen, as he said. [2.] To his grave now empty, which they might look into, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Christ is risen; gone from his grave, and, putting both together, you will believe. You see that he is not here, and, remembering what he said, you may be satisfied that he is risen; come, see the place, and you will see that he is not there, you will see that he could not be stolen thence, and therefore must conclude that he is risen." Note, It may be of use to affect us, and may have a good influence upon us, to come, and with an eye of faith see the place where the Lord lay. See the marks he has left there of his love in condescending so low for us; see how easy he has made that bed, and how light-hearted, for us, by lying in it himself; when we look into the grave, where we expect we must lie, to die off, and are to look into the grave where the Lord lay: the place where our Lord lay, so the Syriac. The angels own him for their Lord, as well as we; for the whole family, both in heaven and earth, is named from him. 3. He directs them to go carry the tidings of it to his disciples; (v. 7.) Go quickly, and tell his disciples. It is probable that they were for entertaining themselves with the sight of the sepulchre, and discourse with the angels. It was good to be here, but they have other work appointed them; this is a day of good tidings, and though they have the premier weisin of the comfort, the first taste of it, yet they must not have the monopoly of it, must not hold their peace, any more than those lepers, 2 Kings 7. 9. They must go tell the disciples. Note, Public usefulness to others must be preferred before the pleasure of secret communion with God ourselves; for it is more blessed to give, than to receive. Observe, (1.) The disciples of Christ must first be told the news; not, Go, tell the chief priests and the Pharisees, that they may be confounded; but, Tell the disciples, that they may be comforted. God anticipates the joy of his friends more than the shame of his enemies, though the perfection of both is reserved for hereafter. Tell his disciples; it may be they will believe your report, however, to them. (1.) That they may encourage themselves under their present sorrows and dispersions. It was a dismal time with them, between grief and fear; what a cordial would this be to them now, to hear their Master is risen! (2.) That they may inquire further into it themselves. This alarm was sent them, to awaken them from that strange stupidity which had seized them, and to raise their expectations. This was to set them on seeking him, and to prepare them for his appearance to them. General hints excite to closer searches. They shall now hear of him, but shall very shortly see him. Christ discovers himself gradually. (2.) The women are sent to tell it them, and so are made, as it were, the apostles of the apostles. This was an honour put upon them, and a recompense for their constant affectionate adherence to him, at the cross, and in the grave, and a rebufk to the disciples who forsok him. Still God chooses the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and puts the treasure, not only into earthly vessels, but here into the weaker vessels; as, the woman, being deceived by the suggestions of an evil angel, was first in the transmigration, (1 Tim. 2. 14.) so these women, being duly informed by the instructions of a good angel, were first in the belief of the resurrection from transmigration by Christ's resurrection, that that reproof of their sex might be rolled away, by putting this in the balance against it, which is their perpetual praise. (3.) They were bid to go quickly upon this errand. Why, what haste was there? Would not the news keep cold, and be welcome to them at any time? Yes, but they were now overwhelmed with grief, and Christ would have this cordial hastened them; our affections may be as green as ours to God for sin, the angel Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly with a message of comfort, Dan. 9. 21. We must always be ready and forward; [1.] To obey the commands of God, Ps. 119. 60. [2.] To do good to our brethren, and to carry comfort to them, as those that felt from their afflictions; Say not, Ce, and come again, and to-morrow I will give; but now quickly. (4.) They were directed to appoint the disciples
to meet him in Galilee. There were other appearances of Christ to them before that in Galilee, which were sudden and surprising, and made them think that he was to be solemn and public, and gave them notice of it before. Now this general rendezvous was appointed in Galilee, eighty or a hundred miles from Jerusalem; [1.] In kindness to those of his disciples that remained in Galilee, and did not (perhaps they could not) come up to Jerusalem; into that country therefore he would go, to manifest himself to his friends there. I know thy works, and shall therefore open the doors of my disciples dwell, and visit there. Note, The exaltation of Christ doth not make him forget the meaner and poorer sort of his disciples, but even to them that are at a distance from the plenty of grace he will graciously manifest himself. [2.] In consideration of the weakness of his disciples that were now at Jerusalem, who as yet were afraid of the Jews, and durst not appear publicly, and therefore this meeting was adjourned to Galilee. Christ knows our fears, and considers our frame, and made his appointment where there was least danger of disturbance.

Lastly, The angel solemnly affirms upon his word the truth of what he had related to them; "Lo, I have told you, you may be assured of it, and depend upon it; you have told me, who dare not tell thee. The word spoken by angels was steadfast, Heb. 2. 2. God had been wont formerly to make known his mind to his people, by the ministration of angels, as at the giving of the law; but as he intended in gospel-times to lay aside that way of communication, (for unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, nor appointed them to be the preachers of the gospel,) this angel was now sent to certify the resurrection of Christ to the disciples, and so leave it in their hands to be published to the world, 2 Cor. 4. 7. In saying, Lo, I have told you, he doth, as it were, discharge himself from the blame of their unbelief, if they should not receive this record, and throw it upon them; "I have done my errand, I have faithfully delivered my message, now look you to it, believe it at your peril; whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I have told you." Note, Those messengers from God, that discharge their trust faithfully, may take the comfort of that, whatever the success be, Acts 20. 26. 27.

IV. The women's departure from the sepulchre, to bring notice to the disciples, v. 8. And observe, 1. What frame and temper of spirit they were in; They departed with fear and great joy; a strange mixture, fear and joy at the same time, in the same soul. To hear that Christ was risen, was matter of joy; but to be led into his grave, and to see an angel, and talk with him about it, could not but cause fear. It was good news, but they were afraid that it was too good to be true. But observe, it is said of their joy, it was great joy; it is not said so of their fear. Note, (1.) Holy fear has joy attending it. The woman who ran into the sepulchre with gladness. (2.) Spiritual joy is mixed with trembling, Ps. 2. 11. It is only perfect love and joy that will cast out all fear. 2. What haste they made; They did run. The fear and joy together quickened their pace, and added wings to their motion; the angel bid them go quickly, and they ran. Those that are sent on God's business must not loiter, or lose time; where the heart is enlarged with the glad tidings of the gospel, the feet will run the way of God's commandments.

3. What errand they went upon; They ran, to bring his disciples word. Not doubting but it would be joyful news to them, they ran, to comfort them with the same comforts whereby they themselves were comforted of God. Note, The disciples of Christ should be forward to communicate to each other their experiences of sweet communion with Heaven, so that it might not be one soul less who has done for their souls, and spoken to them. Joy in Christ Jesus, like the ointment of the right hand, will betray itself, and fill all places within the lines of its communication, with its odours. When Samson found honey, he brought it to his parents.

V. Christ's appearing to the women, to confirm the testimony of the angel, v. 9. 10. These zealous disciples that were so affrighted that morning, and fled from his disciples, but had the first sight of him, after his resurrection. The angel directed those that would see him, to go to Galilee, but before that time came, even here also, they looked after him that lives, and seck them. Note, Jesus Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often anticipates, but ever frustrates, the believing expectations of his people.

Here is, 1. Christ's surprising appearance to the women; As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them. Note, God's gracious visits usually meet us in the way of duty, and to those who use what they have for others' benefit, more shall be given. This interview with Christ was unexpected, or ever they were aware, Cant. 6. 12. Note, Christ is nearer to his people than they imagine. They met him the weekday, went to their friends, dined, to each Christ; hence he was not there, he was raised; nor go to heaven, for he was not yet ascended: but Christ was nigh them, and still in the word is nigh us.

2. The salutation wherewith he accosted them; All hail! The word hail signifies, and is expressive of the Greek form of salutation here used, answering to that of our Lord when he met them at Bethany, Matt. 21. 9.) The good will of Christ to us and our happiness, even since he entered upon his state of exaltation. Though he is advanced, he wishes us as well as ever, and is as much concerned for our comfort. (2.) The freedom and holy familiarity which he used in his fellowship with his disciples; for he called them friends. But the Greek word signifies, Rejoice ye. They were affected both with fear and joy; what he said to them tended to encourage their joy, (v. 9.) Rejoice ye, and to silence their fear; (v. 10.) Be not afraid. Note, It is the will of Christ that his people should be a cheerful joyful people, and his resurrection furnishes them with abundant matter for joy.

3. The affectionate respect they paid him; They came, and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Thus they expressed, (1.) The reverence and honour they had for him; they threw themselves at his feet, put themselves into a posture of adoration, and worshipped him with humility and godly fear, as the Son of God, and now exalted. (2.) The love and affection they had to him; they held him, and would not let him go; Cant. 3. 4. How beautiful are the feet of the Lord Jesus to them! Isai. 52. 7.) They served him, served Jesus; they saw they had this further assurance of his resurrection; they welcomed it with both arms. Thus we must embrace Jesus Christ offered us in the gospel, with reverence cast ourselves at his feet, by faith take hold of him, and with love and joy lay him near our hearts.

4. The encouraging words Christ said to them, v. 10. We do not find that they said any thing to him. He had embraced and adopted them, and spoke plainly enough; and what he said to them was no more than what the angel had said; (v. 5.) for he will confirm the word of his messengers; (Isa. 44. 26.) and his way of comforting his people, is, by his Spirit to speak over again to their hearts the same thing that they had heard before from his angels, the ministers. Now observe, here,
(1.) How he rebukes their fear; Be not afraid. They must not fear being impressed upon by those repeated notices of his resurrection, nor fear any hurt from the appearance of one from the dead; for the news, though strange, was both true and good. Note, Christ rose from the dead, to silence his people’s fears, and there is enough in that to silence them.

(2.) How he repeats their message; Go, tell my brethren, that they must prepare for a journey into Galilee, and there they shall see me.” If there be any communion between our souls and Christ, it is he that appoints the meeting, and he will observe the appointment. Jerusalem had forfeited the honour of Christ's presence, it was a tumultuous city, therefore he adjourns the meeting to Galilee. Come, my beloved, let us go forth, Cant. 7. 11. But that which is especially observable here, is, that he calls his disciples his brethren. Go, tell my brethren, not only those of them that were akin to him, but all the rest, for they are all his brethren, (ch. 12. 50.) but he never called them so till after his resurrection, here, and John 20. 17. Being by the resurrection himself declared to be the Son of God with power, all the children of God were thereby declared to be his brethren. Being the First-born from the dead, he is become the First-born among many brethren, because all of that are planted together in the likeness of his resurrection. Christ did not now converse so constantly and familiarly with his disciples as he had done before his death; but, lest they should think him grown strange to them, he gives them this endearing title, Go to my brethren, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which, speaking of his entrance upon his exalted state, saith, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. They had shamefully deserted him in his sufferings; but, to shew that he could forgive and forget, and to teach us to do so, he not only continues his purpose to meet them, but calls them brethren. Being all his brethren, they were brethren one to another, and must love as brethren. Hisowning them for his brethren put a great honour upon them, but withal gave them an example of humility in the midst of that honour.

11. Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. 12. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, 13. Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. 14. And if this come to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. 15. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

For the further proof of the resurrection of Christ, we have here the confession of the adversaries that were upon the guard; and there are two things which strengthen this testimony—that they were eye-witnesses, and did themselves see the glory of the resurrection, which none else did—and that they were enemies, set there to oppose and obstruct his resurrection. Now observe here. They shewed to the chief priests all the things that were done; told them of the earthquake, the descent of the angel, the rolling of the stone away, and the coming of the body of Jesus alive out of the grave. Thus the sign of the prophet Jonas was brought to pass, to the end that there might be some visible and preceptive evidence that could be; and so the utmost means of conviction were afforded them; we may well imagine what a mortification it was to them, and that, like the enemies of the Jews, they were much cast down in their eyes, Neh. 6. 16. It might justly have been expected that they should now have believed in Christ, and repented their putting him to death; but they were obstinate in their infidelity, and therefore sealed up under it.

11. How it was baffled and stilled by them. They called an assembly, and considered what was to be done. For their own parts, they were resolved not to believe that Jesus was risen; but their care was, to keep others from believing, and themselves from being quite ashamed from their disbelief of it. They had put him to death, and there was no way of standing to their report but by confronting the evidence of his resurrection. Thus they who have sold themselves to work wickedness, find that one sin draws on another, and that they have plunged themselves into a wretched necessity of adding iniquity to iniquity, which is part of the curse of Christ’s persecutors. Ps. 69. 27. The result of their debate was, that those soldiers must by all means be bribed off, and hired not to teach. 1. They put money into their hands; and what wickedness is it which men will not be brought to by the love of money? They gave large money, probably a great deal more than they gave to Judas, into the soldiers. These chief priests loved their money as well as most people did, and were as loath to part with it; and yet, to carry on a malicious design against the gospel of Christ, they were very prodigal of it; they gave the soldiers, it is likely, as much as they asked, and they knew how to improve their advantages. Here was large money given for the advancing of that which they knew to be a lie, yet many grudge a little money for the advancement of that which they know to be the truth, though they have a promise of being reimbursed in the resurrection of the just. Let us never starve a good cause, when we see a bad one so liberally supplied.

2. They put a lie into their mouths; (v. 13.) Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; a sorry shift is better than none, but this is a sorry one indeed. (1.) The sham was ridiculous, and carried along with it its own confutation. If they slept, how could they know any thing of the matter, or say who came? If any one of them were awake to observe it, no doubt it would have been all to offer it; for that was the only thing they had in charge. It was altogether improbable that a company of poor, weak, cowardly, dishonest men should expose themselves for so inconsiderable an achievement as the rescue of the dead body. Why were not the houses where they lodged diligently searched, and other means used to discover the dead body? but this was so thin a lie as one might easily see through. But had it been even plausible, (2.) It was a wicked thing for these priests and elders to hire these soldiers to tell a deliberate lie, (if it had been in a matter of ever so small importance,) against their consciences. These know not what they do, who draw others to commit one wilful sin; for that may devastate conscience, and be an inlet to many. But, (3.) Considering this as intended to
overthrow the great doctrine of Christ's resurrection, this was a sin against the last remedy, and was, in effect, a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, in particular against the efficacy of the disciples, which was done by the power of the Holy Ghost.

But lest the soldiers should object the penalty they incurred by the Roman law for sleeping upon the guard, which was very severe, (Acts 12, 19.) they promised to interpose with the governor; "We will persuade him, and secure you. We will use our own interest in him, to gain him no notice of our presence; and we have lately found how easily they could manage him. If really these soldiers had slept, and so suffered the disciples to steal him away, as they would have the world believe, the priests and elders would certainly have been the foremost to solicit the governor to punish them for their treachery; so that their care for the soldiers' safety plainly gives the lie to the story. They undertook to secure the sword of Pilate's justice, but could not secure them from the sword of God's justice, which hangs over the head of those that love and make a lie. They promise more than they can perform, who undertake to save a man harmless in the commission of a wilful sin.

Well, thus was the plot laid; now, what success had it?

[1.] Those that were willing to deceive, took the money, and did as they were taught. They cared as little for Christ and his religion as the chief priests and elders did; and men that have no religion at all, can be very well pleased to see Christianity run down, and lend a hand to, if need be, to serve a turn. They *took the money*; that was it they aimed at, and nothing else. Note, Money is a bait for the blackest temptation; mercenary tongues will tell the truth for it.

The great argument to prove Christ to be the Son of God, is, his resurrection, and none could have more convincing proofs of the truth of that than these soldiers had; they saw the angel descend from heaven, saw the stone rolled away, saw the body of Christ come out of the grave, unless the consternation they felt hindered them; and yet they were so far from being convinced by it themselves, that they were hired to belie him, and to hinder others from believing in him. Note, The most sensible evidence will not convince men, without the concurring operation of the Holy Spirit.

[2.] Those that were willing to be deceived, not only credited, but propagated, the story; This saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. The sham took well enough, and answered the end. The Jews, who persisted in their infidelity, when they were pressed with the argument of Christ's resurrection, had this still ready to reply, His disciples came, and stole him away. To this purport was the solemn narrative, which (as Justin Martyr relates in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew) the great Sanhedrim sent to all the Jews of the dispersion. A rumour and an alarum was sent, to a vigorous resistance of Christianity—that, when they had crucified, and buried him, the disciples came by night, and stole him out of the sepulchre, designing thereby not only to overthrow the truth of Christ's resurrection, but to render his disciples odious to the world, as the greatest villains in nature. When once a lie is raised, none knows how far it will spread, or how high its influence will rise, or what mischief it will do. Some give another sense of this passage. This saying is commonly reported, that is, "Notwithstanding the artifice of the chief priests, thus to impose upon the people, the collusion that was between them and the soldiers, and the money that was given to support the cheat, were commonly reported and whispered among the Jews:" for one way or other truth will out.

16. Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. 18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

This evangelist passes over several other appearances of Christ recorded by Luke and John, and hastens to this, which was of all other the most solemn, as being promised and appointed again and again before his death, and after his resurrection. Observe,

1. How the disciples attended his appearance, according to the appointment; (v. 16.) They went into Galilee, a long journey to go for one sight of Christ, unless it was by the way. They had seen him several times at Jerusalem, and yet they went into Galilee, to see him there.

2. Because he appointed them to do so. Though it seemed a needless thing to go into Galilee, to see him when they might see at Jerusalem, especially when they must so soon come back again to Jerusalem, before his ascension, yet they had learned to obey Christ's commands, and not object against them. Note, Those who would maintain communion with Christ, must attend him there where he has appointed. Those who have met him in one ordinance, must attend him in another; those who have seen him at Jerusalem, must go to Galilee.

2. Because that was to be a public and general meeting. They had seen him themselves, and conversed with him in private, but that should not excuse their attendance in a solemn assembly, where many were to be gathered together to see him. Note, Our communion with God in secret must not supersede our attendance on public worship, as we have opportunity; for God loves the gates of Zion, and so must we. The place was a mountain in Galilee, probably the same mountain on which he was transfigured. There they met for private, and, perhaps, to signify the exalted state into which he was entered, and his advances toward the upper world.

II. How they were affected with the appearance of Christ to them, v. 17. Now was the time that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, 1 Cor. 15. 6. Some think that they saw him, at first, at some distance, above in the air, &c. He was now seen of five hundred brethren; (so they read it;) which gave occasion to some to doubt, till he came nearer; (v. 18.) and then they were satisfied. We are told,

1. That they worshipped him; many of them did so, nay, it should seem, they all did that, they gave divine honour to him, which was signified by some outward expressions of adoration. Note, All that see the true Jesus with an eye of faith, are obliged to worship him.

2. But *some doubted*, some of those that were then present. Note, Even among these that worship there are some that doubt. The faith of those that are sincere, may yet be very weak and wavering. They doubted, *literally*—they hung in suspense, as the scales of the balance, when it is hard to say which preponderates. These doubts were after,
warn removed, and their faith grew up to a full assurance, and it tended much to the honour of Christ, that the disciples doubted before they believed; so that they cannot be said to be credulous, and willing to accept of any preposterous question, but they first questioned, and then proved all things, and then held fast that which was true, and they found to be so.

11. What Jesus Christ said to them; (v. 18-20.)

Jesus came, and spoke unto them. Though there were those that doubted, yet he did not therefore reject them; for he will not break the bruised reed. He did not stand at a distance, but came near, and gave them such convincing proofs of his resurrection, that they were constrained to abandon all doubt, and make the faith to triumph over their doubts. He came, and spake familiarly to them, as one friend speaks to another, that they might be fully satisfied in the commission he was about to give them. He that drew near to God, to speak to us, draws near to us, to speak from him to us. Christ now delivered to his apostles the great charter of his kingdom in the world, was sending them out as his ambassadors, and here gives them their credentials.

In opening this great charter, we may observe two things.

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received himself from the Father. Being about to authorize his apostles, if any ask by what authority he doth it, and who gave him that authority? here he tells us, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. The Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are one God, and the Son has given his commission to the apostles. As God, equal with the Father, all power was originally and essentially his; but as Mediator, as God-man, all power was given him; partly in connexion with his work, (because he humbled himself, therefore God thus exalted him,) and partly in pursuance of his design; he had this power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as were given him, (John 17. 2.) for the more complete execution of his salvation. This power he was now more signally invested in, upon his resurrection, Acts 13. 33. He had power before, power to forgive sins; (ch. 9. 6.) but now all power is given him. He is now going to receive for himself a kingdom, (Luke 19. 12.) to sit down at the right hand, Ps. 110. 1. Having purchased it, nothing remains but to take possession; it is his own for ever. He has now set his face against the transgression of all mankind, and put his holy spirit to dwell in the sole universal Monarch, he is Lord of all. Acts 10. 36. He has all power in heaven. He has power of dominion over the angels, they are all his humble servants, Eph. 1. 20. 21. He has power of intercession with his Father, in virtue of his satisfaction and atonement; he intercedes, not as a supplicant, but as a demandant; Father, I will. He has all power on earth too; having prevailed with God, by the sacrifice of atonement, he prevails with men, and deals with them as one having authority, by the ministry of reconciliation. He is indeed, in all causes and over all persons, supreme Moderator and Governor. By him Kings reign. All souls are his, and to him every heart and knee must bow, and every tongue confess him to be the Lord. This our Lord Jesus tells them, not only to satisfy them of the authority he had to commission them, and to bring them out in the execution of their commission, but to take off the offence of the cross; they had no reason to be ashamed of Christ crucified, when they saw him thus glorified.

2. The commission he gives to those whom he sent forth; Go ye therefore. This is the beginning, (Isa. 49. 6.) Chiefly, the chief ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, the architects that laid the foundation of the church. Now these that had followed Christ in the regeneration, were set on thrones; (Luke 22. 30.) Go ye. It is not only a word of command, like that, Son, go work, but a word of encouragement, Go, and fear not, have not I sent you? Go, and make a business of this work. They must now take state, and issue out summons to the nations to attend upon them; but they must go, and bring the gospel to their doors. Go ye. They had dated on Christ's bodily presence, and hung upon that, and built all their joys and hopes upon that; but now Christ discharges them from further attendance on his person, and sends them abroad about other work. As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, to excite them to fly, (Deut. 22. 11.) so Christ stirs up his disciples, to disperse themselves into all the world. It is given to their successors, the ministers of the gospel, whose business it is to transmit the gospel from age to age, to the end of the world in time, as it was their's to transmit it from nation to nation, to the end of the world in space, and no less necessary. The Old-Testament promise of a gospel ministry is made to a succession; (Isa. 59. 21.) and the New-Testament promise is made to a continuation, as Christ be with them always to the consummation of the world? Christ, at his ascension, gave not only apostles and prophets, but pastors and teachers, Eph. 4. 11. Now observe,

[1.] How far his commission is extended; to all nations. Go, and disciple all nations. Not that they must go all together into every place, but by consent disperse themselves in such manner as might best diffuse the light of the gospel. Now this signifies it to be the will of Christ, First, That the covenant of peculiarity, made with the Jews, should now be cancelled and disannulled. This word broke down the middle wall of partition, which had so long excluded the Gentiles from a visible church state; and whereas the apostles, when first sent out, were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, now they were sent to all nations. Secondly, That salvation, by the grace of God, would be offered to all men, and excluded that did not by their unbelief and impenitence exclude themselves. The salvation they were to preach is a common salvation; whoever will, let him come, and take the benefit of the act of indemnity; for there is no difference of Jew or Greek in Christ Jesus. Thirdly, That Christianity should be twistid in with national constitutions, that the kingdoms of the world should become Christ's kingdoms, and his kingdom the church's nursing fathers.

[2.] What is the principal intention of this commission; to disciple all nations. Mat. 18. 17. "Admit them disciples; do your utmost to make the nations Christian nations," not, "Go to the nations, and denounce the judgments of God against them, as Jonah against Ninevah, and as the other Old-Testament prophets," (though they had reason enough to expect it for their wickedness,) but, "Go, and disciple all nations; make up a kingdom in the world, bring the nations to be his subjects; setting up a school, bring the nations to be his scholars; raising an army for the carrying on of the war against the powers of darkness, enlist the nations of the earth under his banner. The work which the apostles had to do, was, to set up the Christian religion in all places, and it was honourable work; the achievements of the mighty heroes of the world were nothing to it. They conquered the nations for themselves, and made them
miserable; the apostles conquered them for Christ, and made them happy.

[3.] Their instructions for executing this commission:

First. They must, as their disciples by the sacred rite of baptism; "Go into all nations, preach the gospel to them, work miracles among them, and persuade them to come in their children with them, into the church of Christ, and then admit them and their's into the church, by washing them with water;" either dipping them in the water, or by pouring or sprinkling water upon them, which seems the more proper, because the thing is most frequently expressed so. As, Isa. 44. 3. I will pour my Spirit on thy seed. And, Tit. 3. 5. The grace of God through faith brings salvation to all men.

Ezek. 36. 25. I will sprinkle clean water upon you.

And, Isa. 52. 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; which seems a prophecy of this commission to baptize the nations.

Secondly, This baptism must be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. That is, 1. By authority from heaven, and is 

a) for his minister act by authority from the three Persons in the Godhead, who all concur, as to our creation, so to our redemption; they have their commission under the great seal of heaven, which puts an honour upon the ordinance, though to a carnal eye, like him that instituted it, it has no form or comeliness.

b) Calling upon the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Every thing is sanctified by prayer, and particularly the word of faith, and the minister's prayer, with due respect to the presence of God with the ordinance, which is its lustre and beauty, its life and efficacy. But, 3. It is into the name (σε 

νά τοῦ ὕδατος) of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; this was intended as the summary of the first principles of the Christian religion, and of the new covenant, and according to it the ancient creeds were drawn up. By our being baptized, we solemnly profess, (1.) Our assent to the scripture revelation concerning God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We confess our belief that there is a God, that there is but one God, that in the Godhead there is a Father that begets, a Son that is begotten, and a Holy Spirit of both. We are baptized not into the names, but into the name, of Father, Son, and Spirit, which plainly intimates that these Three are One in God, and One in name One. The distinct mention of the Three Persons in the ministry, both in the Christian baptism here, and in the Christian blessing, (2 Cor. 13. 14.) as it is a full proof of the doctrine of the Trinity, so it has done much toward the preserving of it pure and entire through all ages of the church; for nothing is more great and awful in Christian assemblies than these two. (2.) Our consent to a covenant relation to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Baptism is a sacrament, that is, it is an oath and a super sacrament, an eucharist, is to say upon oath. It is an oath of abjuration, by which we renounce the world and the flesh, as rivals with God for the throne in our hearts; and an oath of allegiance, by which we resign and give up ourselves to God, to be his, our own selves, our whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, to be governed by him, and live happy in his favour; we become his men, so the forementioned "This is my blood of the new covenant and precious promise is ushered in with a behold, to strengthen their faith, and engage their observation of it. "Take notice of this; it is what you may assure yourselves of, and venture upon." Observe here,

(1.) The favour promised them; I am with you.

Not, I will be with you, but I am—by you. As God sent Moses, so Christ sent his apostles, by this name, I am; for he is God, to whom past, present, and to come, are the same; see Rev. 1. 8. He was
now about to leave them, his bodily presence was now to be removed from them, and this grieved them; but he assuaged them of his spiritual presence, which was more expedient for them than his bodily presence could be; I am with you; that is, “My Spirit is with you, the Comforter shall abide with you,” John 16. 7. I am with you, and not against you; with you to take your part, to be on your side, and to hold with you, as Michael our prince is said to do, Dan. 10. 21. I am with you, and not absent from you, not at a distance; I am a very present help,” Ps. 46. 1. Christ was now sending them to set up his kingdom in the world, which was a great undertaking. And then doth he seasonably promise them his presence with them, [1.] To carry them on through the difficulties they were likely to meet with. “I am with you, to bear you up; to plead your cause; with you in all your services, in all your sufferings, to bring you through them with comfort and honour. When you go through the fire or water, I will be with you. In the pulpit, in the prison, lo, I am with you.” [2.] To succeed this great undertaking; “Lo, I am with you, to make your ministry effectual for the disciplining of the nations, for the pulling down of the strong-holds of Satan, and the setting up of stronger for the Lord Jesus.” It was an unlikely thing that they should unhinge national constitutions in religion, and turn the stream of so long a usage; that they should establish a doctrine so directly contrary to the genius of the age, and persuade people to become the disciples of a crucified Jesus; but, lo, I am with you, and therefore you shall gain your point. [2.] The continuance of the favour, always, even unto the end of the world. [1.] They shall have his constant presence, always, εἰσάς τὰς ἡμέρας—all days, every day. “I will be with you on sabbath days, on week days, fair days and foul days, winter days and summer days.” There is no day, no hour of the day, in which our Lord Jesus is not present with his churches and with his ministers; if there were that day, that hour, they were undone. Since his resurrection he had appeared to them now and then, once a week, it may be, and scarcely that. But he assures them that they shall have his spiritual presence continued to them without intermission. Wherever we are, the word of Christ is nigh us, even in our mouth, and the Spirit of Christ nigh us, even in our hearts. The God of Israel, the Saviour, is sometimes a God that hideth himself, (Isa. 45. 15.) but never a God that absenteth himself; sometimes in the dark, but never at a distance. [2.] They shall have his perpetual presence, even to the end of the world. There is a world before us, that will never have an end, but this is hastening towards its period; and even till then the Christian religion shall, in one part of the world or other, be left up, and the presence of Christ continued with his ministers. I am with you to the end of the world, not with your persons, they died quickly, but, First, With you and your writings. There is a divine power going along with the scriptures of the New Testament, not only preserving them in being, but producing strange effects by them, which will continue to the end of time. Secondly, With you and your successors; with you and all the ministers of the gospel in the several ages of the church; with all to whom this commission extends, with all who, being duly called and sent, thus baptize and thus teach. When the end of the world is come, and the kingdom delivered up to God, even the Father, there will then be no further need of ministers and their ministration; but till then they shall continue, and the great intentions of the institution shall be answered. This is an encouraging word to all the faithful ministers of Christ, that what was said to the apostles, was said to them all, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Two solemn farewells we find our Lord Jesus giving to his church, and his parting word at both of them is very encouraging; one was here, when he closed up his personal converse with them, and then his parting word was, “Lo, I am with you always; I leave you, and yet still I am with you;” the other was, when he closed up the canon of the scripture by the pen of his beloved disciple, and then his parting word was, “Surely, I come quickly. I leave you for a while, but I will be with you again shortly,” Rev. 22. 20. By this it appears that he did not part in anger, but in love, and that it is his will we should keep up both our communion with him and our expectation of him. There is one word more remaining, which must not be overlooked, and that is Amen; which is not a cipher, intended only for a concluding word, like finis at the end of a book, but it has its significance. 1. It speaks Christ’s confirmation of this promise, Lo, I am with you. It is his Amen, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. “Verily I am, and will he, with you; I the Amen, the faithful Witness, do assure you of it.” Or, 2. It speaks the church’s concurrence with it, in their desire, and prayer, and expectation. It is the evangelist’s Amen, So be it, blessed Lord. Our Amen to Christ’s promises turns them into prayers. Hath Christ promised to be present with his ministers, present in his word, present in the assemblies of his people, though but two or three are gathered together in his name, and this always, even to the end of the world? Let us heartily say Amen to it; believe that it shall be so, and pray that it may be so; Lord, Remember this word unto thy servants, upon which thou hast caused us to hope.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. MARK.

We have heard the evidence given in by the first witness to the doctrine and miracles of our Lord Jesus, and now here is another witness produced, who calls for our attention. The second living creature saith, Come and see, Rev. 6. 3. Now let us inquire a little.

I. Concerning this witness. His name is Mark. Marcus was a Roman name, and a very common one, and yet we have no reason to think, but that he was by birth a Jew; but as Saul, when he went among the nations, took the Roman name of Paul, so he of Mark, his Jewish name perhaps being Mardocaeus; so Grotius. We read of John, whose surname was Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, whom Paul was displeased with, (Acts 13. 37, 38,) but afterward had a great kindness for, and not only ordered the churches to receive him, (Col. 4. 10.) but sent for him to be his assistant, with this encomium, He is profitable to me for the ministry; (2 Tim. 4. 11,) and he reckons him among his fellow-labourers, Phil. 24. We read of Marcus whom Peter calls his son, he having been an instrument of his conversion; (1 Pet. 5. 13,) whether that was the same with the other, and if not, which of them was the penman of this gospel, is altogether uncertain. It is a tradition very current among the ancients, that St. Mark wrote this gospel under the direction of St. Peter, and that it was confirmed by his authority; so Hieron. Catal. Script. Eccles. Marcus, discipulus et interpres Petri, juxta quod Petrum referendum auderat, legatus Roma ad fratrum, brevem scriptum evangelium—Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, being sent from Rome by the brethren, wrote a concise gospel; and Tertullian saith, (Adv. Marcion. lib. 4. cap. 5.) Marcus quod edidit, Petri affirmatur, ejus interpres Marcus—Mark, the interpreter of Peter, delivered in writing the things which had been preached by Peter. But, as Dr. Whitby very well suggests, why should we have recourse to the authority of Peter, for the support of this gospel, or to say with St. Jerome, that Peter approved of it, and recommended it by his authority to the church to be read, when, though, it is true, Mark was no apostle, yet we have all the reason in the world to think that both he and Luke were of the number of the seventy disciples, who companied with the apostles all along, (Acts 1. 21.) who had a commission like that of the apostles, (Luke 10. 19. compared with Mark 16. 18,) and who, it is highly probable, received the Holy Ghost when they did? Acts 1. 13.—2. 1. So that it is no diminution at all to the validity or value of this gospel, that Mark was not one of the twelve, as Matthew and John were. St. Jerome saith, that, after the writing of this gospel, he went into Egypt, and was the first that preached the gospel at Alexandria, where he founded a church, to which he was a great example of holy living. Constituit ecclesiam tantat doctrinæ et vitæ continentis, ut omnes rectores Christi ad exemplum sui coegerit—He so adorned by his doctrine and his life the church which he founded, that his example influenced all the followers of Christ.

II. Concerning this testimony. Mark's gospel, 1. Is but short, much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles. 2. It is very much a repetition of what we had in Matthew; many remarkable circumstances being added to the stories there related, but not many new matters. When many witnesses are called to prove the same fact, upon any judgment is to be given, it is not thought tedious, but highly necessary, that they should each of them relate it in their own words, again and again, that by the agreement of the testimony the thing may be established; and therefore we must not think this book of scripture needless, for it is written not only to confirm our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but to put us in mind of things which we have read in the foregoing gospel, that we may give the more earnest heed to them, lest at any time we let them slip; and even pure minds have need to be thus stirred up by way of remembrance. It was fit that such great things as these should be spoken and written once, yea twice, because man is so unapt to perceive them, and so apt to forget them. There is no ground for the tradition, that this gospel was written first in Latin, though it was written at Rome; it was written in Greek, as was St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Greek being the more universal language.

ST. MARK, I.

CHAP. I.

Mark's narrative does not take rise so early as those of Matthew and Luke do, from the birth of our Saviour, but from John's baptism, from which he soon passes to Christ's public ministry. Accordingly, in this chapter, we have, I. The office of John Baptist illustrated by the prophecy of him, (v. 1. 3,) and by the history of him, v. 4. 8. II. Christ's baptism, and his being owned from heaven, v. 9. 11. III. His temptation, v. 12. 15. IV. His preaching, v. 14, 15, 21, 22, 37, 38. V. His calling disciples, v. 16. 20. VI. His praying, v. 35. VII. His working miracles. 1. His rebuking an unclean spirit, v. 29. 32. 2. His curing Peter's mother-in-law, who was ill of a fever, v. 39. 51. 3. His healing all that came to him, v. 32. 34. 35. 4. His cleansing a leper, v. 40. 43.
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HE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; 2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. 5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins. 6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey; 7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and minse. 8. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

We may observe here,
1. What the New Testament is—the divine testament, to which we adhere above all that is human; the new testament, which we advance above that which was old. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God, v. 1. 1. It is gospel; it is God's word, and is faithful and true; see Rev. 19. 9.—21. 3.—22. 6. It is a good word, and well worthy of all acclamation; it brings us glad tidings. 2. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the anointed Son of the Messiah promised and expected. The foregoing gospel began with the generation of Jesus Christ—that was but preliminary, this comes immediately to the business—the gospel of Christ. It is called his, not only because he is the Author of it, and it comes from him, but because he is the Subject of it, and it treats wholly concerning him. 3. This Jesus is the Son of God. That truth is the foundation on which the gospel is built, and which it is written to demonstrate; for if Jesus be not the Son of God, our faith is vain.

II. What the reference of the New Testament is to the Old, and its coherence with it. The gospel of Jesus Christ begins, and so we shall find it goes on, just as it is written in the prophets, (v. 2) for it saith no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come; (Acts 26. 22) which was most proper and powerful for the conviction of the Jews, who believed the Old-Testament prophets to be sent of God, and ought to have evidenced that they did so, by welcoming the accomplishment of their prophecies in its season; but it is of use to us all for the confirmation of our faith both in the Old Testament and in the New, for the exact harmony that there is between both, shews that they both have the same divine original.

Our passage is borrowed from two prophecies—that of Isaiah, which was the longest, and that of Malachi, which was the latest, (and there were above three hundred years between them,) both of whom spake to the same purport concerning the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in the ministry of John.

1. Malachi, in whom we had the Old-Testament forecast, spake very plainly (ch. 3. 1.) concerning John Baptist, who was to give the New-Testament welcome. Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, v. 2. Christ himself had taken notice of this, and applied it to John. (Matt. 1. 10.) who was God's messenger, sent to prepare Christ's way.

2. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, begins the evangelical part of his prophecy with this, which points to the beginning of the gospel of Christ; (Isa. 40. 3.) The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness; v. 3. Matthew had taken notice of this, and applied it to John, ch. 3. 3. But from these two, put together here, we may observe, (1.) That Christ, in his gospel, comes among us, bringing with him a message of grace and salvation to the heathen world. Such is the corruption of the world, that it is something to do to make room for him, and to remove that which gives not only obstruction, but opposition, to his progress. (3.) When God sent his Son into the world, he took care, and when he sends him into the heart, he takes care, effectual care, to prepare his way before him; for the designs of his grace shall not be frustrated; nor may any expect the comforts of that grace, or find the means, by conviction and humiliation for it, are prepared for those comforts, and disposed to receive them. (4.) When the paths that were crooked are made straight, (the mistakes of the judgment rectified, and the crooked ways of the affections,) then way is made for Christ's comforts. (5.) It is in a wilderness, for such this world is, that Christ's way is prepared, and their's that follow him, like that which Israel passed through to Canaan. The messengers of conviction, terror, that come to prepare Christ's way, are God's messengers, whom he sends and will own, and must be received as such. (7.) They that are sent to prepare the way of the Lord, in such a vast howling wilderness as this, have need to cry aloud, and not spare, and to lift up their voice like a trumpet.

III. What the beginning of the New Testament was. The gospel began in John Baptist; for the new and the prophets went ordained and called John, the least of all the dainties, but then the kingdom of God began to be preached, Luke 16. 16. Peter begins from the baptism of John, Acts 1. 22. The gospel did not begin so soon as the birth of Christ, for he took time to increase in wisdom and stature, not so late as his entering upon his public ministry, but half a year before, when John began to preach the same doctrine that Christ afterward preached. His baptism was the dawning of the gospel day; for,

In John the beginning was the beginning of a gospel spirit; for it bespoke great self-denial, mortification of the flesh, a holy contempt of the world, and nonconformity to it, which may truly be called the beginning of the gospel of Christ in any soul, v. 6. He was clothed with camel's hair, not with soft raiment; was girt, not with a golden, but with a leathern, girdle; and, in contempt of dainties and delicate things, his meat was locusts and wild honey. Note, The more we sit loose to the body, and live above the world, the better we are prepared for Jesus Christ.

2. In John's preaching and baptizing there was the beginning of the gospel doctrines and ordinances, and the first fruits of them. (1.) He preached the remission of sins, which is the great gospel privilege; showed people their need of it, that they were undone without it, and that it might be obtained. (2.) He preached repentance, that there might be a renovation of their hearts, and a reformation of their lives, that they must forsake their sins and turn to God, and upon those terms, and no other, their sins should be forgiven. Repentance for the remission of sins, was what the apostles were commissioned to preach to all nations, Luke 24. 47. (3.) He preached Christ, and directed his hearers to expect him speedily to appear, and to expect great things from him. The preaching of Christ is pure, but such, and that was John Baptist's preaching, v. 7, 8. Like a true gospel minister, he
preaches, [1] The great pre-eminent Christ is advanced to; so high, so great, is Christ, that John, though one of the greatest that was born of women, thinks himself unworthy to be employed in the meanest office about him, even to stoop down, and unlace his shoes. Thus inducements is he to give honour to him, and brings others to do so too. [2] The great promise Christ makes in his gospel to those who have repented, and have had their sins forgiven them; They shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, shall be washed, cleansed, and refreshed by his comforts. And, lastly, All those who received his doctrine, and submitted to his institution, he baptized with water, as the manner of the Jews was to admit proselytes, in token of their cleansing themselves by repentance and reformation, (which were the duties required,) and of God's cleansing them both by remission and by sanctification, which were the blessings promised. Now this was afterward to be advanced into a gospel ordinance, which John's using it was a preface to.

3. In the success of John's preaching, and the disciples he admitted by baptism, there was the beginning of a gospel church. He baptized in the wilderness, and declined going into the cities; but there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and all the country about Jordan, who were baptized, inhabited both of city and country, families of them, and were all baptized of him. The Jews entered themselves his disciples, and bound themselves to his discipline; in token of which, they confessed their sins; he admitted them his disciples, in token of which, he baptized them. Here were the stamens of the gospel-church, the dew of its youth from the womb of the morning, Ps. 110. 3. Many of these afterward became followers of Christ, and preachers of his gospel, and this grain of mustardseed became a tree.

9. And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. 10. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him; 11. And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. 12. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.

We have here a brief account of Christ's baptism and temptation, which were largely related, Matt. 3. and 4.

1. His baptism, which was his first public appearance, Christ is so long lived obscurely in Nazareth, O how much hidden sport, which in this world is either lost in the dust of contempt and cannot be known, or wrapped up in the veil of humility and will not be known! But sooner or later it shall be known, as Christ's was.

1. See how humbly he owned God, by coming to be baptized of John; and thus it became him to fulfill all righteousness. Thus he took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, that, though he was perfectly pure and unpolluted, yet he was washed as if he had been polluted; and thus for our sakes he sanctified himself, that we also might be sanctified, and be baptized with him, John 17. 19.

2. See how honourably God owned him, when he submitted to John's baptism. Those who justify God, as they are said to do, who were baptized with the baptism of John, he will glorify, Luke 7. 29, 30.

(1.) He saw the heavens opened; thus he was owned to be the Lord from heaven, and had a glimpse of the grace that was set before him, and secured to him, as the recompense of his undertaking. Matthew saith, The heavens were opened to him. Mark saith, He saw them opened. Many have the heavens opened to receive them, but they do not see it; Christ had not only a clear foresight of his sufferings, but of his glory too.

(2.) He saw the Spirit come upon him, like a dove, descending upon him. Then we may see heaven opened to us, when we perceive the Spirit descending and working upon us. God's good work in us is the surest evidence of his good will towards us, and his preparations for us. Justin Martyr says, that when Christ was baptized, a fire was kindled in Jordan; and it is an ancient tradition, that a great light shone round the place, for the Spirit brings both light and heat.

Thus a voice from heaven announced his unusual encouragement to proceed in his undertaking, and therefore it is here expressed as directed to him, thou art my beloved Son. God lets him know, [1] That he loved him never the less for that low and mean estate to which he had now humbled himself; "Though thus emptied and made of no reputation, yet he is my beloved Son still." [2] That he loved him more for it than when he was called, he went not to Jerusalem, but went into Arabia, Gal. 1. 17. Retirement from the world is an opportunity of more free converse with God, and therefore must sometimes be chosen, for a while, even by those that are called to the greatest business. Mark observes this circumstance of his being in the wilderness—that he was with the wild beasts. It was an instance of his Father's care of him, that he was surrounded with so great a multitude of wild beasts, which encouraged him the more that his Father would provide for him when he was hungry. Special protections are earnest of seasonable supplies. It was likewise an intimation to him of the inhumanity of the men of that generation, whom he was to live among—no better than wild beasts in the wilderness, may, abundantly worse. In that wilderness

1. The evil spirits were busy with him; he was tempted of Satan; not by any inward injections, (the prince of this world had nothing in him to fasten upon,) but by outward solicitations. Solitude often gives advantages to the tempter, therefore two are better than one. Christ himself was tempted, not only to teach us, that it is no sin to be tempted, but to direct us whither to go for solace when we are tempted, even to him that suffered, being tempted; that he might experimentally sympathize with us when we are tempted.

2. The good spirits were busy about him; the angels ministered to him, supplied him with what he needed, and dutifully attended him. Note, The ministration of the good angels about us, is matter of great comfort in reference to the malicious designs of the evil angels against us; but much more doth it befriend us, to have the indwelling of the Spirit in our hearts, which they that have, are born of
God, that, as far as they are so, the evil one toucheth them not, much less shall he triumph over them.

14. Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye, and believe the gospel. 16. Now, as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: (for they were fishers.) 17. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. 18. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him. 19. And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. 20. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him. 21. And they went into Capernaum: and straightway on the sabbath-day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. 22. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes.

Here is,
1. A general account of Christ's preaching in Galilee. John gives an account of his preaching in Judea (ch. 2 and 3.), which the other evangelists had omitted, who chiefly relate what occurred in Galilee, because that was least known at Jerusalem. Observe, 1. When Jesus began to preach in Galilee: After that John was put in prison. When he had finished his testimony, then Jesus began his. Note, The silencing of Christ's ministers shall not be the suppressing of his gospel: if some be laid aside, others shall be raised up, perhaps mightier than they, to carry on the same work. 2. What he preached; The gospel of the kingdom of God. Christ came to set up the kingdom of God among men, that they might be brought into submission to it, and might obtain salvation in it; and he set it up by the preaching of his gospel, and a power going along with it. Observe, (1.) The great truths Christ preached; The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. This refers to the Old Testament, in which the kingdom of the Messiah was promised, and the time fixed for the introducing of it. They were not so well versed in those prophecies, nor did they so well observe the signs of the times, as to understand it themselves, and therefore Christ gives them notice of it: The time prefixed is now at hand; glorious discoveries of divine light, life, and love, are now to be made: first dispensations are glorious and heavenly than that which you have hitherto been under, is now to commence. Note, God keeps time; when the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand; for the vision is for an appointed time which will be punctually observed, though it tarry past our time. (2.) The great duties inferred from thence. Christ gave them to understand the times, that they might know what Israel ought to do; they fondly expected the Messiah to appear in external pomp and power, not only to free the Jewish nation from the Roman yoke, but to make it have dominion over all its neighbours, and therefore thought, when that kingdom of God was at hand, they must prepare for it: a common and universal being said for victory was demanded for virtue; they must forsake all things in the world; but Christ tells them, in the prospect of that kingdom approaching, they must repent, and believe the gospel. They had broken the moral law, and could not be saved by a covenant of innocency, for both Jew and Gentile are concluded under guilt. They must therefore take the benefit of a covenant of grace, must submit to a remedial law, and this is repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. They had not made use of the prescribed preservatives, and therefore must have recourse to the prescribed restoratives. By repentance we must lament and forsake our sins, and by faith we must receive the forgiveness of them. By repentance we must give glory to our Creator whom we have offended; by faith we must give glory to our Redeemer who came to save us from our sins. Both these must go together: we must not think either that reforming our lives will save us without trusting in the righteousness and grace of Christ, or that trusting in Christ will save us without the reformation of our hearts and lives. Christ has joined these two together, and let no man think to put them asunder. They will mutually assist and befriend each other. Repentance will quicken faith, and faith will make repentance evangelical; and the sincerity of both together must be evidenced by a desire and conscientious obedience to all God's commandments. Thus the preaching of the gospel began, and thus it continues; still the call is, Repent, and believe, and live a life of repentance and a life of faith.

II. Christ appearing as a Teacher, here is next his calling of his disciples, v. 16—20. Observe, 1. Christ will have followers. If he set up a school, he will have scholars; if he set up his standard, he will have soldiers; if he preach, they will hear. 2. He took an effectual course to secure this; for all that the Father has given him, shall without fail, come to him. 2. The instruments Christ chose to employ in setting up his kingdom, were the weak and foolish things of the world; not called from the great sanhedrin, or the schools of the rabbins, but picked up from among the tarsyphilins by the sea-side, that the excellency of the power might appear to be of God, and not of men. And so the calling of the twelve here, for the kingdom needs not the help of man, yet he is pleased to make use of it in setting up his kingdom, that he might deal with us not in a formidable but in a familiar way, and that in his kingdom the nobles and governors may be of ourselves. Jer. 30. 21. 4. Christ puts honour upon those who, though mean in the world, are diligent in their business and loving to one another; so these were, whom Christ called. He formed them, and made them one together. Industry and unity are good and pleasant, and there the Lord Jesus commands the blessing, even this blessing, Follow me. 5. The business of ministers is to fish for souls, and win them to Christ. The children of men, in their natural condition, are lost, wander endlessly in the great ocean of this world, and are carried down the stream of its course and way; they are unprofitable, they are perishing, they are left behind; and often, like the fishes of the sea, they devour one another. Ministers, in preaching the gospel, cast the net into the waters, Matt. 13. 47. Some are inclosed and brought to shore, but far the greater number escape. Fishermen take great pains, and expose themselves to great perils, so do ministers; and they have need of wisdom. If many a draught brings home nothing, yet they must go on. Those whom Christ calls, must learn all, to follow him; and by his grace he inclines them to do so. Not that we must needs go
out of the world immediately, but we must sit loose to the world, and forsake every thing that is inconsistent with our duty to Christ, and that cannot be kept without prejudice to our souls. Mark takes notice of James and John, that they left not only their father, (which we had in Matthew,) but the hired servants, whom perhaps they looked as their own brethren, being their fellow-labourers and pleasant companions; not only relations, but companions, must be left for Christ, and old acquaintance. Perhaps it is an intimidation of their care for their father; they did not leave him without assistance, they left the hired servants with him. Grotescs thinks it is mentioned as an evidence that their calling was gainful to them, for it was worth while to keep servants in pay, to help them in it, and their hands would be much missed, and yet they left it.

III. Here is a particular account of his preaching in Capernaum, one of the cities of Galilee; for though John Baptist chose to preach in a wilderness, and did well, and did good, yet it doth not therefore follow, that Jesus must do so too; the inclinations and opportunities of ministers may very much differ, and yet be in the way of duty. And yet it was the more necessary for him to do so, if he was to be a teacher of men. Observe, 1. When Christ came into Capernaum, he straightway applied himself to his work there, and took the first opportunity of preaching the gospel. Those will think themselves concerned not to lose time, who consider what a deal of work they have to do, and what a little time to do it in. 2. Christ religiously observed the sabbath-day, though not by tying himself up to the tradition of the elders, in all the niceties and particularities of it, (which was far better) by applying himself to, and abounding in, the sabbath-work, in order to which the sabbath-rest was instituted. 3. Sabbaths are to be sanctified in religious assemblies, if we have opportunity; it is a holy day, and must be honoured with a holy convocation; this was the good old way, Acts 13. 27.—15. 21. On the sabbath-day, see 3. 22.—5. 21. The sabbath-days, every sabbath-day, as duly as it returned, he went into the synagogue. 4. In religious assemblies on sabbath-days, the gospel is to be preached, and those to be taught, who are willing to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. 5. Christ was a non-such Preacher; he did not preach as the scribes, who explained the law of Moses by rote, as a school-boy says his lesson, but were neither acquainted with it, (Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was ignorant of the law,) nor did they know Christ, and therefore came not with authority. But Christ taught as one that had authority, as one that knew the mind of God, and was commissioned to declare it. 6. There is much in the doctrine of Christ, that is astonishing; the more we hear it, the more cause we shall see to admire it.

23. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit: and he cried out. 24. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. 25. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. 26. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. 27. And they were all amazed, so much that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. 28. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.

As soon as Christ began to preach, he began to work miracles for the confirmation of his doctrine; and they were such as intimated the design and tendency of his doctrine, which were to conquer Satan, and cure sick souls.

In these verses, we have, I. Christ's casting the devil out of a man that was possessed, in the synagogue at Capernaum. This passage was not related in Matthew, but is afterward in Luke 4. 33. There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, in qui sunt demones; in an unclean spirit; for the spirit had the man under his possession, and bid him, and his unclean spirit, to come out. So the whole world is said to lie in the wicked one. And some have thought it more proper to say, The body is in the soul, because it is governed by it, than the soul in the body. He was in the unclean spirit, as a man is said to be in a fever, or in a frenzy, quite overcome by it. Observe, The devil is here called an unclean spirit, because he has lost all the dominion he had before; and he is in direct opposition to the holy Spirit of God, and because with his suggestions he pollutes the spirits of men. This man was in the synagogue; he did not come either to be taught or to be healed, but, as some think, to confront Christ and oppose him, and hinder the people from believing on him. Now here we have, 1. The rage which the unclean spirit expressed at Christ; 2. It cried out, and blasphemed him, Mattliew, 23. 5. 3. The people were amazed, and frightened, Acts 13. 27. But the word of God grew mightily and spread abroad. 4. They thought to themselves concerned not to lose time, who consider what a deal of work they have to do, and what a little time to do it in. 5. Christ was a non-such Preacher; he did not preach as the scribes, who explained the law of Moses by rote, as a school-boy says his lesson, but were neither acquainted with it, (Paul himself, when a Pharisee, was ignorant of the law,) nor did they know Christ, and therefore came not with authority. But Christ taught as one that had authority, as one that knew the mind of God, and was commissioned to declare it. 6. There is much in the doctrine of Christ, that is astonishing; the more we hear it, the more cause we shall see to admire it. 7. This is the misery of those wicked spirits, that they persist in their rebellion, and yet know it will end in their destruction. 8. He desires to have nothing to do with Jesus Christ; for he despairs of being saved by him, and dreads being destroyed by him. 9. What have we to do with thee? If thou wilt let us alone, we will let thee alone. See whose language they speak, that say to the almighty, Depart from me, I beseech thee, and I am unclean. 10. He hated and dreaded Christ, because he knew him to be a holy One; for the carnal mind is enmity against God, especially against his holiness. 11. The victory which Jesus Christ obtained over the unclean spirit; for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and so he makes it to appear; nor will he be turned back from prosecuting this war, even his flatteries or his menaces. It is in vain for Satan to beg and pray, Let us alone; his power must be broken, and the poor man must be relieved; and
therefore, (1.) Jesus commands. As he taught, so be healed, with authority. Jesus rebuked him; he chid him and threatened him, imposed silence upon him; Hold thy peace; &c.—be muzzled.

Christ has a muzzle for that unclean spirit when he frowns as well as when hebarks; such acknowledgments of him as this, Christ disdains, so far as it is in his power. He pronounced Christ to be the holy One of God, that under the cloak of that profession they may carry on malicious, mischievous designs; but their confession is doubly an abomination to the Lord Jesus, as it sues in his name for a license to sin: and shall therefore be put to silence and shame. But this is not all, he must not only hold his peace, but he must come out of the mouth; this was it he dreaded—his being restrained from doing further mischief. But, (2.) The unclean spirit yields, for there is no remedy; (v. 26.) He tore him, put him into a strong convulsion; that one could have thought he had been pulled in pieces; when he would not touch Christ, in fury at him he grievously disturbed this poor creature. Thus, when Christ by his grace delivers poor souls out of the hands of Satan, it is not without a grievous toss and tumult in the soul: for that spiteful enemy will dispute with him from he cannot destroy. He cried with a loud voice, to frighten the spectators, and make himself seem terrible, as if he would have thought that though he was conquered, he was but just conquered; and that he hoped to rally again, and recover his ground.

II. The impressions which this miracle made upon the minds of the people. v. 27, 28.

1. It astonished them that saw it; They were all amazed. It was evident, beyond contradiction, that the man was possessed by some strange power, the terrors of him, and the loud voice with which the spirit cried; it was evident that he was forced out by the authority of Christ; this was surprising to them, and put them upon considering with themselves, and inquiring of one another, What is this new doctrine? For it must certainly be of God, which is thus confirmed. He hath certainly an authority to command us, who hath authority to command even the unclean spirits, and they cannot resist him. The Jewish exorcists pretended by charm or invocation to drive away evil spirits; but this was quite another thing, with authority he commands them. Surely it is our interest to make him our Friend, who has the control of infernal spirits.

2. It raised his reputation among all that heard it; Immediately his fame spread abroad into the whole adjacent region of Galilee, which was a third part of the land of Canaan. The city was presently got into every one's mouth, and people wrote it to their friends all the country over, together with the remark made upon it, What new doctrine is this? So that it was universally concluded, that he was a Teacher come from God, and under that character he shone more bright than if he had appeared in all the external pomp and power which the Jews expected their Messiah to appear in; and thus he prepared his own way, now that John, who was his harbinger, was clapped up; and the fame of this miracle spread the further, because as yet the Pharisees, who envied his fame, and laboured to eclipse it, had not advanced their blasphemous suggestion—that he cast out devils by compact with the prince of the devils.

29. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever; and anon they tell him of her. 31. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. 32. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. 33. And all the city was gathered together at the door. 34. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. 35. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. 36. And Simon and they that were with him, followed after him. 37. And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. 38. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. 39. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils.

In these verses, we have,

1. A particular account of one miracle that Christ wrought, in the cure of Peter's wife's mother, who was ill of a fever. This passage we had before in Matthew.

2. When Christ had done that which spread his fame throughout all parts, he did not then sit still, as some think that they may lie in bed when their name is up. No, he continued to do good, for that was not he aimed at, and not his own honour. Nay, those who are in reputation, had need be busy and careful to keep it up.

3. When he came out of the synagogue, where he had taught and healed with a divine authority, yet he conversed familiarly with the poor fishermen, he that attended him, and did not think it below him. Let the same mind, the same lowly mind, be in us, that was in him.

4. He cured his mother-in-law, who was sick. Wherever Christ comes, he comes to do good, and will be sure to pay richly for his entertainment. Observe, How complete the cure was; when the fever left her, it did not as usually, leave her weak, but the same hand that healed her, strengthened her, so that she was able to minister to them; the cure is in order to that, to fit for action, that we may minister to Christ, observe to these that are his for his sake.

II. A general account of many cures he wrought—diseases healed, devils expelled. It was at the even of the sabbath, when the sun did set or was set; perhaps many scurried bringing their sick to him, till the sabbath was over; but their weakness there-in was no prejudice to them in applying to Christ. Though he proved it lawful to heal on the sabbath-days, yet, if any stumbled at it, they were welcome at another time. Observe, How numerous the patients were; All the city was gathered at the door, as beggars for a dole. That one cure in the synagogue occasioned this crowding after him. Others spreading well with Christ, should quicken us in our inquiries after him.
Now the Sun of righteousness riseth, with healing 
under his wings; to him shall the gathering of the
people be. Observe, How Christ was flanked after
in his house, as well as in the synagogue; where
he is, there let his servants, his patients, be.
And in the evening of the sabbath, when the
public worship is over, we must continue our at-
tendance upon Jesus Christ; he healed, as Paul
preached, publicly, and from house to house.

2. How powerful the physician was; he healed
all that were brought to him, though ever so many.
Now was Christ flocked with patients, and was
set up for the cure, but he healed those that were
sick of divers diseases, for his word was a panphar-
macron—a solace for every sore. And that miracle
particularly which he wrought in the synagogue, he
repealed in the house at night; for he cast out many
devils, and suffered not the devils to speak, for he
made them know who he was, and that silenced them.
Or, he suffered them not to say that he knew him;
so it may be read; he would not permit any more of them to say, as they did, (v. 24.) I know thee, who thou art.

III. His retirement to his private devotion; (v. 35.) He prayed, prayed alone; to set us an
example of secret prayer. Though as God he was prayer-
ted to, as man he prayed. Though he was glorify-
ing God, and doing good, in his public work, yet he
found it well both to retire in devotion, and thus,
because he had a fullness of all righteousness. Now observe,

1. The time when Christ prayed. (1.) It was in
the morning, the morning after the sabbath-day.
Note, when a sabbath-day is over and past, we must
not think that we may intermit our devotion till the
next sabbath; no, though we go not to the syn-
agogue, we must go to the throne of grace, every
day in private prayer; so Christ, we must not
apply ourselves to the affairs of the sabbath, par-
ticularly, that we may preserve the good impres-
sions of the day. This morning was the morning
of the first day of the week, which afterward he
sanctified, and made remarkable, by another sort
of rising early. (2.) It was a great while before day.
When others were asleep in their beds, he was pray-
ing, as a genuine Son of David, who seeks God ear-
y, and directs his prayer in the morning; nay, and
at midnight will rise to give that God his due is
hath been so long. The morning is a friend to the Muses—Aurora
Messias amica; and it is no less so to the Graces. When
our spirits are most fresh and lively, then we should
take time for devout exercises. He that is the first
and best, ought to have the first and best.

2. The place where he prayed; He departed into
a solitary place, either out of town, or some re-
 mote garden or out-building. Though he was in no
danger of distraction, or of temptation to vain-glory,
yet he retired, to set us an example to his own rule, When thou prayest, enter into thy closet. Secret
prayer must be made secretly. Those that have
the most business in public, and of the best kind,
must sometimes be alone with God; must retire into
solitude, there to converse with God, and keep up
communication with him.

IV. His return to his public work. The disciples
thought they were up early, but found their Master
was up before them, and they inquired which way
he went, followed him to his solitary place, and
there found him at prayer, v. 36, 37. They told him
that he was much wanted, that there were a great
many patients waiting for him; All men seek for
thee; they were proud that their Master was be-
come so popular already, and would have him ap-
pear in public, yet more in that place, because it
was their own city; and we are apt to be partial to
the places we know and are interested in. "No," saith Christ, "Capernaum must not have the mo-
nopoly of the Messiah's preaching and miracles.
If we go into the next towns, the villagers that be
about here, that I may preach there also, and be
work miracles there, for therefore came I forth, not
to be continually resident in one place, but to go about de-
"Ning good." Even the inhabitants of the villages in
Israel shall rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord,
Judg. 5. 11. Observe, Christ had still an eye to the end
wherefore he came forth, and closely pursued that;
now will he be drawn by importunity, or the
persuasions of his friends, to decline from that; for
(v. 39.) he preached in their synagogues throughout
all Galilee, and, to illustrate and confirm his doc-
trine, he cast out devils. Note, Christ's doctrine is
Satan's destruction.

40. And there came a leper to him, be-
seeking him, and kneeling down to him,
and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou
mayest make me clean. 41. And Jesus,
moved with compassion, put forth his hand,
and touched him, and saith unto him, I
will; be thou clean. 42. And as soon as he
had spoken, immediately the leprosy de-
parted from him, and he was cleansed. 43.
And he straitly charged him, and forthwith
sent him away; 44. And saith unto him,
See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy
way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for
thy cleansing those things which Moses
commanded, for a testimony unto them.
45. But he went out, and began to pub-
lish it; and, to blaze abroad the mat-
ter, insomuch that Jesus could no more
openly enter into the city, but was without
in desert places; and they came to him
from every quarter.

We have here the story of Christ's cleansing of a
leper, which we had before, Matth. 8. 2. It teaches
us,

1. How to apply ourselves to Christ; come
as this leper did, (1.) With great humility; this leper
came beseeching him, and kneeling down to him;
(v. 40.) whether giving divine honour to him as
God, or rather a less degree of respect as a great
prophet, it teaches us that those who would receive
grace and mercy from Christ, must ascribe honour
and glory to Christ, and approach to him with hu-
mility and reverence. (2.) With a firm belief of
his power; Thou canst make me clean. Though
Christ's outward appearance was but mean, yet he
had this faith in his power, which implies his belief
that he was sent of God. He believes it with applica-
tion, not only in general, Thou canst do every
thing, (as John 11. 22.) but, Thou canst make me
clean. Note, What we believe of the power of
Christ we must bring home to our particular case;
Thou canst do this for me. (3.) With submission
to the will of Christ; Lord, if thou wilt. Not as if
he had any doubt of Christ's readiness in general
to help the distressed, but, with the modesty that be-
came a poor petitioner, he refers his own particular
case to him.

2. What to expect from Christ; that according
to our faith it shall be to us. His address is not in
the form of prayer, yet Christ answered it as a request
Note, Affectionate professions of faith in Christ, and
resignations to him, are the most prevailing petitions
for mercy from him, and shall speed accordingly.
(1.) Christ was moved with compassion. This is ad-
hed here, in Mark, to shew that Christ's power is
employed by his pity for the relief of poor souls;
that his reasons are fetched from within himself, and
we have nothing in us to recommend us to his favour, but our misery makes us the objects of his mercy. And what he doth for us he doth with all possible tenderness. (2.) He put forth his hand, and touched him. He exerted his power, and directed it to this creature. In healing souls, Christ toucheth them, 1 Sam. 29. 26. When the queen touched for her child, shew me thy hand, that I touch thee, and he toucheth her, and she is healed. (3.) He said, I will, be thou clean. Christ’s power was put forth in and by a word, to signify in what way Christ would ordinarily work spiritual cures; He casteth his word, and heals, Ps. 107. 29. John 17. 17.-15. 3. The poor leper put an if upon the will of Christ; if thou wilt; but that doubt is soon put out of doubt, I will. Christ most readily sheweth the like that most readily apply themselves to his will. He was confident of Christ’s power; Thou canst make me clean; and Christ will shew how much his power is drawn out into act by the faith of his people, and therefore speaks the word as one having authority, Be thou clean. And power accompanied this word, and the cure was perfect in an instant; Immediately his leprosy vanished, and there remained no more sign of it, v. 42. 3. What to do, when we have received mercy from Christ. We must with his favours receive his commands. When Christ had healed him, he strictly charged him; the word here is very significant, ὑπομενεῖ—greater intermittus—prohibiting with threat. I am apt to think that this refers not to the directions he gave him to conceal it, (v. 44.) for those are mentioned by themselves; but that this was such a charge as he gave to the man whom he cured, John 5. 14. Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee; for the leprosy was ordinarily the punishment of some particular sinners, as in Miriam’s, Gehazi’s, and Uzziah’s case; now, when Christ healed him, he warned him, he threatened him with the fatal consequence of it if he should return to sin again. He also appointed him, (1.) To shew himself to the priests; with his own judgment of this leper might be a witness for Christ, that he was the Messiah, Matth. 11. 5. (2.) Till he had done that, not to say anything of it to any man; this is an instance of the humility of Christ and his self-denial, that he did not seek his own honour, did not strive or cry, Isa. 42. 2. And it is an example to us, not to seek our own glory, Prov. 25. 27. He must not proclaim it, because that would much increase this man’s favour to the Lord and good works of wise men better become them than their friends; nor are we always bound by the modest commands of humble men. The leper ought to have observed his orders; yet, no doubt, it was with a good design that he proclaimed the cure, and it had no other ill effect than that it increased the multitudes which followed Christ, to that degree, that he could no more openly enter into the city; not upon the account of personal injury, but, because the crowd was so great, that the streets would not hold them, which obliged him to go into desert places, to a mountain, (ch. 3. 13.) to the sea side, ch. 4. 1. This shews how expeditious it was for us, that Christ should go away and send the Comforter, for his bodily presence could be but in one place at a time; and those that came to him from every quarter, could not get near him; but by his spiritual presence he is with his people wherever they are, and comes to them to every quarter.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ’s healing of a man that was sick of the palsy, v. 1-11. II. His healing that was paralysed from the receipt of custom, and his eating, upon that occasion, with publicans and sinners, and justifying himself in so doing, v. 13. 17. III. His justifying his disciples in not following so much as those of the Pharisees did, v. 18. 21. IV. His justifying of them in plucking the corn on the sabbath day, v. 22. 23. All which passages we had before, Matt. 9 and 12.

1. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. 2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, no so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. 3. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. 4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. 5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. 6. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7. Why dode this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9. Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? 10. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11. I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. 12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

Christ, having been for some time preaching about in the country, here returns to Capernaum, his head quarters, and makes his appearance there, in hopes that by this time the talk and crowd would be somewhat abated. Now observe, I. The great resort there was to him. Though he was in the house, either Peter’s house, or some lodgings of his own which he had taken, yet people came to him as soon as it was noised that he was in town; they did not stay till he appeared in the synagogue, which they might be sure he would do on the sabbath day, but straightway many were gathered together to him. Where the king is, there is the court; where Shiloh is, there shall the gathering of the people be. In improving opportunities for our souls, we must take care not to lose time. One invited another, (Come, let us go see Jesus,) so that
his house could not contain his visitors. *There was no room to receive them, they were so numerous, no, not so much as about the door.* A blessed sight, to see people thus flying like a cloud to Christ's house, that it was but a poor one, and *as the doves to their windows!*

II. The good entertainment Christ gave them, the best his house would afford, and better than any other could; *he preached the word unto them,* v. 2.

Many of them perhaps came only for cures, and many perhaps only for curiosity, to get a sight of him; but when he had them together he *preached to them.* Though the upper room door was open to him all per times, he thought it not at all amiss to preach in a house, on a week day; though some might reckon it both an improper place and an improper time. *Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters,* Isa. 32. 20.

III. The presenting of a poor cripple to him, to be healed by him. The patient was one sick of the palsy, it should seem not as that, Matth. 9. 6, grievously tormented, but perfectly disabled, so that he was borne of four, was carried upon a bed, as if he had been upon a bier, by four persons. It was his misery, that he needed to be so carried, and bespeaks the calamitous state of human life; it was their charity, who did so carry him, and bespeaks the compassion that is justly expected should be in the church; and the-people feared the distress, because we know not how soon the distress may be our own. These kind relations or neighbours thought if they could but carry this poor man once to Christ, they should not need to carry him any more; and therefore made hard shift to get him to him; and when they could not otherwise get to him, they *uncovered the roof where he was,* v. 4. I see no necessity to conclude this, Christ was preaching in an upper room, though in truth the Jews had stately houses, had their oratories; for then to what purpose should the crowd stand beside the door, as wisdom's clients used to do: Prov. 3. 34. But I rather conjecture that the house he was in was so little and mean, (agreeable to his present state,) that it had no upper room, but the ground-floor was open to the roof; and these petitioners for the poor pa ralytic resolving not to be disappointed, they could not get through the crowd at the door, got their friend by some means or other to the roof of the house, took off some of the tiles, and so let him down upon his bed with cords into the house where Christ was preaching. This bespoke both their faith and their fervency in this address to Christ. Hereby it appeared that they were in earnest, and would not go away, nor *let Christ go without a blessing,* Gen. 32. 26.

IV. The kind word Christ said to this poor patient; *He saw their faith;* perhaps not so much his, for his distemper hindered him from the exercise of faith, but theirs that brought him. In curing the centurion's servant, Christ took notice of it as an instance of his faith, that he did not bring him to Christ; but believed he could cure him at a distance, here he commanded their faith, because they did bring their friend through so much difficulty. Note, True faith and strong faith may work variously, conquering sometimes the objections of reason, sometimes those of sense: but it shall be accepted and approved by Jesus Christ, however, Christ said, *Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.* The compellation is very sweet, and, I may easily carry it to him and concern for him. Christ owns true believers as his sons: a son, and yet sick of the palsy. Herein God deals with you as with his sons. The cordial is very rich; *Thy sins are forgiven thee.* Note, 1. Sin is the procuring cause of all our pains and sicknesses. The word of Christ was to take his thoughts off from the disease, which was the effect, and to lead them to the sin, the cause, that he might be more concerned about that, to get that pardoned. 2. God doth then graciously take away the sting and malignity of sickness, when he forgives sin; reconcileth from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when way is made for it by the pardon of sin. See Isa. 38. 17. Ps. 103. 3. The way to remove the effect, is, to take away the cause. Pardon of sins strikes at the root of all diseases, and either cures them, or alters their property.

V. The cavi of the disciples at which Christ said, and a demonstration of the unreasonableness of their cavi. They were expositors of their law, and their doctrine was true,—that it was blasphemy for any creature to undertake the pardon of sin, and that it is God's prerogative, Isa. 43. 25. But, as is usual with such teachers their application was false, and was the effect of their ignorance and enmity to Christ. It is true, *None can forgive sins but God only;* but it is false, that therefore Christ cannot, who had abundantly proved himself to have a divine power. But Christ perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves: this proves him to be God, and therefore confirmed what was to be proved, that he had authority to forgive sins; for he searched the heart, and knew what was in man, Rev. 2. 23. God's royalties are inseparable, and he that could know thoughts, could forgive sins. This magnifies the grace of Christ, in forgiving sins. Christ knew men's thoughts, and therefore knows more than any other can know, both of the sinfulness of their sins and the particulars of them, and yet is ready to pardon. Now he proves his power to forgive sin, by demonstrating his power to cure the man sick of the palsy, v. 9—11. He would not have pretended to do the one if he could not have done the other; that he may know that the *Son of man,* that Jesus has power on earth to forgive sin, that I have that power. *Thou that art sick of the palsy, arise, take up thy bed.* Now, 1. This was a suitable argument in itself. He could not have cured the disease, which was the effect, if he could not have taken away the sin, which was the cause. And besides, his curing diseases was a figure of his pardoning of sin, for sin is the disease of the soul; when it is pardoned and forgiven, what can be more cured, what can be more healing. He could not by so to accomplish the sign, could doubtless perform the thing signified. 2. It was suited to them. These carnal Scribes would be more affected with such a suitable effect of a pardon as the cure of the disease, and be sooner convinced by it, than by any other more spiritual consequences; therefore it was proper enough to appeal, whether it is curious, *Thy sins are forgiven thee,* or to say, *Arise, and walk?* The removing of the punishment as such, was the remitting of the sin; that he could go so far in the case no doubt could perfect it. See Isa. 33. 24.

VI. The cure of the sick man, and the impression it made upon the people, v. 12. He not only arose out of his bed, perfectly well, but, to show that he had perfect strength restored to him, he took up his bed. If he had been disabled for a year and some, and then was cured, and he stood up, that would have been extraordinary, but they all, and they were all amazed, as well they might, and glorified God, as indeed they ought; saying, *We never saw it on this fashion;* never were such wonders as these done before in our time. Note, Christ's works were without precedent. When we see what he doeth in healing souls, we must own that we never saw the like.

13. And he went forth again by the sea-side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them. 14. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said
unto him, Follow me. And he arose and
followed him. 15. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also to-
erge with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16. And when the Scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? 17. When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them: They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is,
I. Christ preaching by the sea-side, (v. 13) wher-
ther he went for room, because he found, upon
second trial, no house or street large enough to con-
tain his auditory; but upon the strand there might
come as many as would. It should seem by this,
that our Lord did not walk in order to put his
voice, and could and did speak loud; for wisdom crieth without in the places of concourse. Wherever he goes, though it be to the sea-side, multitudes resort to him.

Wherever the doctrine of Christ is faithfully preach-
ed, though it be given into corners or into deserts, we must follow it.

II. His calling Levi; the same with Matthew, who had a place in the custom-house at Capernaum, from which he was denominated a publican; his place fixed him by the water-side, and thither Christ went to meet with him, and to give him an effectual call. This Levi is here said to be the son of Alpheus or Cleophas, husband to that Mary who was sister or near kinswoman to the Virgin Mary; and if so, he was own brother to James the less, and Jude, and Simon the Canaanite, so that there were four brothers of them apostles. It is probable that Matthew was at a house of publicans for more, or else, being a Jew, he would never have been a publican. However, Christ called him to follow him. Paul, though a Pharisee, had been one of the chief of sinners, and yet was called to be an apostle. With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, that had been a publican, became an evangelist, the first that put pen to paper, and the fullest in writing the life of Christ. Great sin and scandal, before conversion, are no bar to great gifts, graces, and advancements, after; nay, God may be the more glorified. Christ prevented him with this call; in bodily curing, ordinarily, he was sought unto, but in these spiritual cures, he was found of them that sought him not. For this is the great evil and peril of the disease of sin, that those who would be cured, desire not to be made whole.

III. His familiar converse with publicans and sin-
ners, v. 15. We are told, 1. That Christ sat at
meat in Levi's house, who invited him and his disci-
ples to the farewell feast he made to his friends, when he left all, to attend on Christ: such a feast he
made, as Elisha did, (1 Kings 19. 21.) to show, not
only with what cheerfulness in himself, but with
what thankfulness to God, he quitted all, in com-
plicity with Christ's call. Fifthly, did he make the
day of his return to Christ a festival, in which he was also to testify his respect to Christ, and the grateful sense he had of his kindness in snatching him from the receipt of custom, as a brand out of the burning. 2. That many publicans and sinners sat with Christ in Levi's house; for there were
many belonging to that custom-house; and they
followed him. They followed Levi; so some un-
derstand it, supposing that, like Zacchaeus, he was
chief among the publicans, and was rich; and for
that reason the inferior sort of them attended him,
for what they could get. I rather take it, that they
followed Jesus because of the report they had heard of him. They did not for conscience sake (for Matthew follows him) or for desire of sinning less, as it is said, 'they came to Levi's feast, to see him;' whatever brought them thither, they were sitting with Jesus and his disci-
ples. The publicans are here and elsewhere rank-
ed with sinners, the worst of sinners. (1.) Because commonly they were such; so general were the cor-
rupitions in the execution of that office, oppressing, exa
taxing, and taking bribes or fees to extortion, and
was so rare, even at Rome, that one Sabasius, who kept a
common reputation in that office, was, after his death, honoured with this in-
scription, XALX ΣΟΛΩΝΟΣ—Here lies an honest publican. (2.) Because the Jews had a particular
antipathy to them and their office, as an affront to the liberty of their nation, and a badge of their slavery, and therefore put them into an ill name, and thought it no uncommon thing to be ashamed of them. Such as these our blessed Lord was pleased to converse with, when he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh.

IV. The offence which the Scribes and Pharisees
took at this, v. 16. They would not come to hear
him preach, which they might have been convinced and edified by; but they would come themselves to see him sit with publicans and sinners, which they would be provoked by. They endeavoured to put the discourse out of conceit with their Master, as a Man not of that sanctity and severe morals that be-
came his character; and therefore put the question to them, How is it, that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? Note, It is no new thing for that which is both well done and well designed, to be misrepresented, and turned to the reproach of the wisest and best of men.

V. Christ's justification of himself in it, v. 17. He stood to what he did, and would not withdraw, though the Pharisees were offended; as Peter after-
ward did, Gal. 2. 12. Note, Those are too tender of their own good name, who, to preserve it with some nice people, will decline a good work. Christ would not do so. They thought the publicans were to be hated. "Now," saith Christ, "they are to be fitted, they are sick, and need a physician; they are sinners, and need a Saviour." They thought Christ's character should separate him from them; "No," saith Christ, "my commission directs me to them; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to re-
pentance. If the world had been righteous, there
had been no occasion for my coming, either to preach repentance, or to purchase remission. It is
to a sinful world that I am sent, and therefore my business lies most with those that are the greatest
sinners in it." Or thus: "If not, none of the proud Pharisees, that think them-
selves righteous, that ask, Wherein shall we return? (Mal. 3. 7.) of what shall we repent? but poor pub-
colans, that own themselves to be sinners, and are glad to be invited and encouraged to repent." It is good dealing with those that there is hope of; now there is more hope of a fool than of one that is wise in his own conceit, Prov. 26. 12.

18. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they came and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19. And Jesus said unto them,
Can the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 21. No man also secthew a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse. 22. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. 23. And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. 24. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25. And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungered, he, and they that were with him? 26. How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shew-bread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? 27. And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Christ had been put to justify himself in conversing with publicans and sinners: here he is put to justify his disciples; and in what they do according to his will he will justify them, and bear them out.

I. He justifies them in their not fasting, which was turned to their reproach by the Pharisees. Why do the Pharisees and the disciples of John fast? They used to fast, the Pharisees fasted twice in the week, (Luke 18. 12.) and probably the disciples of John did so too; and, it should seem, this very day, when Christ and his disciples were fasting in Levi's house, was their fast-day, for the word is reiter— they do fast, or are fasting, which aggravated the offence. Thus are strict professors to make their own practice a standard, and to cenure and condemn all that do not fully come up to it. They invidiously suggest, that if Christ went among sinners, to do them good, as he had pleased, yet the disciples want to indulge their appetites, for they dare not know what it is to fast, or to deny themselves. Note, III will always suspect the worst.

Two things Christ pleads in excuse of his disciples not fasting.

1. That these were easy days with them, and fasting was not so seasonable now as it would be hereafter, ver. 19, 20. There is a time for all things. Those that enter into the married state, must except care and trouble in the first, and yet, during the nuptial solemnity, they are merry, and think it becomes them to be so; it was very absurd for Samuel's bride to weep before him, during the days that the feast lasted, Judg. 14. 17. Christ and his disciples were but newly married, the Bridegroom was yet with them, the mirths were yet in the celebrat-
recollect what we have read in the scripture; appeals to that are most convincing. You have read that David, the man after God's own heart, when he was hungry, made no difficulty of eating the show-bread, which by the law none might eat of but the priests and their families. Note, Ritual observances must give way to moral obligations: and that may be done in a case of necessity, which one of the sons of David did in the days of Abiathar the High-Priest; or just before the days of Abiathar, who immediately succeeded Abimelech his father in the pontificate, and it is probable, was at that time his father's deputy, or assistant, in the office; and he it was that escaped the massacre, and brought the ephod to David.

(3.3) Be argument. To reconcile them to the disciples' plucking the ears of corn, let them consider,

[1.] When the sabbath was made for; (v. 27.) it was made for men, and not man for the sabbath. This we had not in Matthew. The sabbath is a sacred and divine institution; but we must receive and embrace it as a privilege and a benefit, not as a task and a drudgery. First, God never designed it to be an imposition upon us, and therefore we must not make it so to ourselves. Man was not made for the sabbath; for he was made a day before the sabbath was set aside. Man was made for God; and for his honour and service, and he must rather die than deny him; but he was not made for the sabbath, so as to be tied up by the law of it, from that which is necessary to the support of his life. Secondly, God did design it to be an advantage to us, and so we must make it, and improve it. He made it for man. 1. He had some regard to our bodies in the institution, that they might rest, and not be tired out with the constant business of this world; (Deut. 5. 11.) that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest. Now he that intended the sabbath-rest for the repose of our bodies, certainly never intended it should restrain us, in a case of necessity, from fetching in the necessary supports of the body; it must be construed so as not to contradict itself—for edification, and not for destruction. 2. He had much more regard to our souls. The sabbath was made a day for leisure only in order to this; a day of work, a day of communion with God, a day of praise and thanksgiving; and the rest from worldly business is therefore necessary, that we may closely apply ourselves to this work, and spend the whole time in it, in public and in private; but then time is allowed us for that which is necessary to the fitting of our bodies for the service of our souls in God's service, and the enabling of them to keep face with them in that work. See here, (1.) What Master we serve, all whose institutions are for our own benefit, and if we be so wise as to observe them, we are wise for ourselves; it is not he but we, that are gainers by our service. (2.) What we should aim at in our sabbath-work, even the good of our own souls. If the sabbath was made for man, we should be by; ask ourselves at night, What am I to do to-day for the sabbath? and after that care we ought to take not to make those exercises in religion burdens to ourselves or others, which God ordained to be blessings; neither adding to the command by unreasonable strictness, nor indulging those corruptions which are adverse to the command, for thereby we make those devout exercises a pittance to ourselves, which otherwise would be a pleasure.

[2.] Who the sabbath was made by; (v. 28.) The Son of man is also of the sabbath; therefore he will not see the kind intentions of the institution of it frustrated by your impositions. Note, The sabbath-days are days of the Son of man; he is the Lord of the day, and to his honour it must be observed; by him God made the worlds, and so it was by him that the sabbath was first instituted; by him God gave the law at mount Sinai, and so the fourth commandment was his law; and that little alteration that was shortly to be made, by the shifting of it one day forward to the first day of the week, was to be in remembrance of his resurrection, and therefore the christian sabbath was to be called the Lord's day, (Rev. 1. 10.) the Lord Christ's day; and the Son of man, Christ, is always to be looked upon as Lord of the sabbath. This argument he largely insists upon in his own justification, when he was charged with having broken the sabbath, John 5. 16.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's healing of a man that had a withered hand, on the sabbath-day, and the combination of his enemies against him for it, v. 1., 6. II. The universal resort of people to him from all parts, to be healed, and the relief they all found with him, v. 7. 12. III. His ordaining of his twelve apostles to be attendants on him, and the preachers of his gospel, v. 19. 21. IV. His answer to the blasphemous cavil of the scribes, who inquired his power to cast out devils, to a confederacy with the prince of the devils, v. 22. 30. V. His owning of his disciples for his nearest and dearest relations, v. 31. 35.

1. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. 2. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath-day; that they might accuse him. 3. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. 4. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. 5. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 6. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him. 7. But Jesus withdrew himself with his disciples to the sea: and a great multitude from Galilee followed him, and from Judea. 8. And from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond Jordan; and they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. 9. And he spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him. 10. For he had healed many; insomuch that they pressed upon him to touch him, as many as had plagues. 11. And unclean spirits, when they saw him, fell down before him, and cried, saying, Thou art the Son of God. 12. And he strictly charged them that they should not make him known.

Here, as before, we have our Lord Jesus busy at work in the synagogue first, and then by the sea-side; to teach us that his presence should not be confined either to the one or to the other, but wherever any are gathered together in his name, whether in the
Synagogue or any where else, there is he in the midst of them. *In every place where he records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them*; it is his will that men pray every where. Now here we have some account of what he did.

1. When he entered again into the synagogue, he improved the opportunity he had there, of doing good, and having, no doubt, preached a sermon there, he wrought a miracle for the confirmation of it, or at least for the confirmation of this truth—that it is lawful to do good on the sabbath-day. We had the laws as God's servants.

2. The patient's case was piteous; he had a withered hand, by which he was disabled to work for his living; and those that are so, are the most proper objects of charity; let those be helped, that cannot help themselves.

3. Christ dealt very fairly with the spectators, and dealt with them *first*, if possible to prevent the offence.

(1.) He laboured to convince their judgment. He bid the man stand forth, (v. 3.) that by the sight of him they might be moved with compassion toward him, and might not, for shame, account his a curse a crime. And then he appeals to their own consciences; though the thing seems strange, yet will be pleased to speak it: "Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath-days, as I design to do, or to do evil, as you design to do? Whether is better, to save life, or to kill?" What fairer question could be put? And yet, because they saw it would turn against them, they held their peace. Note, Those are obstinate indeed in their infidelity, who, when they cannot say nothing against a truth, will say nothing to it; and those are not repentant, who will not repent of their error.

(2.) When they rebelled against the light, he lamented their stubbornness; (v. 5.) He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. The sin he had an eye to, was, the hardness of their hearts, their insensibility of the evidence of his miracles, and their inflexible resolution to persist in unbelief. We hear what is said amiss, and see what is done amiss; but Christ looks at the root of bitterness, not to the heart, the blindness and hardness of that. Observe, [1.] How he was provoked by the sin; he looked round upon them; for they were so many, and had so placed themselves, that they surrounded him, and looked with anger; his anger, it is probable, appeared in his countenance; his anger was, like Gid, without the least perturbation to himself, but not without the least perturbation from the heart, and to the outward works. The sin of sinners is very displeasing to Jesus Christ; and the way to be angry, and not to sin, is to be angry, as Christ was, at nothing but sin. Let hard-hearted sinners tremble to think of the anger with which he will look round upon them shortly, when the great day of his wrath comes. [2.] How he hated the sinners; he was grieved for the hardness of the heart; he had grieved for forty years for the hardness of the hearts of their fathers, his own and his parents' generation, in their stubbornness. Note, It is a great grief to our Lord Jesus, to see sinners bent upon their own ruin, and obstinately set against the methods of their conviction and recovery, for he would not that any should perish. This is a good reason why the hardness of our own hearts and of the hearts of others, should be a grief to us.

4. Christ dealt very kindly with the patient; he bid him raise up for his hand, and it was immediately restored. Now, (1.) Christ has hereby taught us to go on with resolution in the way of our duty, how violent soever the opposition is, that we meet with in it. We must deny ourselves sometimes in our ease, pleasure, and convenience, rather than give offence even to those who causelessly take it, but we must not deny ourselves the satisfaction of serving God and doing good, though offence may unjustly be taken at it. None could be more tender of giving offence than Christ; yet rather than send this poor man away unhealed, he would venture offending all the Scribes and Pharisees that compassed him about. (2.) He hath hereby given us a specimen of the cures wrought by his grace upon poor souls; our hands are spiritually withered, the powers of our souls weakened by sin, and disabled for that which is good. The great healing-day, is the sabbath, and the healing-place the synagogue; the healing-power is that of Christ. The gospel-counsel is like this recorded here; and the command as rational and just, though our hands are withered, and we cannot of ourselves stretch them forth, we must attempt it, must, as well as we can, lift them up to God in prayer, lay hold on Christ and eternal life, and strive to do our work; yet the thing grieves them, yet our endeavour, power goes along with the word of Christ, he affects the cure. Though our hands be withered, yet, if we will not offer to stretch them out, it is our own fault that we are not healed; but if we do, and are healed, Christ and his power and grace must have all the glory.

5. The enemies of Christ dealt very barbarously with him. Such a work of mercy should suggest the minds of his followers to a work of wonder their faith in him. But, instead of that, the Pharisees, who pretended to be oracles in the church, and the Herodians, who pretended to be the supporters of the state, though of opposite interests one to another, took counsel together against him, how they might destroy him. Note, They that suffer for doing good, do suffer as their Master did.

(1.) When he withdrew from them, he left them there; while he engaged some to destroy him, he quit the place, to teach us in troublous times to shift for our own safety; but see here,

1. How he was followed into his retirement. When some had such an enmity to him, that they drove him out of their country, others had such a value for him, that they followed him wherever he went; and the enmity of their leaders to Christ did not cool their respect to him. Great multitudes followed him from all parts of the nation; as far north, as from Galilee; as far south, as from Judea and Jerusalem; as far, and from Idumea; as far east, as from beyond Jordan; and west, as from about Tyre and Sidon. Observe, (1.) What induced them to follow him; it was the report they heard of the great things he did for all that applied themselves to him; some wished to see one that had seen Christ; others that he might do great things for them. Note, The consideration of the great things Christ has done, should engage us to come to him. (2.) What they followed him for; (v. 10.) They pressed upon him, to touch him, as many as had plaques. Diseases are here called plaques, μαστίγοι, corrections, chastisements; so they are designed to be, to make us smart for our sins, that thereby we may be made sorry for them, and may be warned not to return to them. Those that were under these scourgings, came to Jesus; this is the errand on which sickness is sent, to quicken us to inquire after Christ, and apply ourselves to him as our Physician. They pressed upon him.
each striving which should get nearest to him, and which should be first served. They fell down before him, (so Dr. Hammond,) as petitioners for his favour; they desired leave but to touch him, having faith to be healed, not only by his touching them, but by their touching him; which no doubt they had many instances of. (3.) What provision he made to be ready to attend them. (4.) He spake to his disciples, who were fishermen, and had fisher-boats at command, that a small ship should constantly wait on him, to carry him from place to place on the same coast; that, when he had despatched the necessary business he had to do in one place, he might easily remove to another, where his presence was requisite, without pressing through the crowds of people that followed him from curiosity. Wise men, as much as they can, decline a crowd. (5.) What abundance of good he did in his retirement. He did not withdraw, to be idle, nor did he send back those who rudely crowded after him when he withdrew, but took it kindly, and gave them what they came for; for he never said to any that sought him diligently, Seek ye me in vain. (1.) Diseases were effectually cured; He healed many; divers sorts of patients. All the diseases, though various, he healed them. (2.) Devils were effectually conquered; those whom unclean spirits had got possession of, when they saw him, trembled at his presence and they also fell down before him, not to supplicate his favour, but to deprecate his wrath, and by their own terrors were compelled to own that he was the Son of God, v. 11. It is sad that this great truth should be denied by any of the children of men, who may have the benefit of it, when a confession of it has so often been extorted from devils, who are excluded from having benefit by it. (3.) Christ sought not applause to himself in doing those great things, for he strictly charged those for whom he did them, that they should not make him known; (v. 12.) that they should not be intruders to spread the notice of his cures, as it were by advertisements in the newspapers, but let them leave his own works to praise him, and let the report of them diffuse itself, and make its own way. Let not those that are cured, be forward to divulge it, lest it should feed their pride who are so highly favoured; but let the standers-by carry away the intelligence of it. When we do that which is praise-worthy, and yet covert not to be praised for it, then the same mind is in us, which was in Christ Jesus.

13. And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would; and they came unto him. 14. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15. And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16. And Simon he surnamed Peter; 17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; 18. And he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder; 19. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 20. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house. 21. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. 22. And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself.

In these verses, we have,

1. The choice Christ made of the twelve apostles to be his constant followers and attendants, and to be sent abroad as there was occasion, to preach the gospel. 2. The introduction to this call or promotion of disciples; He goes up into a mountain, and his errand thither was to pray. Ministers must be set apart with solemn prayer for the pouring out of the Spirit upon them; though Christ had authority to confer the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet, to set us an example, he prayed for them. 3. The rule he went by in his choice; and that was to choose such as he himself should be called. He called unto him whom he would. Not such as we would have thought fittest to be called, looking upon the countenance, and the height of the stature; but such as he thought fit to call, and determined to make fit for the service to which he called them; even so, blessed Jesus, because it seemed good in thine eyes. Christ calleth whom he will; for he is a free Agent, and his grace is his own pleasure. 4. The efficacy of the call; He called them to separate themselves from the crowd, and stand by him, and they came unto him. Christ calls those who were given him; (John 17. 6.) and all that the Father gave him, shall come to him, John 6. 37. Those whom it was his will to call, he made willing to come; his people shall be willing in the day of his power. Perhaps they came to him readily enough, because they were in expectation of reigning with him upon great temporal pomp and power; but when afterward they were undeceived in that matter, yet they had such a prospect given them of better things, that they would not say they were deceived in their Master, nor repent their leaving all to be with him. 5. The end and intention of this call: He ordained them, (probably by the imposition of hands, which was a ceremony used among the Jews,) that they should be with him constantly, to be witnesses of his doctrine, manner of life, and patience, that they might fully know it, and be able to give an account of it; and especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be with him, to receive instructions from him, that they might be qualified to give instructions to others. It would require time to fit them for that which he designed them for; for they must be sent forth to preach; not to preach till they were sent, and not to be sent till by a long and intimate acquaintance with Christ they were fitted. Note, Christ's ministers must be much with him. 6. The power he gave them to work miracles; and hereby he put a very great honour upon them, beyond that of the great men of the earth. He ordained them to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. They showed that the power which Christ had to work these miracles, was an original power; that he had it not as a Servant, but as a Son in his own house, in that he could confer it upon others, and invest them with it: they have a rule in the law, Deputas non potest deputare—He that is only deputed himself, cannot depute another; but our Lord Jesus had life in himself, and the Spirit without measure; for he could give this power even to the weak and foolish things of the world. 7. Their number and ordination; He ordained twelve, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. They are here named not just in the same order as they were in Matthew, nor by couples, as they were there; but as there, so here, Peter is put first, and Judas last. Here Matthew is put before Thomas, probably being called in that order; but in that catalogue which Matthew himself drew up, he
puts himself after Thomas: so far was he from insisting upon the precedence of his consecration. But that which Mark only takes notice of in this list of the apostles, is, that Christ called James and John Beaverages, which is, The sons of thunder; perhaps they were remarkable for a loud, commanding voice, they were thundering preachers; or, rather, it denotes the zeal and fervency of their spirits, which would make them active for God above their brethren. These two (called Dr. Hammond), went to be special eminent ministers of the gospel, which is called a voice shaking the earth, Heb. 12. 26. Yet John, one of those sons of thunder, was full of love and tenderness, as appears by his epistles, and was the beloved disciple.

7. Their retirement with their Master, and close adherence to him; They went into a house. Now that this was impanneder, they stood together, to hearken to their evidence. They went together into the house, to settle the orders of their infant-college; and now, it is likely, the bag was given to Judas, which pleased him, and made him easy.

II. The continual crowds that attended Christ’s motions; (v. 20.) The multitude cometh together again, unsent for, and unseasonably pressing upon him, some with one errand and some with another; so that he and his disciples could not get time so much as to eat bread, much less for a set and full meal. Yet he did not shut his doors against the petitioners, but bid them welcome, and gave to each of them an answer of peace. Note. They whose hearts are envious, and whose Lord is God, can in a sweet bear with great inconveniences to themselves, in the prosecution of it, and will rather lose a man’s meat at any time than slip an opportunity of doing good. It is happy when zealous hearers and zealous preachers thus meet, and encourage one another. Now the kingdom of God was preached, and men pressed into it, Luke 16. 16. This was a gale of opportunity which was never upon the disciples; and the powers might well afford to adjourn their meals, to lay hold on it. It is good striking while the iron is hot.

III. The care of his relations concerning him; (v. 21.) When his friends in Capernaum heard how he was followed, and what pains he took, they went out, to lay hold on him, and fetch him home, for they said, He is beside himself.” 1. Some understand it of an absurd preposterous care, which had more in it of reproach to him than of respect; and so we must take it as we read it, He is beside himself: either they supposed that it was suggested to him, or that it was suggested to them, and they gave credit to the suggestion, that he was gone distracted, and therefore his friends ought to bind him, and put him in a dark room, to bring him to his right mind again. His kindred, many of them, had mean thoughts of him, (John 7. 5.) and were willing to hearken to this ill construction which some put upon his great zeal, and to conclude him crazed in his intellects, and under that pretence to take him off. The other way of the passage is to translate it: He is my kinsmen, my relations and fellowers, 2 Kings 9. 11; 2 Kings 11. 1; 2. Others understand it of a well-meaning care; and then they read it so— He fainteth, he hath no time to eat bread, and therefore his strength will fail him; he will be stifled with the crowd of people, and will have his spirits quite exhausted with constant speaking, and the virtue that goes out of him in his miracles; and therefore let us take occasion with him, and get him a little breathing time.” In his preaching-work, as well as his suffering-work, he was attacked with, Master, spare thyself. Note. They who go on with vigour and zeal in the work of God, must expect to meet with hindrances, both from the groundless disadvantage of their enemies, and the mistaken affectations of their friends, and they have need to stand upon their guard against both.

22. And the Scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beezliebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth he out devils. 23. And he called them unto him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? 24. And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26. And if Satan rise up against himself, and be divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. 27. No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house. 28. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: 29. But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: 30. Because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.

Here is,

I. The impudent, impious brand which the Scribes fastened upon Christ’s casting out devils, that they might evade and invalidate the conviction of it, and be a poor excuse for not yielding to it. These Scribes came down from Jerusalem, v. 22. It should seem, they came this long journey on purpose to hinder the progress of the doctrine of Christ; such pains did they take to do mischief; and, coming from Jerusalem, where were the most noble and learned Scribes, and where they had opportunity of consulting together against the Lord and his Anointed, they were in the greater capacity to do mischief; the reputation of Scribes from Jerusalem would have an influence not only upon the country-people, but upon the country-Scribes; they had never thought of this base suggestion concerning Christ’s miracles till the Scribes from Jerusalem put it in their heads. They could not deny but that he cast out devils, which plainly bespake him sent of God; but they insinuated that he had Beezliebub on his side, was in league with him, and by the prince of the devils cast out devils. There is a trick in the case; Satan is not cast out, he only goes out by consent. There was nothing in the manner of Christ’s casting out devils, that gave any cause to suspect this; he did it as one having authority; but so they will have it, who resolve not to believe him.

II. The rational answer which Christ gave to this objection, demolishing the absurdity of it.

1. Satan is so subtle: but he will never voluntarily quit his possession; If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself, and it cannot stand, v. 23—25. He called them to him, as one desirous they should be convinced; he treated them with all the freedom, friendliness, and familiarity, that could be; he vouchsafed to reason the case with them, that every mouth may be stopped. It was plain that the doctrine of devil’s made war upon the devil’s kingdom, and had a direct tendency to break his power, and crush his interest in the souls of men; and it was as plain that the casting of him out of the bodies of people confirmed that doctrine, and gave it the setting on; and therefore it cannot be imagined that he should come into such a design; every one knows that Satan is no fool, nor will act so directly against his own interest.
THE USEFUL AND BEAUTIFUL.

The tomb of Moses is unknown; but the traveller slakes his thirst at the well of Jacob. The gorgeous palace of the wisest and wealthiest of monarchs, with the cedar, and gold, and ivory, and even the great temple of Jerusalem, hallowed by the glory of the Deity himself, are gone; but Sodoma and Gomorra are as perfect as ever. Of the architecture of the Holy City, not one stone is upon another; but the pool of Bethesda is still the pilgrim's reverence at the present day. Its cisterns and aqueducts remain to excite admiration. The golden house of Nero is a ruin; but Aqua Claudia still pours into the limpid stream. The temple of the sun at the source of the Nile in the wilderness has fallen; but the god himself, as freshly in his rays, as when worshippers thronged its lofty colonnade, can show London will share the fate of nothing he left to mark its site, say crumbling brick-work. The Thames flows as it does now. And if any should still rise over the deep, may we believe that it will be neither a temple, but some vast aqueduct; and if it can claim the name of antiquity, it will probably be that of the man who in his day sought the happiness of his fellow-men, rather than their glory, and linked his memory to some great work of national utility and benevolence. This is the glory which outlives all others, and shines with undying lustre from generation to generation; imparting to works something of its own immortality, and in some degree rescuing them from the ruin which overtakes the ordinary monuments of historical tradition or mere magnificence. — Edinburgh Review.
...and may be found in the city.

The knowing ones at Alb...
2. Christ is so wise, that, being engaged in war with him, he will attack his forces wherever he meets them, whether in the brothels or souls of people, v. 37. It is plain, Christ's design is to enter into the strong man's house, to take possession of the interest he has in the world, and to spoil his goods, and convert them to his own service; and therefore it is natural to suppose that he will thus bind the strong man, will forbid him to speak when he would, and to stay where he would, and thus show that he has gained a victory over him.

III. The awful warning Christ gave them to take heed how they spoke such dangerous words as these; however they might make light of them, as only conjectures, and the language of free-thinking, if they persisted in it, it would be of fatal consequence to them; it would be found a sin against the last remedy, and consequently unpardonable; for what could be imagined possible to bring them to repentance for their sin in blaspheming Christ, who could set aside such a strong conviction with such a weak evasion? It is true, the gospel promises, because Christ hath purchased forgiveness for the greatest sins and sinners, v. 38. Many of those who reviled Christ on the cross, (which was a blaspheming of the Son of man, aggravated to the highest degree,) found mercy, and Christ himself prayed, Father, forgive them; but this was blaspheming the Holy Ghost, for it is by the Holy Spirit that we are sanctified, and delivered from all unclean spirit, v. 30. By this method they would outface the conviction of all the gifts of the Holy Ghost after Christ's ascension, and defeat them all, after which there remained no more proof, and therefore they should never have forgiveness, but were liable to eternal damnation. They were in imminent danger of that everlasting punishment, from which there was no redemption, and in which there was no intermission, no remission.

31. There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him, v. 32. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. 33. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? 34. And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! 35. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Here is, 1. The disrespect which Christ's kindred, according to the flesh, showed to him, when he was preaching; (and they knew very well that he was then in his element;) they not only stood without, having no desire to come in, and hear him, but they sent in a message to call him out to them, (v. 31, 32,) as if he must leave his work, to hearken to their importunities; it is probable that they had no business with him, only to provoke him to come to them, and oblige him to break off, lest he should kill himself. He knew how far his strength would go, and preferred the salvation of souls before his own life, and soon after made it appear with a witness; it was therefore an idle thing for them, under pretence of his sparing himself, to interrupt him; and it was worse, if really they had business with him, when they knew he preferred his business as a Saviour, so much before any other business.

2. The respect which Christ showed to his spiritual kindred upon this occasion. Now, as at other times, he put a comparative neglect upon his mother, which seemed purposely designed to obviate and prevent the extravagant respect which men in aftertimes would be apt to pay her. Our respect ought to be guided and governed by Christ; now the virgin Mary, or Christ's mother, is not equalled with, but postponed to, ordinary believers, on whom Christ here puts a superlative honour. He looked upon those that sat about him, and pronounced those of them that not only heard, but did, the will of God, to be to him as his mother, and sister, and brother; as much esteemed, loved, and cared for, as his nearest relations, v. 33, 35. This is a good reason why we should honour those that fear the Lord, and choose them for our people; why we should be not hearers of the word only, but doers of the work, that we may share with the saints in this honour. Surely it is good to be akin to those who are thus nearly allied to Christ, and to have fellowship with those that have fellowship with Christ; and woe to these who hate and persecute Christ's kindred, that are his bone and his flesh, every one resembling the children of a King; (see Judg. 8, 18, 19,) for he will with jealousy plead their cause, and avenge their blood.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, I. The parable of the seed, and the four sorts of ground, (v. 1-9,) with the exposition of it, (v. 10-20,) and the application of it, v. 21, 22. II. The parable of the seed growing gradually, but insensibly, v. 26-29. III. The parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and a general account of Christ's parables, v. 30-35. IV. The miracle of Christ's sudden stilling a storm at sea, v. 35-41.

1. And he began again to teach by the sea-side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land. 2. And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, 3. Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: 4. And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. 5. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: 6. But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. 8. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. 9. And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 10. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. 11. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables: 12. That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. 13.
And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? And how then will ye know all parables? 14. The sower soweth the word. 15. And these are they by the way-side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. 16. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; when, who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; 17. And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 18. And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, 19. And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful. 20. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

The foregoing chapter began with Christ's entering into the synagogue; (v. 1.) this chapter begins with Christ's teaching again by the sea-side. Thus he changed his method, that if possible all might be reached and wrought upon. To gratify the nice and more genial sort of people that had seats, chief seats, in the synagogue, and did not care for hearing a sermon any where else, he did not preach always by the sea-side, but, having liberty, went often into the synagogue, and taught there; yet, to gratify the poor, the mob, that could not get room in the synagogue, he did not always preach there, but began again to teach by the sea-side, where they could come within hearing. Thus are we debtor both to the wise and to the unwise, Rom. 1. 14.

Here seems to be a new convenience found out, which had not been used before, though he had before preached by the sea-shore (ch. 4. 13,) and that was verily an unseasonable thing, while his hearers stood upon the land; and that inland sea of Tiberias having no tide, there was no ebbing and flowing of the waters to disturb them. Methinks Christ's carrying his doctrine into a ship, and preaching it thence, was a presage of his sending of the gospel to the isles of the Gentiles, and the shipping off of the kingdom of God, (that rich cargo,) from the Jewish nation, to be spread among the heathen. And that, when they have lost, and perhaps never took, the truth which it was designed to explain and illustrate; but, unless they would take pains to search into it, it would but amuse them: seeing they would see, and not perceive, (v. 12,) and so, while it gratified their curiosity, it was the punishment of their stupidity; they wilfully shut their eyes against the light, and therefore justly did Christ put it into the dark lanthorn of a parable, which had a bright side toward those who applied it to themselves, and were willing to be guided by it; but to those who were only willing for a season to play with it, it only gave a flash of light upon it, but sent them away in the dark. It is just with God to say of those that will not see, that they shall not see, and to hide from their eyes, who only look about them with a great deal of carelessness, and never look before them with any concern upon the things that belong to their peace.

The following chapter contains that he used with his disciples; When Christ was alone by himself, not only the twelve, but others that were about him with the twelve, took the opportunity to ask him the meaning of the parables, v. 10. They found it good to be about Christ; the nearer him the better; good to be with the twelve, to be conversant with those that are intimate with him. And he told them what a distinguishing favour it was to them, that they were made acquainted with the mystery of the kingdom of God, v. 11. The secret of the Lord was with them. That instructed them, which others were only amused with, and they were made to increase in knowledge by every parable, and understood more of the way and method in which Christ designed to set up his kingdom in the world, while others were dismissed, Matt. 13. 11. Note, Those who know the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, it is given to them; that it is given to them; they receive both the light and the sight from Jesus Christ, who, after his resurrection, both opened the scriptures, and opened the understanding, Luke 24. 27—45. In particular, we have here, 1. The parable of the sower, as we had it, Matth. 13. 3, &c. He begins (v. 3.) with, Hearken, and consider the parable; 45. with, He that hath ears to hear let him hear. Note, The words of Christ demand attention, and those who speak from him may command it, and should stir it up; even that which as yet we do not thoroughly understand, or not rightly, we must carefully attend to, believing it to be both intelligible and weighty, that at length we may understand it; we shall find more in Christ's sayings than at first there seemed to be. 2. The exposition of it to the disciples. Here is a question Christ put to them before he expounded it, which we had not in Matthew; (v. 13.) "Know ye not this parable? Know ye not the meaning of it? How then shall ye know all parables?" (1.) "If ye know not this, which is so plain, how will ye understand other parables, which will be more dark and obscure? If ye are gravelled and run aground with this, what will you say of the different success of the word preached upon those that hear it, which yourselves may see easily, how will ye understand the parables which hereafter will speak of the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, which is a thing ye have yet no idea of?" Note, This should quicken us both to prayer and pains that we may get knowledge—that there are a great many things with which we are not acquainted, and that we have not understood not the plain truths of the gospel, how shall we master those that are more difficult? Vita brevis, ergo longa—Life is short, art is long. If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearyed us, and run us down, then how shall we contend with horses? Jer. 12. 3. (2.) "If ye know not this, which is intended for your direction in hearing the word, how can ye be made more profitable by the word?" If ye are further to hear? This parable is to teach you to be attentive to the word, and affected with it, that you may understand it. If ye receive not this, ye will not know how to use the key by which ye must be let into all the rest." If we understand not the rules we are to observe, in order to our profiting by the word, how shall we profit by any other rules? Observe, Before Christ expounds the parable, [1.] He shews them how their care was, who were.
not let into the meaning of the doctrine of Christ; To you it is given, but not to them. Note, It will help us to put a value upon the privileges we enjoy, as disciples of Christ, to consider the deplorable state of those who want such privileges, especially that they are out of the ordinary way of conversion; lest they should be considered, and Two men, as those who have not the favour of God. 12. Those only who are converted have their sins forgiven them: and it is the misery of unconverted souls, that they lie under unforgiven guilt. [2.] He shews them what a shame it was that they needed such particular explanations of the word they heard, and did not apprehend it at first. Those that would improve in knowledge, must be made sensible of their ignorance.

Firstly, That in the great field of the church, the word of God is dispensed to all promiscuously; The sower sowed the word, (v. 14.) sows it at a venture, beside all waters, upon all sorts of ground, (Isa. 32. 20.) not knowing where it will light; or what fruit it will bring forth. He scatters it, in order to its increase. It is a while engaging himself, when he went about teaching and preaching; now he sends his ministers, and sows by their hand. Ministers are sowers; they have need of the skill and discretion of the husbandsmen; (Isa. 28. 24—26.) they must not observe winds and clouds, (Eccl. 11. 4, 6.) and must look up to God, who gives seed to the sower, 2 Cor. 9. 10.

Secondly, That of the many that hear the word of the gospel, and read it, and are conversant with it, there are, comparatively, but few that receive it, so as to bring forth the fruits of it; here is but one in four that come to good. It is sad to think how much of the precious seed of the word of God is lost, and sown in vain; but there is a day coming when lost sermons must be accounted for. Many, that have heard Christ himself preach in their streets, will hereafter be hidden to depart from him; those therefore who place all their religion in hearing, as if that alone would save them, do but deceive themselves, and build their hope upon the sand, Jam. 1. 22.

Thirdly, Many are much affected with the word for the present, who yet receive no abiding benefit by it. The motions of soul they have, answerable to what they hear, are but a mere flash, like the crackling of thorns under a pot; the read of hypercritics is the word to know God, (Gen. 3. 5.) of Herod, that he heard John gladly; (ch. 6. 20.) of others, that they rejoiced in his light; (John 5. 35.) of those to whom Ezekiel was a lovely song, (Ezek. 33. 32.) and those represented here by the stony ground received the word with gladness, and yet came to nothing.

Fourthly, The reason why the word doth not leave common impressions upon the minds of the people, is, because their hearts are not duly disposed, and prepared to receive it; the fault is in themselves, not in the word; some are careless forgetful hearers, and these get no good at all by the word; it comes in at one ear, and goes out at the other; others have their convictions overpowered by their corruptions, and they lose the good impressions the word has made upon them, so that they get nothing good by it.

Fifthly, The devil is very busy about loose, careless hearers, as the fowls of the air go about the seed that lies above ground; when the heart, like the highway, is unploughed, unhumbled, when it lies common, to be trodden on by every passenger, as their's that are great company keepers, then the devil is like the fowls; he comes swiftly, and carries away the word ere we are aware. When, therefore, these fowls come down upon the sacrifices, we should take care, as Abram did, to drive them away; (Gen. 15. 21) that, though we cannot keep them from hovering over our heads, we may not let them nestle in our hearts.

Sixthly, Many that are not openly scandalized, so as to throw off their profession, as they on the stony ground did; many have the good seed secretly choked and stifled, so that it comes to nothing; they continue in a barren, hypocritical profession, which brings nothing to pass, and so go down as certainly, though more plausibly, to hell.

Seventhly, Impressions that are not deep, will not be durable, but will wear off in suffering, trying times; like footsteps on the sand of the sea, which leave marks at high tide of persecution; when I return, Lord; many that keep their profession in fair days, lose it in a storm; and do as those that go to sea only for pleasure, come back again when the wind rises. It is the ruin of hypocrites, that they have no root; they do not act from a living fixed principle; they do not mind heart-work, and without that religion is nothing; for he is the Christian, that is inwardly.

Eighthly, Many are hindered from profiting by the word of God, by their abundance of the world. Many a good lesson of humility, charity, self-denial, and heavenly-mindedness, is choked and lost by that prevailing complacency in the world, which they are apt to have on whom it smiles. Thus many professors, that otherwise might have come to something, prove like Pharaoh's lean kine and thin ears.

Ninthly, These that are not incumbered with the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may yet lose the benefit of their profession by the lusts of other things; this is added here in Mark, by the desires which are about other things, (so Dr. Hani- mond,) an inordinate appetite toward those things that are pleasing to sense or to the fancy. Those that have but little of the world, may yet be ruined by an indulgence of the body.

Tenthly, Fruit is the thing that God expects and requires from those that enjoy the gospel; fruit according to the seed; a temper of mind, and a course of life, agreeable to the gospel; Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. This is fruit, and it will abound to our account.

Lastly, No good fruit is to be expected but from good seed. The seed must be sown on good ground, if the heart be busy, wise, and holy; and heavenly, there will be good fruit; and it will abound sometimes even to a hundred fold, such a crop as Isaac reaped, Gen. 26. 12.

21. And he said unto them, Is a candle brought to be put under a bushel, or under a bed ? and not to be set on a candlestick ? 22. For there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad. 23. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 24. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. 25. For he that hath to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. 26. And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; 27. And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.
23. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. 30. And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God, or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31. It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32. But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. 33. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. 34. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples.

The lessons which our Saviour designs to teach us here, by parables and figurative expressions, are these:

1. That those who are good, ought to consider the obligations they are under to do good; that is, as in the parable before, to bring forth fruit. God expects a grateful return of his gifts to us, and a useful improvement of his gifts in us; for, (v. 21.) Is a candle brought, to be put under a bushel, or under a bed? No, but that it may be set on a candlestick.

2. The apostles were ordained to receive the gospel, not for themselves only, but for the good of others, to communicate it to them. All Christians, as they have received the gifts, must minister the same. Note, Gifts and graces make a man as a candle, the candle of the Lord; (Prov. 20. 27.) lighted by the Father of lights; the most eminent are but candles, poor lights, compared with the Sun of righteousness. A candle gives light but a little way, and but a little while, and is easily blown out, and continually burning down and wasting. 2. Many, who are lighted as candles, put themselves under a bed, or under a bushel: they do not manifest grace themselves, nor minister grace to others; they have estates, and do no good with them; have their limbs and senses, wit and learning, perhaps, but nobody is the better for them; they have spiritual gifts, but do not use them; like a taper in an urn, they burn to themselves. 3. Those who are lighted as candles, set themselves on a candlestick, that is, should improve all opportunities of doing good, as those that were made for the glory of God, and the service of the communities, they are members of; we are not born for ourselves.

The reason given for this, is, because there is nothing hid which shall not be manifested, which should not be made manifest; (so it might better be read,) v. 22. There is no treasure of gifts and graces lodged in any but with design to be communicated; nor was the gospel made a secret to the apostles, to hold it concealed, let the service of the communities be divulged to all the world. Though Christ expounded the parables to his disciples privately, yet it was with design to make them the more publicly useful; they were taught, that they might teach; and it is a general rule, that the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, not himself only, but others also.

It is to those who hear the word of the gospel, to mark what they hear, and to make a good use of it, because their real or false depends upon it; what he had said before he saith again. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear, v. 23. Let him give the gospel of Christ a fair hearing; but that is not enough, it is added, (v. 24.) Take heed what ye hear, and give a due regard to that which ye do hear; Consider what ye hear, so Dr. Hammond reads it. Note, What we hear doth us no good, unless we consider it; those especially that are to teach others, must take care, that the very obscurity in the words, they must take care, that the very obscurity in the words, that they may be exact. We must likewise take heed what we hear, by proving all things, that we may hold fast that which is good. We must be cautious, and stand upon our guard, lest we be imposed upon. To enforce this caution, consider,

1. As we deal with God, God will deal with us. So Dr. Hammond explains the words, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. If ye be faithful servants to him, he will be a faithful Master to you: with the upright he will show himself upright." 2. As we improve the talents we are intrusted with, we shall increase them; if we make use of the knowledge we have, for the glory of God and the benefit of others, it shall sensibly grow, as stock in trade doth by being turned; Unto you that hear, shall more be given; to you that have, it shall be given, v. 25. If the disciples deliver that to the church, which they have received of the Lord, they shall be led more into the secret of the Lord. Gifts and graces multiply by being exercised: and God has promised to bless the hand of the diligent. 3. If we do not use, we lose, what we have. From him that hath not, that doth no good with what he hath, and so hath it in vain, is as if he had it not, shall be taken even that he hath. Burying a talent is the betraying of a trust, and amounts to a forfeiture; and gifts and graces rust for want of wearing. 3. The good seed of the gospel sown in the world, and sown in the heart, doth by degrees produce wonderful effects, but with much noise; (v. 26, R. C.) So is the kingdom of God; so is the gospel, when it is sown, and received, as seed in good ground.

1. It will come up; though it seems lost and buried under the clods, it will find or make its way through them. The seed cast into the ground will spring. Let but the word of Christ have the place it ought to have in a soul, and it will show itself, as the wheat does in the earth. After a field is sown with corn, how soon is the surface of it altered! How gay and pleasant doth it look, when it is covered with green! 2. The husbandman cannot describe how it comes up; it is one of the mysteries of nature; It springs and grows up, he knows not how, v. 27. He sees it has grown, but he cannot tell in what manner it grew, or what was the cause and method of its growth. Thus we know not how the Spirit by the word makes a change in the heart, any more than we can account for the blowing of the wind, which we hear the sound of, but cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes. Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: how God manifested in the flesh came to be believed on in the world, 1 Tim. 3. 16.

3. The husbandman, when he hath sown the seed, doth nothing toward the springing of it up; He sleepeth, and riseth, night and day; goes to sleep at night, gets up in the morning, and perhaps never so much as thinks of the corn he hath sown, or ever looks upon it, but follows his pleasures or other business, and yet the earth brings forth fruit of itself, according to the ordinary course of nature, and by the care of the farmer only. There is no word of grace, when it is received in faith, is in the heart a word of grace, and the preachers contribute nothing to it. The Spirit of God is carrying
After these parables thus specified, the historian concludes with this general account of Christ's preaching—that with many such parables he spake the word unto them; (v. 33.) probably designing to refer us to the larger account of the parables of this kind, which we had before, Matth. 13. He spake in parables, as they were able to hear them: he fetched his discourse from nature and experience; he abased himself to them, and level to their capacity, and delivered them in plain expressions, in condescension to their capacity; though he did not let them into the mystery of the parables, yet his manner of expression was easy, and such as they might hereafter recollect to their edification. But, for the present, without a parable spake he not unto them, (v. 34.) The glory of the Lord was covered with a cloud, and God's word was in the midst of the company of the sons of men, that, though not at first, yet by degrees, we may understand his meaning; the disciples themselves understood these sayings of Christ afterward, which at first they did not rightly take the sense of. But these parables he expounded to them, when they were alone. We cannot but wish we had had that exposition, as we had of the parable of the sower; but it was not so needful; because, when the church should be enlarged, that would expound these parables to us, without any more ado.

35. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. 36. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship, and there were also with him other little ships. 37. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. 38. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? 39. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? 41. And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

This miracle which Christ wrought for the relief of his disciples, in stilling the storm, we had before, (Matth. 8. 23, &c.) but it is here more fully related.

1. It was the same day that he preached out of a ship, when the even was come, v. 33. When he had been labouring in the word and doctrine all day, instead of reposeing himself, he expoundeth himself, to teach us not to think of a constant remaining rest till we come to heaven. The end of the toil may perhaps be the beginning of a toss. But observe, the ship that Christ made his pulpit, is taken under his special protection, and, though in danger, cannot sink. What is used for Christ, he will take particular care of.

2. He himself proposed putting to sea at night, because he would lose no time; Let us pass over to the other side; but when he was first in the midst of the ship, he has work to do there. Christ went about doing good, and no difficulties in his way should hinder him; thus industrious we should be in serving him and our generation according to his will.
3. They did not put to sea, till they had sent away the multitude, that is, had given to each of them that which they came for, and answered all their requests; for he sent none home, complaining that they had attended him in vain. Or, They sent them away with a solemn blessing; for Christ came into the world, not only to pronounce, but to command, and to give, the blessing.

4. They took and gave them as was, that is, in the same dress that he was in when he preached, without any cloak to throw over him, which he ought to have had, to keep him warm, when he went to sea at night, especially after preaching. We must not hence infer that we may be careless of our health, but we may learn hence not to be over-nice and solicitous about the body.

5. The storm was great, that the ship was full of water, that is, by springing a leak, but perhaps partly with the shower, for the word here used signifies a tempest of wind with rain; however, the ship being little, the waves beat into it so that it was full. Note, It is no new thing for that ship to be greatly hurried and endangered, in which Christ and his disciples, Christ and his name and gospel, are embarked.

6. There were with him other little ships, which, no doubt, shared in the distress and danger. Probably, those little ships carried those who were desirous to go along with Christ, for the benefit of his preaching and miracles on the other side. The multitude went away when he put to sea, but some there were, that would venture upon the water with him. Those follow the Lamb aright, that follow him wherever he goes. And those that hope for a happiness in Christ, must be willing to take their lot with him, and run the same risks that he runs. One may boldly and cheerfully put to sea in Christ's company, yea, though we foresee a storm.

7. Christ was asleep in this storm; and here we are told that it was in the hinder part of the ship, the pilot's place: he lay at the helm, to intimate that, as Mr. George Herbert expresses it,

> When winds and waves assault my keel,
> He doth preserve it, he doth steer,
> Even when the boat seems most to reel.

Storms are the triumph of his art;
> Though he may close his eyes, yet not his heart.

He had a pillow there, such a one as a fisherman's ship would furnish him with. And he slept, to try the faith of his disciples, and to stir up prayers upon the trial, their faith appeared weak, and their prayers strong. Note, Sometimes when the church is in a storm, Christ seems as if he were asleep, unconcerned in the troubles of his people, and regardless of their prayers, and doth not presently appear for their relief. Verily he is a God that hideth himself. Isa. 43. 13. But, as when he tarries, he doth not tarry, (Hab. 2. 3.) so when he sleeps, he doth not sleep; he is not so much as a man, for the people of Israel shall not be so much as a slumber; (Ps. 121. 3, 4.) he slept, but his heart was awake, as the spouse, Cant. 5. 2.

8. His disciples encouraged themselves with their having his presence, and thought it the best way to improve that, and appeal to that, and ply the ear of prayer rather than their other ears. Their confidence lay in this, that they had their Master with them and that they were in it, though it may be tossed, cannot sink; the bush that has God in it, though it may burn, shall not consume. Cæsar encouraged the master of the ship, that had him on board, with this, Caesarem vehis; et fortunam Cæsarius—Thou hast Cæsar on board, and Cæsar's fortune. They awaked Christ. Had not the necessity of the case called for it, they would not have stirred up, or awaked, their Master, till he had pleased; (Cant. 2. 7.) but they knew he would forgive them this wrong. When Christ seems as if he slept in a storm, he is awaked by the prayers of his people; when we know not what to do, our eye must be to him; (2 Chron. 20. 12.) we may be at our wits' end, but not at our faith's end, while we have such a Saviour to go to. Their address to Christ is here expressed very emphatically; Master, carest thou not that we perish? I confess this sounds somewhat harsh, rather like chiding him for sleeping the better to stir him to awake him to admit us, but the great familiarity which he was pleased to admit them into, and the freedom he allowed them: and the present distress they were in, which put them into such a fright, that they knew not what they said. They do Christ a deal of wrong who suspect him to be careless of his people in distress. The matter is not so; he is not willing that any child be lost, much less any of his little ones, Matt. 18. 14.

9. The word of command with which Christ rebuked the storm, we have here, and had not in Matthew, v. 39. He says, Peace, be still—shēmet, sērōn, ariñóron—be silent, be dumb. Let not the wind any longer roar, nor the sea rage. Thus he stills the noise of the sea, the noise of her waves; a particular command to the wind, and to the sea; (Isa. 51. 9, 10.) and upon the noise of the sea he says, (Ps. 107. 3, 4.) The noise is threatening and terrifying; let us hear no more of it. This is, (1.) A word of command to us; when our wicked hearts are like the troubled sea which cannot rest; (Isa. 57. 20.) when our passions are up, and are unruly, let us think we hear the law of Christ, saying, Be silent, be dumb. Think not confusedly, speak not unadvisedly; but be still. (2.) A word of comfort to us, that be the storm of trouble ever so loud, ever so strong, Jesus Christ can lay it with a word's speaking. When without are fightings, and within are fears, and the spirits are in a tumult, Christ can create the fruit of the life, peace. If he say, Peace, be still, there is a great calm presently. It is spoken of as God's prerogative to command the seas, Jer. 31. 35. By this therefore Christ proves himself to be God. He that made the seas, can make them quiet.

10. The reproof Christ gave them for their fears, is here carried further than in Matthew. There it is, Why are you fearful? Here, Why are ye so fearful? Though there may be cause for some fear, yet not for fear to such a degree as this. There it is, O ye of little faith. Here it is, How is it that ye have so much fear? Not that the disciples were without faith. No, they believed that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; but at this time their fears prevailed so that they seemed to have no faith at all. It was out of the way, when they had occasion for it, and so it was as if they had not had it. "How is it, that in this matter ye have no faith, that ye think I would not come in with seemable and effectual relief?" These may suspect their faith, who can entertain such a thought as Christ will not suffer them to have had for Christ. But, now that they saw a demonstration of his power over them, they feared them less, and him more. They feared lest they had offended Christ by their unbelieving fears; and therefore studied now to give him honour. They had feared the power and wrath of the Creator in the storm, and that fear had tormented and amazement in it; but now they feared the power and grace of the Redeemer in the calm; they feared the Lord and his goodness; and it had pleasure and
satisfaction in it, and by it they gave glory to Christ, as Jonah's mariners, who, when the sea ceased from her raging, feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, 1. 6. This sacrifice they offered to the honour of Christ; they said, What manner of man is this? Surely more than a man, for even the winds and the sea obey him.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, we have, 7. Christ's casting of the legion of devils out of the man possessed, and suffering of them to enter into the swine, v. 1. 20. 11. Christ's healing of the woman with the bloody issue, in the way as he was going to raise Jairus's daughter to life, v. 21. 43. These three miracles we had the story of before, (Matth. 8. 28, &c. and Matth. 9. 18, &c.) but more fully related here.

1. AND they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. 2. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, 3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: 4. Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. 5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. 6. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him. 7. And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. 8. For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. 9. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. 10. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. 11. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. 12. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. 13. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. 14. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. 15. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the Legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 16. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. 17. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. 18. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. 19. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. 20. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

We have here an instance of Christ's dispossessing the strong man armed, and disposing of him as he pleased, to make it appear that he was stronger than he. This he did when he was come to the other side, whither he went through a storm; his business there was to rescue this poor creature out of the hands of Satan, and when he had done that, he returned. Thus he came from heaven to earth, and returned, in a storm, to redeem a remnant of mankind out of the hands of the devil, though but a little remnant, and did not think his pains ill bestowed.

In Matthew, they were said to be two possessed with devils; here it is said to be a man possessed with an unclean spirit. If there were two, there was one, and Mark doth not say that there was but one; so that this difference cannot give us just offence; it is not probable that one of them was much more remarkable than the other, and said what was said. Now, observe here,

1. The miserable condition that this poor creature was in; he was under the power of an unclean spirit, the devil got possession of him, and the effect of it was not, as in many, a silent melancholy, but a raging frenzy; he was raving mad; his condition seems to have been worse than any of the possessed that were Christ's patients. 1. He had his dwelling among the tombs, among the graves of dead people. Their tombs were out of the cities, in desolate places; (Job 3. 14.) which gave the devil great advantage: for woe to him that is alone. Perhaps the devil drove him to the tombs, to make people fancy that the souls of the dead were turned into devils, and did what mischief was death to execute themselves from it. The touch of a grave was polluting, Numb. 19. 16. The unclean spirit drives people into that company that is defiling, and so keeps possession of them. Christ, by rescuing souls out of Satan's power, saves the living from among the dead.

2. He was very strong and ungovernable; No man could bind him, as it is requisite, both for their own good, and for the safety of others, that those of their condition should be. Not only cords would not hold him, but chains, and fetters of iron would not, v. 3. 4. Very deplorable is the case of such as need to be thus bound, and of all miserable people in this world they are most to be pitied; but his case was worst of all, in whom the devil was so strong, that he could not be bound. This sets forth the sad condition of those souls in which the devil has dominion; these children of disobedience, in whom the unclean spirit works. Some not only are unprofitable sinners, but are like this madman; all are herein like the horse and the mule, that they need to be held in with bit and bridle; but some are like the wild ass, that will not be so held. The commands and curses of the law are as chains and fetters, to restrain sinners from their wicked courses; but they break these bands in splendour, and it is an evidence of the power of the devil in them.

3. He was a terror and torment to himself and to
all about him, v. 5. The devil is a cruel master to those that are led captive by him, a perfect tyrant; this wretched creature was night and day in the mountains and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones, either bemoming his own deplorable case, or in a rage and indignation against Heaven. Men in freedom against God and destroy themselves, is a man when reminded and shewn; Satan is enthroned, and Satan enthroned? The worshippers of Baal in their fury cut themselves, like this madman in his. The voice of God is, Do thousef harm; the voice of Satan is, Do thyself all harm thou canst; yet God's word is despised, and Satan's regarded. Perhaps his cutting of himself with stones was by cutting his feet with the sharp stones he ran barefoot where he did so.

II. His application to Christ; (v. 6.) When he saw Jesus afar off, coming ashore, he ran, and worshipped him. He usually ran upon others with rage, but he ran to Christ with reverence. That was done by an invisible hand of Christ, which could not be done with chains and fetters; his fury was all on a sudden curbed. Even the devil, in this poor creature, was forced to tremble before with them: bow to him: or, rather, the poor man came, and worshipped Christ, in a sense of the need he had of his help, the power of Satan in and over him being, for this instant, suspended.

III. The word of command Christ gave to the unclean spirit, to quit his possession; (v. 8.) Come out of him, thou unclean spirit. He made the man demised, the effect of the garrison, when he enabled him to run, and worship him, and then put forth his power for his relief. If Christ work in us heartily to pray for a deliverance from Satan, he will work for us that deliverance. Here is an instance of the power and authority with which Christ commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, ch. 1. 27. He said, Come out of the man. The design of Christ's gospel is to exalt him, when he enabled him to run, and worship him, and then put forth his power for his relief. If Christ work in us heartily to pray for a deliverance from Satan, he will work for us that deliverance. Here is an instance of the power and authority with which Christ commanded the unclean spirits, and they obeyed him, ch. 1. 27. He said, Come out of him, thou unclean spirit. That the Holy Spirit may enter, may take possession of the heart, and have dominion in it.

IV. The dread which the devil had of Christ. The man ran, and worshipped Christ; but it was the devil in the man that cried with a loud voice, (making use of the poor man's tongue,) What have I to do with thee? Ch. 1. 27. Just as that other unclean spirit, ch. 1. 24. 1. He calls God the most high God, above all other gods. By the name Elion—the most High, God was known among the Phcenicians, and the other nations that bordered upon Israel; and by that name the devil calls him. 2. He owns Jesus to be the Son of God. Note, It is no strange thing to hear the best words drop from the worst mouths. There is such a way of saying this as none can attain to but here. Holy Ghost; (1 Cor. 12. 3.) yet it may be said, after a sort, by the unclean spirit. There is no judging of men by their loose sayings; but by their fruits ye shall know them. Piety from the teeth outward is an easy thing. The most fair-spoken hypocrite cannot say better than to call Jesus the Son of God, and yet that the devil did. 3. He this owns any design against Christ; What have I to do with thee? I have often worse, I pretend to none; I desire to have nothing to do with him; I cannot stand before thee, and would not fall. 4. He deprecates his wrath; I adjure thee, that is, I earnestly beseech thee, by all that is sacred, I beg of thee, for God's sake, by whose permission I have got possession of this man, that thou drive me out hence, yet that thou torment me not, that those mischiefs may be left with me, and those mischiefs somewhere else; though I know I am sentenced yet let me not be sent to the chains of darkness, or hindered from going to and fro, to devour.

V. The account Christ took from this unclean spirit of his name. This we had not in Matthew Christ asked him, What is thy name? Not but that Christ could call all the fallen stars, as well as the morning stars, by their names; but he demands this, that the standers-by might be affected with the vast numbers and power of these malignant infernal spirits, as they had reason to be, when they saw such a host of them as this. The number of this legion of soldiers among the Romans consisted, some say, of six thousand men, others, of twelve thousand and five hundred; but the number of a legion with them, like that of a regiment with us, was not always the same. Now, this intimates, that the devils, the infernal powers, are, 1. Military powers; a legion is a number of soldiers in arms. The devil was against the Lord, and the Lord against him, and his gospel, men and their holiness and happiness. They are such as we are to resist, and wrestle against, Eph. 6. 12. 2. That they are numerous, he owns, or rather he boasts—We are many; as if he hoped to be too many for Christ himself to deal with. What multitudes of apostate spirits were there, and all enemies to God and man; when here was only one Christ, to deal against them, and give the victory, in one poor, wretched creature, against Christ! Many there are that rise up against 1s. 3. That they are unani mous; there are many devils, and yet but one legion, engaged in the same wicked cause; and therefore that cavil of the Pharisees, which supposed Satan to cast out Satan, and to be divided against himself, was altogether groundless. It was not one of this legion that betrayed the rest, but they all. They are all one, and where he is, there in, What have I to do with thee? 4. That they are very powerful; who can stand before a legion? We are not a match for our spiritual enemies, in our own strength; but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, we shall be able to stand against them, though there are legions of them. 5. That there is order among them, as there is in a legion; there are principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, which signifies that there are those of a lower rank, the devil and his angels; the dragon and his; the prince of the devils and his subjects; which makes these enemies the more formidable.

VI. The request of this legion, that Christ would suffer them to go into a herd of swine that was feeding nigh unto the mountains, (v. 11.) these mountains being near by the country where Christ was, and their request was, 1. That he would not send them away out of the country, (v. 10.) not only that he would not commit them, or confine them, to their infernal prison, and so torment them before the time, but that he would not banish them that country, as justly he might, because in this poor man they had been such a terror to it, and done so much mischief. They seem to have had a particular affection for that country, or, rather, a particular spite to it; and to have liberty to walk to and fro through the rest of the earth, will not serve, (Job 1. 7.) unless the range of those mountains be allowed them for their pasture, Job 39. 8. But why would they abide in that country? Grotius saith, Because in that country there were many apostate Jews, who had thrown themselves out of the nation, and gone under the name of Gentiles, and given Satan power over them. And some suggest, that, having by experience got the knowledge of the dispositions and manners of the people of that country, they could the more effectually do them mischief by their temptations. 2. That he would suffer them to enter into the swine, by destroying which, they hoped to do more mischief to the souls of all the people in the country, the swine being in those parts, an particular parts, in which therefore they did not ask leave to do, for they knew Christ would not grant it.

VII. The permission Christ gave them. to enter
VIII. The report of all this dispersed through the country immediately. They that saw the swine hastened to the owners, to give an account of their charge, v. 14. This drew the people together, to see what was done; and, 1. When they saw how wonderfully the poor man was cured, they hence conceived a veneration for Christ, v. 15. They saw him that was possessed with the devil, and knew him well enough by the same token, that they had many a time been frightened at the sight of him; and were now as much surprised to see him sitting clothed, and in his right mind; when Satan was cast out, he came to himself, and was his own man presently. Note, Those who are grave and sober, and live by rule and with consideration, thereby make it appear, that by the power of Christ the devil’s power is broken. If they have been set on little or no sight of their sinnings, and were afraid; it astonished them, and forced them to own the power of Christ, and that he is worthy to be feared. But, 2. When they found that their swine were lost, they thence conceived a dislike of Christ, and wished to have rather his room than his company; they prayed him to depart out of their coasts, for they think not any good he can do them sufficient to make them amend for the loss of so many fine, fat swine, it may be, and ready for the market. Now the devils had what they would have; for by no handle do these evil spirits more effectually manage sinful souls than by that of the love of the world. They were afraid of some further punishment, if Christ should tarry among them, whereas, as if they would but part with their sins, he had life and happiness for them; but, being both to quit either their sins or their swine, they chose rather to abandon their salvation. Thus they do, who, rather than let go a base lust, will throw away their interest in Christ, and their expectations from him. They should rather have argued, “If he had such power as this over devils and all creatures, it is good having him our Friend; if the devils have leave to tarry in our country, (v. 10.) let us entreat him to tarry in it too, who alone can control them.” But, instead of this, they wished him further off. Such strivings do not carnal hearts, do not understand the just judgments of God; instead of being by them driven to him as they ought, they set him at so much a greater distance; though he hath said, “Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt,” Jer. 25. 6.

IX. An account of the conduct of the poor man that was delivered, after his deliverance. 1. He desired that he might go along with Christ, (v. 18.) perhaps for fear lest the evil spirit should again seize him; or, rather, that he might receive instruction from him, being unwilling to stay among those heathenish people that desired him to depart. Those that are freed from the evil spirit, cannot but covet acquaintance and fellowship with Christ. 2. Christ would not suffer him to go with him, lest it should savour of ostentation, and to let him know that he could both protect and instruct him at a distance. And besides, he had other work for him to do; he must go home to his friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for him, the Lord Jesus had done; that Christ might be honoured, and his neighbours and friends might be edified, and invited to believe in Christ. He must take particular notice rather of Christ’s pity than of his power, for that it is which especially he glories in; he must tell them what compassion the Lord had had on him in his misery. 3. The man, in the transport of joy, proclaimed, all the country over, what great things Jesus had done for him, v. 20. This is a debt we owe both to Christ and to our brethren, that he may be glorified and they edified. And see what a power the sight of it: All men did marvel, but none went any further. Many that cannot but wonder at the works of Christ, yet do not, as they ought, wonder after him.

21. And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him; and he was nigh unto the sea. 22. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, 23. And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. 24. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. 25. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, 26. And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, 27. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. 28. For she said, if I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. 29. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. 30. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? 31. And his disciples said unto him, Thou seeest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou who touched me? 32. And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. 33. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. 34. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith
hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

The Gadarenes having desired Christ to leave their country, he did not stay to trouble them long, but presently went by water, as he came back, to the other side; and there a great multitude gath-ered to him. Note, If there be some that reject Christ, yet there are others that receive him, and bid him welcome. A despaired gospel will cross the water, and go where it will have better entertain-ment. Now, among the many that applied them-selves to him,

I. Here is one, that comes openly to beg a cure for her daughter; and it is no less a person than one of the rulers of the synagogue, one that resided in the synagogue-worship, or, as some think, one of the judges of the consistory-court, which was in every city, consisting of twenty-three. He was not named in Matthew, he is here, Jairus, or Jair, Judg. 10. 3. He addressed himself to Christ, though a ruler, with great humility and reverence; When he saw him, he fell at his feet, giving honour to him as one really greater than he appeared to be; and with great importunity, he besought him greatly, as one in earnest, as one that not only valued the mercy he came for, but that knew he could obtain it no where else. The case is this, He has a little daughter, about twelve years old, the darling of the family, and she has a dying: but he believes that if Christ will come, and lay his hands upon her, she will return the relief she prayed for. This cure was wrought first, when he came, She has a dying; (so Mark;) but afterward, upon fresh information sent him, he saith, She is even now dead; (so Matthew;) but he still prosecutes his suit; See Luke 8. 42, 49. Christ readily agreed, and went with him, v. 24.

II. Here is another, that comes clandestinely to steal a cure (if I may say so) for herself; and she got the relief she prayed for. This cure was wrought by the way, as he was going to raise the ruler's daughter, and was followed by a crowd. See how Christ improved his time, and lost none of the precious moments of it. Many of his discourses, and some of his miracles, are dated by the way-side; we should be doing good, not only when we sit in the house, but when we walk by the way, Deut. 6. 7. Note, Observe,

1. The piteous case of this poor woman. She had a constant issue of blood upon her, for twelve years, which had thrown her, no doubt, into great weak-ness, had impoverished the comfort of her life, and threatened to be her death in a little time. She had had the best advice of physicians, that she could get, and had made use of the many medicines and methods they prescribed; as long as she had any thing to give them, they had kept her in hopes that they could cure her; but now that she had spent all that she had among them, they gave her up as incurable. See here, (1.) That skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for life and health; she spent all she had upon physicians. (2.) It is ill with those patients, whose physicians are their worst phisicians; who suffer by their physicians, instead of being helped by them. (3.) It is often the case, that what are gain-ered by medicines, commonly grow worse, and the disease gets the more ground. (4.) It is usual with people not to apply themselves to Christ, till they have tried in vain all other helpers, and find them, as certainly they will, physicians of no value. And he will be found a sure Refuge, even to those who make him their last Refuge.

2. The wonderful effect produced by it. Such a thing was in the power of Christ to heal her; she said within herself, though it doth not appear that she was encouraged by any preceding instance to say it, If I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole, v. 28. She believed that he cured, not as a Prophet, by virtue derived from God, but as the Son of God, by a virtue inherent in himself. Her case was such as she could not in mo-desty tell him publicly, as others did their grievan-cies, and therefore a private cure was that she wish-ed for, and her faith was suited to her case. This was the effectual remission in her case. She came in the crowd behind him, and with much ado get to touch his garment and immediately she felt the cure wrought, v. 29. The flux of blood was dried up, and she felt herself perfectly well all over her, as well as ever she was in her life, in an instant; by this it appears that the cure was altogether miracu-lons; for those that in such cases are cured by na-ture, are cured immediately, the strength being gradually, and not per saltum—all at once; but as for God, his work is perfect. Note, Those whom Christ heals of the disease of sin, that bloody issue, cannot but experience in themselves an universal change for the better.

4. Christ's inquiry after his concealed patient, and the encouragement he gave her, upon the dis-cover of her; Christ knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him, v. 30. He knew not the de-ficiency of spirits, through the exhausting of this virtue, but rather by an agility of spirits, in the ex-erting of it, and the innate and inseparable pleasure he had in doing good. And being desirous to see his patient, he asked, not in displeasure, as one affronted, but in tenderness, as one concerned, Who touch-ed my clothes? The disciples, not without a show of concern, and many who were present, took the de- procession; (v. 31.) The multitudes throng thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? As if it had been an improper question. Christ passed by the afront, and looks round to see her that had done this thing; not that he might blame her for her presumption, but that he might commend and encourage her faith, and by his own act and deed might warrant and confirm the cure, and render to her that which she had sur-reptitiously obtained. He needed not that any should inform him, for he had presently his eye upon her. Note, As secret acts of sin, so secret acts of faith, are known to the Lord Jesus, and are under his eye. If believers derive virtue from Christ ever so closely, he knows it, and is pleased with it. The poor woman hereupon presented herself to the Lord Je-sus (v. 32.) fearfully, and astonishment, knowing how he would take it. Note, Christ's patience is often trembling, when they have reason to be tri-umphing. She might have come boldly, knowing what was done in her; yet knowing that, she fears and trembles. It was a surprise, and was not yet, as it should have been a pleasing surprise. However, she fell down before him. Note, There is nothing better for those that fear and tremble, than to throw themselves at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and just to cry, be bid from Christ, should engage us to confess all to him. See what an encouraging word he gave her; (v. 34.) Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Note, Christ puts honour upon faith, because faith gives honour to Christ. But see how what is done by faith on earth, is ratified in heaven; Christ saith, Be whole of thy disease. Note, If our faith sets the seal of its approbation to the power of God, say- ing, So it is, and so let it be to me; God's grace will set the seal of its approbation to the prayers and hopes of faith, saying, So be it, and so let it be to thee. And therefore, Go in peace; be well
satisfied that thy cure is honestly come by, is effectually wrought, and take the comfort of it." Note, They that by faith are healed of their spiritual diseases, have reason to go in peace.

33. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house, certain which said, thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? 36. As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. 37. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. 38. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. 39. And when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. 41. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damned, (I say unto thee,) arise. 42. And straightway the damsel arose and walked: for she was of the age of twelve years: and they were astonished with a great astonishment. 43. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.

Diseases and deaths came into the world by the sin and disobedience of the first Adam; but by the grace of the second Adam both are conquered. Christ, having healed an incurable disease, here goes on to triumph over death, as in the beginning of the chapter he had triumphed over an outrageous devil.

I. The melancholy news is brought to Jairus, that his daughter is dead, and therefore if Christ be as other physicians, he comes too late. While there is life, there is hope, and room for the use of means; but when life is gone, it is past recall; Why troublest thou the Master any further? v. 25. Ordinarily, the proper thought in this case, is, "The matter is determined, the will of God is done, and I submit, I acquiesce; The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. While the child was alive I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell but God will yet be gracious to me, and the child shall live? But now that it is dead, wherewith should I weep? I shall go to it, but it shall not return to me." With such words we should quiet ourselves at such a time, that our souls may be as a child that is weaned from his mother; but here the case was extraordinary; the death of the child doth not, as usually, put an end to the narrative.

II. Christ encourageth the afflicted father yet to hope that his application to Christ on the behalf of his child should not be in vain. Christ had stayed to work a cure by the way, but he shall be no sufferer by that, nor loser by the gain of others; Be not afraid, only believe. We may suppose Jairus at a pause, whether he should ask Christ to go on or not; but have we not as much occasion for the grace of God and his consolations, and consequently of the prayers of our ministers and christian friends, when death is in the house, as when sickness is? Christ therefore soon determines this matter; "Be not afraid that my coming will be to no purpose, only believe that I will make it turn to a good account." Note, 1. We must not despair concerning our relations that are dead, sleepers for them as sleepers that should arise, and will. See what is said to Rachel, who refused to be comforted concerning her children, upon the presumption that they were not; Reftain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for there is hope in thine end, that thy children shall come again, Jer. 31. 16, 17. Therefore fear not, faint not. 2. Faith is the only remedy against disquieting grief and fear at such a time: let that silence them, and believe in Christ, and a dependence upon him, and he will do what is for the best. Believe the resurrection, and then be not afraid.

III. He went with a select company to the house where the dead child was. He had, by the crowd that attended him, given advantage to the poor woman he last healed, and, having done that, now he shook off the crowd, and suffered no man to follow him, (to follow him into the word is,) but his private discipies, Peter and James, and John; a competent number to be witnesses of the miracle, but not such a number as that his taking with him might look like vain-glory.

IV. He raised the dead child to life; the circumstances of the narrative here, are much the same as we had them in Matthew; only here we may observe,

1. That the child was extremely well beloved, for the relations and neighbours wept and waited greatly. It is very affective when that which is come forth like a flower, is so soon cut down, and wherefore before it is grown up; when that grieves us, of which we said, This same shall comfort us. 2. That it was evident beyond dispute, that the child was really and truly dead. Their laughing Christ to scorn, for saying, She is not dead, but sleepeth, was highly reprehensible, serves for the proof of this.

3. That Christ put those out as unworthy to be witnesses of the miracle, who were noisy in their sorrow, and were so ignorant in the things of God, as not to understand him when he spake of death as a sleep, or so sorrowful, as to ridicule him for it. 4. That he took the parents of the child to be witnesses of the miracle, because in it he had an eye to their faith, and designed it for their comfort, who were the true, for they were the silent, mourners.

5. That Christ raised the child to life by a word of power, which is recorded here, and recorded in Syrme, the language in which Christ spake, for the greater certainty of the thing; Talitha cumi; Damned, I say unto thee, Arise. Dr. Lightfoot saith, It was customary with the Jews, when they took the body of a sick person, to say, Arise from thy disease; by meaning, We wish thou mayest arise; but to one that was dead, Christ said, Arise from the dead; meaning, I command that thou arise; nay, there is more in it—the dead have not power to arise, therefore power goes along with this word, to make it effectual. De quad jubes, & jube quad ven—Give what thou commandest, and command when thou wilt. Christ works while he commands, and works by the command, and therefore may command what he pleaseth, even the dead to arise. Such is the gospel-call to those that are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and can no more rise from that death by their own power, than this child could; and yet that word, Awake and arise from the dead, is neither vain, nor in vain, when it follows immediately,
Christ shall give thee life, Eph. 5. 14. It is by the word of Christ that spiritual life is given. I said unto thee, Love, Ezek. 16. 6.

6. That the damsel, as soon as life returned, arose and walked, v. 42. Spiritual life will appear by our rising from the bed of sloth and carelessness, and our walking in a religious conversation, our walking up and down in Christ's name and strength; even from those that are of the age of twelve years, it may be expected that they should walk as those whom Christ has raised to life, otherwise than in the native vanity of their minds.

7. That all who saw it, and heard of it, admired the miracle, and him that wrought it; They were astonished with a great astonishment. They could not but acknowledge that there was something in it extraordinary and very great, and yet they knew not what to make of it, or to infer from it. Their wonder should have worked forward to a lively faith, but it rested in a stupid or astonishment.

8. That Christ endeavoured to conceal it; He charged them straitly that no man should know it. It was sufficiently known to a competent number, but he would not have it as yet proclaimed any further, because his own resurrection was to be the great instance of his power over death, and therefore the divulging of other instances must be reserved till that great proof was given; let one part of the evidence be kept private, till the other part, on which the main stress lies, he made ready.

9. That Christ took care something should be given her to eat. By this it appeared that she was raised to life only for a short time, but for a good state of health, that she had an appetite to her meat; even the newborn babes in Christ's house desire the sincere milk, 1 Pet. 2. 1, 2. And it is observable, that, as Christ, when at first he had made man, presently provided food for him, and food out of the earth of which he was made, (Gen. 1. 29.) so now when he had given a new life, he took care that something should be given to eat; for if he had given life, he may be trusted to give livelihood, because the life is more than meat, Matt. 6. 25. Where Christ hath given spiritual life, he will provide food for the support and nourishment of it unto life eternal, for he will never forsake, or be wanting to, the work of his own hands.

CHAP. VI.

A great variety of observable passages we have in this chapter, concerning our Lord Jesus, the substance of all which we had before in Matthew, but divers circumstances we have, which we did not there meet with. Here is I. Christ condemned by his countrymen, because he was one of them, and they knew, or thought they knew, his original, v. 1. . . . 6. II. The just power he gave his apostles over unclean spirits, and an account given of their negotiation, v. 7. . . . 13. III. A strange notion which Herod and others had of Christ, upon which occasion we have the story of the martyrdom of John Baptist, v. 14. . . . 29. IV. Christ's retirement into a desert place with his disciples; the crowds that followed him thither to receive instruction from him; and his feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, v. 30. . . . 42. V. Christ's walking upon the sea to his disciples, and the abundance of cures he wrought on the other side the water, v. 43. . . . 50.

1. And he went out from thence, and every where he went about, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching, and casting out devils. And a great multitude followed him. II. And the Sabbath-day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? And what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? 3. Is not this the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. 4. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. 5. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. 6. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.

Here,

1. Christ makes a visit to his own country, the place not of his birth, but of his education; that was Nazereth, where his relations were. He had been in danger of his life among them, (Luke 4. 29.) and yet he came among them again; so strangely doth he wait to be gracious, and seek the salvation of his enemies. Thither he went, though it was into danger, his disciples followed him; (v. 1.) for they had left all, to follow him whithersoever he went.

2. Where he preached in their synagogue, on the sabbath-day, v. 2. It seems, there was not such flocking to him there as in other places, so that he had no opportunity of preaching till they came together on the sabbath-day; and then he expounded a portion of scripture with great clearness. In religious assemblies, on sabbath-days, the word of God is to be preached according to Christ's example. We give glory to God by receiving instruction from him.

III. They could not but own that which was very honourable concerning him. 1. That he spake with great wisdom, and that that wisdom was given to him, for they knew he had no learned education. 2. That he did mighty works, did them with his own hand, for the confirming of the doctrine he taught. They acknowledged the two great proofs of the divine original of his gospel—the divine miracles that appeared in the contrivance of it, and the divine power that was exerted for the ratifying and recommending of it; and yet, though they could not deny the premises, they would not admit the conclusion.

IV. They studied to disparage him, and to raise prejudices in the minds of people against him, notwithstanding. All this wisdom, and all these mighty works, shall be of no account, because he had had a home education, had never travelled, nor been at any university, or bred up at the feet of any of their doctors; (v. 5.) Is not this the carpenter? In Matthew they upbraid him with being the carpenter's son, his supposed father Joseph being of that trade. But, it seems, they could say further. Is not this the carpenter? Our Lord Jesus, it is probable, employed him, and subscribed his name to the things he had written. But what if he entered upon his public ministry, at least, sometimes in journey-work. 1. He would thus humble himself, and make himself of no reputation, as one that had taken upon him the form of a servant, and came to minister. Thus low did our Redeemer stoop, when he came to redeem us out of our low estate.

He would thus teach us to abhor idle laboratory, and to do our work and services in the world; and rather to take up with mean and laborious employments, and such as no more is to be got by than a bare livelihood, than indulge ourselves in sloth. Nothing is more pernicious for young people than to get a habit of sauntering. The Jews had a good rule for this—that their young men, who were designed for scholars, were yet bred up to some trade, as Paul was a tent-maker, that they might
have some business to fill up their time with, and, if need were, to get their bread with. 5. He would thus put an honour upon despised mechanics, and encourage those who the labour of their hands, the Gihy great men look upon them with contempt.

Another thing they upbraided him with, was, the manner of his relations; *He is the son of Mary; his brethren and sisters are here with us; we know his family and kindred;* and therefore, though they were astonished at his doctrine, (v. 2.) yet they were offended at his person, (v. 3.) were prejudiced against him, and looked upon him with contempt; and for that reason would not receive his doctrine, though ever so well recommended. 6. Mark the thing, that his pedantry had dropped among them from the clouds, without father, without mother, and without descent, they would have entertained him with any more respect? Truly, no; for in Judea, where this was not known, that was made an objection against him; (John 9. 29.) *As for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. Obstinate unbelief will never want excuses.*

V. Let us see how Christ bore this contempt.

1. He partly excused it, as a common thing, and what might be expected, through not reasonably or justly (v. 4.) A prophet is not despised any where but in his own country. Some exceptions there may be to this rule, doubtless many have got over this prejudice, but ordinarily it holds good, that ministers are seldom so acceptable and successful in their own country as among strangers; familiarity in the younger years breeds a contempt, the advancement of one that was an inferior begots envy, and men will hardly set those among the guides of their souls, whose fathers they were ready to set with the dogs of their flock; in such a case, therefore, it must not be thought hard, it is common treatment, it was Christ's, and wisdom is profitable to direct to other soil.

2. He did some good among them, notwithstanding the sighs they put upon him, for he is kind even to the evil and unthankful; He laid his hands upon a few sick folks, and healed them. Note, It is generous, and becoming the followers of Christ, to content themselves with the pleasure and satisfaction of doing good, though they be unjustly denied the praise of it.

3. Yet he could there do no such mighty works, at least, not so many as in other places, because of the unbelief that prevailed among the people, by reason of the prejudices which their leaders instilled into them against Christ. v. 3. It is a strange expression, as if unbelief tied the hands of omnipotence itself; he would have done as many miracles there as he had done elsewhere, but he could not, because people would not make application to him, nor sue for his favours; he could have wrought them, but they forsook the honour of having them wrought for them. Note, By unbelief and contempt of Christ, men stop the current of his favours to them, and put a bar in their own door.

4. He marvelled because of their unbelief, v. 6. We never find Christ wonderning but at the faith of the Gentiles that were strangers, as the centurion, (Matth. 8. 10.) and the woman of Samaria, and the unbelief of Jews that were his own countrymen. Note, The unbelief of those that enjoy the means of grace, is a most amazing thing.

5. He went round about the villages, teaching. If we cannot do good where we would, we must do it where we can, and be glad if we may have any opportunity, even though we are not considered as capable of anything for Christ and souls. Sometimes the gospel of Christ finds better entertainment in the country villages, where there is less wealth, and pomp, and mirth, and subtlety, than in the populous cities.

6. And he calleth unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; 8. And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse: 9. But be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. 10. And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into a house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 11. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart hence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimonio against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

Here is,

1. The commission given to the twelve apostles to preach and work miracles; it is the same which we had more largely, Matth. 10. Mark doth not name them here, as Matthew doth, because he had named them before, when they were first called into fellowship with him, ch. 3. 16. Hitherto they had been conversant with Christ, and had sat in his feet, had heard his doctrine, and seen his miracles, and now he determines to make them acquainted with them; they received, that they might give, had learned, that they might teach; and therefore now he began to send them forth. They must not always be studying in the academy, to get knowledge, but they must preach in the country, to do good with the knowledge they have got. Though they were not as yet so well accomplished as they were to be, yet, according to their present ability and capacity, they must be sent out to work, and make further improvements afterward. Now, observe here,

1. That Christ sent them forth by two and two; this Mark takes notice of. They went two and two to a place, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word might be established; and that they might be company for one another when they were among strangers, and might strengthen the hands, and encourage the hearts, one of another; might help one another if any thing should be amiss, and keep one another in countenance. Every common soldier has his comrade; and it is an approved maxim, Two are better than one. Christ would thus teach his ministers to associate, and both lend and borrow help.

2. That he gave them power over unclean spirits. He commissioned them to attack the devil's kingdom, and empowered them, as a specimen of their breaking his interest in the souls of men by their doctrine, to cast him out of the bodies of those that were possessed. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that they cured diseases, and cast out devils, by the Spirit, but preached that only which they had learned from the mouth of Christ.

3. That he commanded them not to take provisions along with them, neither victuals nor money. That they might not be hindered in their work, by the care or concern of the things of this world. The poor men, men not of this world, and therefore might, with the better grace, call people off from it to another world. When afterward he bid them take purse and scrip, (Luke 22. 35.) that did not in-
timate (as Dr. Lightfoot observes) that his care of them was abstained from what it had been; but that they should meet with worse times, and worse entertainment, than they met with at their first mission. In Matthew and Luke they are forbidden to take staves with them, that is, fighting staves; but here in Mark they are bid to take nothing save a staff only, that is, a walking staff, such as pilgrims carry; and out of their own ground, yet which only, which were only the soles of shoes tied under their feet, or like pumps, or slippers; they must go in the readiest plainest dress they could, and must not so much as have two coats; for their stay abroad would be short, they must return before winter, and what they wanted, those they preached to would cheerfully accommodate them with.

4. He directed them, whatever advice they came to, to make that house their head-quarters, which happened to be their first quarters; (v. 10.) "There abide till ye depart from that place. And since ye know ye come on an errand sufficient to make you welcome, have that charity for your friends that first invited you, as to believe they do not think you harshly.

5. He pronounces a very heavy doom upon those that rejected the gospel they preached; (v. 11.) "Whoever shall not receive you, or will not so much as hear you, depart thence, (if one will not, another will,) and shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Let them know that they have had a fair offer of life and happiness made them, witness that dust; but that, since they have refused it, they cannot expect ever to have another; let them take up with their own dust, for so shall their doom be." That dust, like the dust of Egypt, (Exod. 9. 9.) shall turn into a plague to them; and their condemnation, in the great day, will be more intolerable than that of Sodom: for the angels were sent to Sodom, and were abused there; yet that would not bring on so great a guilt, and so great a ruin, as the contempt and abuse of the apostles of Christ, who bring with them the offers of gospel grace.

II. The apostles' acts, in pursuance of their commission. Though they were conscious to themselves of great weakness, and expected no secular advantage by it, yet in obedience to their Master's order, and in dependence upon his strength, they went out as Abraham, not knowing whether they went. Observe how.

1. The doctrine they preached; They preached that men should repent; (v. 12.) that they should change their minds, and reform their lives, in consideration of the near approach of the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, The great design of gospel preachers, and the great tendency of gospel preaching, should be, to bring people to repentance, to a new heart and a new way. They did not amuse people with curious speculations, but told them that they must repent of their sins and turn to God.

2. The miracles they wrought. The power Christ gave them over unclean spirits was not ineffectual, nor did they receive it in vain, but used it, for they cast out many devils; (v. 13.) and they anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them. Some think this oil was used medicinally, according to the opinion of Josephus. But I rather think it was used as a sign of miraculous healing, by the appointment of Christ, though not mentioned; and it was afterward used by those elders of the church, to whom, by the Spirit, was given the gift of healing, Jam. 5. 14. It is certain here, and therefore probable there, that anointing the sick with oil, is appropriated to that extraordinary power which is long ceased, and therefore that sign must cease with it.

14. And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. 15. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. 16. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. 17. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. 18. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. 19. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: 20. For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. 21. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; 22. And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. 23. And he swears unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. 24. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. 25. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. 26. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. 27. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, 28. And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. 29. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Here is,

1. The wild notions that the people had concerning our Lord Jesus, v. 15. His own countrymen could believe nothing great concerning him, because they knew his poor kindred; but others, that were not under the power of that prejudice against him, were yet willing to believe any thing rather than the truth—that he was the Son of God, and the true Messiah: they said, He is Elias, whom they expected; or, He is a Prophet, one of the Old Testament prophets raised to life, and returned to this world; or, as one of the prophets, a prophet now
I. The opinion of Herod concerning him.  He heard of his name and fame, of what he said, and what he did; and he said, "It is certainly John Baptist, Luke 14. As sure as we are here, it is John whom I beheaded, v. 16. He is risen from the dead; and though while he was with us he did no miracle, yet, now returned from a while to another world, he is come again with greater power, and now mighty works do shew forth themselves in him."

Note, 1. Where there is an idle faith, there is commonly a working fancy. The people said, It is a prophet risen from the dead; Herod said, It is John Baptist risen from the dead. It seems by that, the rising of a prophet from the dead, to do mighty works, was a thing expected, and was thought neither impossible nor improbable, and it was now readily suspected when it was not true; but afterward, when it was true concerning Christ, and a truth undeniable evidenced, yet then it was obstinately gainsaid and denied. Those who most wilfully disbelieve the truth, are commonly most credulous of errors and fancies.

2. They who fight against the cause of God, will find, after all, that he can even work their own selves conquerors; the sword cannot gain their point, for the word of the Lord endures for ever. They who rejoiced when the enemies were slain, fretted as much when, in three or four days, they rose again in their successors, Rev. 11. 10, 22. The impotent, unenforced sinner, that escapeth the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha say.

3. A guilty conscience needs no accuser or tormentor but itself. Herod charges himself with the murder of John, which perhaps no one else dare charge him with: I beheaded him; and the terror of it made him imagine that Christ was John risen. He feared John while he lived, and now, when he thought he had got clear of him, fears him ten times worse when he is dead. One might as well be haunted with ghosts and furies, as with the horrors of an accusing conscience; those, therefore, who would keep an undisturbed peace, must keep an undenied conscience, Acts 24. 16.

4. There may be the terrors of strong conviction, where there is not the truth of a saving conversion. This Herod, who had this notion concerning Christ, afterward sought to kill him, Luke 13. 31. and did set him at nought; Luke 23. 11. so that he will not be persuaded, though it be by one risen from the dead; no, not by a John the Baptist risen from the dead.

III. A narrative of Herod's putting John Baptist to death, which is brought in upon this occasion, as it was in Matthew. And here we may observe,

1. The great value and veneration which Herod had sometime had for John Baptist, which is related only by this evangelist, v. 20. Here we see what a great way a man may go toward grace and glory, and yet come short of both, and perish eternally.

(1.) He feared John, knowing the good that man, and a holy. It is possible that a man may have a great reverence for good men, and especially for good ministers, yea, and for that in them that is good, and yet himself be a bad man. Observe, [1.] John was a just man, and a holy; to make a complete good man, both justice and holiness are necessary; holiness toward God, and justice toward men. John was mortified to this world, and so was a good friend to justice and holiness. [2.] He feared John, knowing the good that man, and a holy. He knew this, not only by common fame, but by personal acquaintance with him. Those that have but little justice and holiness themselves, may yet discern it with respect in others. And, [3.] He therefore feared him, he honoured him. Holiness and justice command veneration, and many that are not good themselves, have respect for those that are.

(2.) He observed him; he sheltered him from the malice of his enemies; (so some understand it;) or, rather, he had a regard to his exemplary conversation, and took notice of that in him that was praiseworthy, and commended him in the hearing of those whose witness was against him; and he made it appear that he observed what John said and did.

(3.) He heard him preach; which was great condescension, considering how mean John's appearance was. To hear Christ himself preach in our streets, will be but a poor plea in the great day, Luke 13. 26.

(4.) He did many of those things which John, in his preaching, taught him. He was not only a hearer of the word, and a doer of part of the work. Some sins which John, in his preaching, reproved, he confessed, and some duties he bound himself to; but it will not suffice to do many things, unless we have respect to all the commandments.

(5.) He heard him gladly. He did not hear him with terror as Felix heard Paul, but heard him with pleasure. There is a flashy joy, which a hypocrite may have in his sin, but a just man will have a lovely song, Ezekiel 33. 32. and the stone ground received the word with joy, Luke 8. 13.

2. John's faithfulness to Herod, in telling him of his faults. Herod had married his brother Philip's wife, v. 17. All the country, no doubt, cried shame on him for it, and reproached him for it; but John reproved him, told him plainly, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. This was Herod's own iniquity, which he could not have when he did not know the things that John taught him; and therefore John tells him of this particularly. Though he were a king, he would not spare him, any more than Elijah did Ahab, when he said, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? Though John had an interest in him, and he might fear this plain dealing would destroy his interest, yet he reproved him; for faithful are the wounds of a friend; Prov. 27. 6. and though there are some swine that will turn again, and rend those that cast pearls before them, yet, ordinarily, he that rebuketh a man, (if the person reproved has any thing of the understanding of a man,) afterward shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue, Prov. 28. 23. Though it was dangerous to offend Herod, and much more to offend Herodias, yet John would run the hazard rather than be wanting in his duty. Note, Those ministers that would be found faithful, and work of God, must not be afraid of the face of man. If we seek to please men, further than is for their spiritual good, we are not the servants of Christ.

3. The malice which Herodias bore to John for this; v. 19. She had a quarrel with him, and would have killed him; but when she could not obtain that, she got him committed to prison; v. 17. Herod respected him, till he touched him in his Herodias. Many that pretend to love peace, and to seek no quarrels, are only, and love good preaching, if it keep far enough from their beloved sin; but if that be touched, they cannot hear it. No marvel if the world hate those who testify of it that its works are evil. But it is better that sinners persecute ministers now for their faithfulness, than curse them eternally for their unfaithfulness.

4. The plot laid to take off John's head. I am apt to think that Herodias was the instigator, notwithstanding his pretences to be displeased and surprised, and that the thing was concerted between him and Herodias; for it is said to be when a convenience day was come. v. 21. fit for such a purpose.

(1.) There must be a ball at court, upon the king's birthday, and a supper prepared for his lords, high captains, and chief estates of office. (2.) To grace
the solemnity, the daughter of Herodias must dance publicly, and Herod must take on him to be wonderfully charmed with her dancing; and if he be, they that sat with him, cannot but, in compliment to him, be so too. (3.) The king hereupon must make her an extravagant promise, to give her whatever she would ask; but, after all, he would only ask; and yet, that, if rightly understood, would not have reached the end designed, for John Baptist's head was worth more than his whole kingdom. This promise is bound with an oath, that no room might be left to fly off from it; He swears to her, Whatever-than shalt ask, I will give. I can scarcely think he would have made such an unlimited promise, if his mind had not been made up to give. But she, being instructed by Herodias her mother, asked the head of John Baptist; and she must have it brought her in a charger, as a pretty thing for her to play with; (v. 24. 25.) and there must be no delay, no time lost, she must have it by and by. (5.) Herod granted it, and the execution was done immediately, while the company were together, which we can scarcely think the king would have done, if he had not determined the matter before. But he takes on him, [1.] To be very backward to it, and that he would not for all the world have done it, if he had not been surprised into such a promise: The king was exceeding sorry, that is, he seemed to be so, he said he was so, he looked as if he had been so; but it was all sham and grimace, he was ready; and had formed a pretence to get John out of the way. Quint quem desistis, declare, quid regnar—The man who cannot dissemble, knows not how to reign. And yet he was not without sorrow for it; he could not do it but with great regret and reluctance; natural conscience will not suffer men to sin easily; the very commission of it is vexations; what then will the reflection upon it be? [2.] He takes on him to be very sensible of the violation of his oath; whereas, if the damsel had asked but a fourth part of his kingdom, I doubt not but he would have found out a way to evade his oath. The promise was rashly made, and could not bind him to do an unrighteous thing. Sinful oaths must be repented of, and therefore not performed; for repentance is the undoing of what we have done amiss, as far as is in our power. When Theodosius the emperor was wrangling with his suitor, a promise, he answered, I said it, but did not promise it if it be unjust. If we may suppose that Herod knew nothing of the design when he made that rash promise, it is probable that he was hurried into the doing of it by those about him, only to carry on the humour; for he did it for their sakes, who sat with him, whose company he was proud of, and therefore would do any thing to gratify them. Thus do princes make themselves slaves to those whose respect they covet, and both value and secure themselves by. None of Herod's subjects stood in more awe of him than he did of his lords, high captains, and chief estates. The king sent an executioner, a soldier of his guard. Bloody tyrants have executioners ready to obey their most cruel and unrighteous commands. Thus Saul has a Doeg at hand, to fall upon the priests of the Lord, when his own footsteps declined it. 5. The effect of this, is, (1.) That Herod's wicked court is all in triumphant, because this prophet tormented them; the head is made a present of to the damsel; and by her to her mother, v. 28. (2.) That John Baptist's sacred college is all in tears; the disciples of John little thought of this; but, when they heard of it, they came, and shewed the king his coloured corpse, and laid it in a tomb; where Herod, if he had pleased, might have found it, when he frightened himself with the ecstasy that John Baptist was risen from the dead.

30. And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. 31. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. 32. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. 33. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and overtook them, and came together unto him. 34. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. 35. And when the day was far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a desert place, and now the time is far passed: 36. Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. 37. He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? 38. He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? and go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. 39. And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. 40. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. 41. And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave them to his disciples, to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. 42. And they did all eat, and were filled. 43. And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. 44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

In these verses, we have,

I. The return to Christ of the apostles whom he had sent forth, (v. 7.) to preach, and work miracles. They had dispersed themselves into several quarters of the country for some time, but when they had made good several their appointments, by consent they gathered themselves together, to compare notes, and came to Jesus, to the Centre of their unity, to give him an account of what they had done, pursuant to their commission: as the servant that was sent to invite to the feast, and had received answers from the guests, came, and showed his lord all these things, so did the apostles here; they told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. Ministers are accountable both for what they do, and for what they teach; and must both watch over their own souls, and watch for
the souls of others, as those that must give account, Heb. 13. 17. Let them not either do any thing, or teach any thing, but what they are willing should be related and repeated to the Lord Jesus. It is a comfort to faithful ministers, when they can appeal to Christ concerning their doctrine and manner of life, both which, perhaps, have been misrepresented by men; and he gives them leave to tell him, and declare before him, to tell him all things, what treatment they have met with, what success, and what disappointment.

II. The tender care Christ took for their repose, after the fatigue they had; (v. 31.) He said unto them, perceiving them to be almost spent, and out of breath, Come ye yourselves apart, into a desert place, and rest awhile. It should seem that John’s discourses from the cross are recorded, as the history of his master’s death, much about the same time, that his own disciples came to him with the report of their negociation. Note, Christ takes cognizance of the frights of some, and the toils of others, of his disciples, and provides suitable relief for both, rest for those that are tired, and refuge for those that are terrified. With what kindness and compassion doth Christ say to them, Come, and rest! Not, ‘They have brought no shepherds upon the stretch of business, but have bodies that require some relaxation, some breathing time; we shall not be able to serve God without ceasing, day and night, till we come to heaven, where they never rest from praising him, Rev. 4. 8. And the Lord is for the body, considers its frame, and not only allows it time for rest, but puts it in mind of resting. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers. Return to thy rest. And those that work diligently and faithfully, may cheerfully retire to rest. The sleep of the labouring man is sweet. But observe, 1. Christ calls them to come themselves apart; for, if they had any body with them, they would have something to say, or something to do, for their good; if they must rest, they must be alone. 2. He invites them not to some pleasant country-seat, where there were fine buildings and fine gardens, but into a desert place, where the accommodations were very poor, and which was fitted by nature only, and not by art, for quietness and rest. But it was of a piece with all the other circumstances he was in; no wonder that he who had but a ship for his preaching place, had but a desert for his resting place. 3. He calls them only to rest a while; they must not expect to rest long, only to get breath, and then go to work again. There is no remainder rest for the people of God till they come to heaven. 4. The reason given for this is, not so much because they had been in constant work, but because they now were in a constant hurry; so that they had not their work in any order; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. Let but proper time be set, and kept, for every thing, and a great deal of work may be done with a great deal of ease; but if men be continually hindered in their work, going, and no rule or method he observed, a little work will not be done without a deal of trouble. 5. They withdrew, accordingly, by ship; not crossing the water, but making a coasting voyage to the desert of Bethsaida, v. 32. Going by water was much less toilsome than going by land would have been. They went away privately, that they might be by themselves. The most public persons cannot long enjoy a season of repose. 

III. The diligence of the people to follow him. It was made too so, when he and his disciples were desirous, for such good reason, to retire; and yet they are not blamed for it, nor bid to go back, but bid welcome. Note, A tallow in good manners will easily be excused in those who follow Christ, if it be but made up in a fulness of good affections. They followed him of their own accord, without being called upon. Here is no time set, no meeting appointed, no bell tolled; yet they thus fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows. They followed him out of the town, rented their houses and shops, their callings and affairs, to hear him preach. They followed him afoot, though he was gone by sea, and so, to try them, seemed to put a slight upon them, and to endeavour to shake them off; yet they stuck to him. They ran afoot, and made such haste, that they went out with the disciples, and came together to him with an appetite to the word of God. Nay, they followed him, though it was into a desert place, despising the inconvenience. The presence of Christ will turn a wilderness into a paradise.

IV. The entertainment Christ gave them; (v. 34.) When he saw much people, instead of being moved with displeasure, because they disturbed him when he desired to be private, as many a man, many a good man, would have been, he was moved with compassion toward them, and looked upon them with concern, because they were as sheep having no shepherd, were not disposed to be well-inclined, and manageable as sheep, and willing to be taught, but they had no shepherd, none to lead and guide them in the right way, none to feed them with good doctrine: and therefore, in compassion to them, he not only healed their sick, as it is in Matthew, but he taught them many things, and we may be sure that they were all true and good, and fit for them to learn.

The provision he made for them all; all his hearers he generously made his guests, and treated them at a splendid entertainment: so it might truly be called, because a miraculous one.

1. The disciples moved that they should be sent home. When the day was far spent, and night drew on, they said, This is a desert place, and much time is now passed; send them away to buy food, v. 35, 36. This the disciples suggested to Christ; but we do not find that the multitude themselves did. They did not say, Send us away, (though they could not but be hungry,) for they esteemed the words of Christ’s mouth more than their necessary food, and forgot themselves when they were hearing him; but the disciples thought it would be a kindness to them to dismiss them. Note, Willing minds will do more, and hold out longer, in that which is good, than one would expect from the weakest of Christ’s people, they should all be fed; (v. 37.) Give ye them to eat. Though their crowding after him and his disciples hindered them from eating, (v. 31.) yet he would not therefore, to be even with them, send them away fasting, but to teach us to be kind to those who are rude to us, he ordered provision to be made for them; that bread which Christ and his disciples took with them into the desert, that they might make a quick meal of it, and so refresh themselves, he will have them to partake of. The Lord will supply the spiritual food of his word, and then he took care that they should not want corporal food. The way of duty, as it is the way of safety, so it is the way to supply. Let God alone to fill the pools with rain from heaven, and so to make a well, even in the valley of Baca, for those that are going Zion-ward, from strength to strength, Ps. 23. 2. This was he greatly pleased in, and not merely showed kindness to God’s faithful servants, but has refreshed many with seasonable and surprising relief. It has often been seen in the mount of the Lord, Jehovah-jireh, that the Lord will provide for those that wait on him.

2. The disciples objected against it as impracticable; Shall we go, and buy two hundred penny-
worth of bread, and give them to eat? Thus, through the weakness of their faith, instead of waiting for divine provisions from Christ, they perplexed, by their own projects of their own. It was a question whether they had two hundred pence with them, and whether the country would, of a sudden, afford so much bread, if they had, and whether that would suffice so great a company; but thus Moses objected, (Numb. 11. 22.) Shall the flock or herds be slain for them? Christ would let them see their folly in foreboding themselves, that he might put the greater value upon his provision for them.

4. Christ effected it, to universal satisfaction. They had brought with them five loaves, for the victualling of their ship, and two fishes, perhaps, they caught as they came along; and that is the oill of fare. This was but a little for Christ and his disciples, and yet this they must give away, as the wind1 put it to use, as the churches of Macedonia’s deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. We often find Christ entertained at other people’s tables, dining with one friend, and supping with another: but here we have him supping a great many at his own charge, which shews, that, when others ministered to him of their substance, it was not because he could not supply himself otherwise; (if he were hungry, he needed not tell them, that he was hungry, but he gave a promise, that he had been pleased to submit to, nor was it acceptable to the intention of miracles, that he should work them for himself. Observe,

(1.) The provision was ordinary. Here were no rarities, no varieties, though Christ, if he had pleased, could have furnished his table with them; but thus he would teach us to be content with food convenient for us, and not to be desirous of dainties. If we have for necessity, it is better, though we have not for delicacy and curiosity. God, in love, gives meat for our hunger; but, in wrath, gives meat for our lusts. Ps. 78. 18. The promise to them that fear the Lord, is, that verily they shall be fed: he doth not say, They shall be feasted. If Christ and his disciples took up with mean things, surely we may.

(2.) The guests were orderly; for they sat down by companies upon the green grass, (v. 39.) they sat down in ranks by hundred, and by fifties, (v. 40.) that the provision might the more easily and regularly be distributed among them; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. Thus care was taken that every one should have enough, and none be overlooked, nor any have more than was fitting.

(3.) A blessing was cried upon the meat. He looked to heaven, and blessed. Christ did not give one of his disciples to crave a blessing, but did it himself; (v. 41.) and by virtue of this blessing the bread strangely multiplied, and so did the fishes, for they did all eat, and were filled, though they were to the number of five thousand, v. 42, 44. This miracle was significant, and shews that Christ came into the world to be the great Feeder as well as the great Teacher. It shews not only his power, but to provide and nourish, spiritual life; and in him there is enough for all that come to him, enough to fill the soul, to fill the treasures; none are sent empty away from Christ, but those that come to him full of themselves.

(4.) Care was taken of the fragments that remained, with which they filled twelve baskets. Though Christ had bread enough at command, he would hereby teach us, not to make waste of any of God’s good creatures: remembering how many there are that do want, and that we know not but we may some time or other want such fragments as we throw away.

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. 46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. 47. And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and he alone on the land. 48. And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them. 49. But when they saw him walking upon the sea, they supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out: 50. For they all saw him, and were troubled. And immediately he talked with them, and saith unto them, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. 51. And he went up unto them into the ship; and the wind ceased: and they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. 52. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened. 53. And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. 54. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, 55. And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. 56. And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

This passage of story we had, Matth. 14. 22, &c. only what was there related concerning Peter, is omitted here. Here we have,

I. The dispersing of the assembly; Christ constrained his disciples to go before him by ship to Bethsaida, intending to follow them, as they supposed, by land. The people were loath to scatter, so that it cost him some time and pains to send them away. For now that they had got a good supper, they were in no haste to leave him. But as long as we are here in this world, we have no continuing city, no, not communion with Christ. The everlasting feast is reserved for the future state.

II. Christ departed into a mountain, to pray. Observe, He was constrained, though he had so much preaching work upon his hands, yet he was much in prayer; he prayed often, and prayed long, which is an encouragement to us to depend upon the intercession he is making for us at the right hand of the Father, that continual intercession. 2. He went alone, to pray; though he needed not to retire for the avoiding either of discretion or of ostentation, yet, to set us an example, and to encourage us in our secret addresses to God, he prayed alone, and, for want of a closet, went up into a mountain, to pray. A good man is never less alone than when alone with God.

III. The disciples were in distress at sea: The wind was contrary, (v. 48.) so that they toiled in rowing, and could not get forward. This was a spe
ceman of the hardships they were to expect, when hereafter he should send them abroad to preach the gospel; it would be like sending them to sea at this time with the wind in their teeth; they must expect to toil in rowing, they must work hard to strive against so strong a stream; they must likewise expect to be tossed with waves, to be prosecuted by their enemies; and by exposing them now he intended to train them up for such difficulties, that they might learn to endure hardness. The church is often like a ship at sea, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; we may have Christ for us, and yet wind and tide against us; but it is a comfort to Christ's disciples in a storm, that their Master is in the heavenly mount, interceding for them, and that he is a kind visit upon the water. He could have checked the winds, where he was, or have sent an angel to their relief; but he chose to help them in the most endeavoring manner possible, and therefore came to them himself.

1. He did not come till the fourth watch of the night, not till after three o'clock in the morning; but then he came. Note, If Christ's visits of his people be deferred long, yet at length he will come, and the perseverance of his people for them is so much the more seasonable. Though the salvation tarry, yet we must wait for it; at the end it shall speak, in the fourth watch of the night, and not lie.

2. He came, walking upon the waters. The sea was now tossed with waves, and yet Christ came, walking upon it; for though the floods lift up their voices, the Lord on high is mighty, Ps. 93. 3, 4. No difficulties can obstruct Christ's gracious appearances for his people, when the set time is come. He will either find, or force, a way through the most tempestuous sea, for their deliverance, Ps. 42. 7, 8.

3. He would have passed by them; that is, he set his face, and steered his course, as if he would have gone further, and took no notice of them; this he did, to awaken them to call to him. Note, Providence, when it is acting designedly and directly for the succour of God's people, yet sometimes seems as if it were giving them the go-by, and regarded not their case. They thought that he would, but we may be sure that he would not, have passed by them.

4. They were frightened at the sight of him, supposing him to have been an apparition; They all see him, and were afraid, Matt. 14. 27. Believing he had been some daemon, or evil genius, that haunted them, and raised this storm. We often perplex and frighten ourselves with phantoms, the creatures of our own fancy and imagination.

5. He encouraged them, and silenced their fears, by making himself known to them; he talked familiarly with them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid. Note, (1.) We know not Christ till he is known to us, and not till he reveals himself, as it is by faith, 1 Thess. 1. 5. (2.) I and Master, I your Friend, I your Redeemer and Saviour. It is I, that came to a troublesome earth, and now to a tempestuous sea, to look after you. (2.) The knowledge of Christ, as he is in himself, and near to us, is enough to make the disciples of Christ cheerful even in a storm, and no longer fearful. If it be so, why am I thus? If it is Christ that is with thee, be of good cheer, be not afraid. Our fears are soon banished, if our mistakes be but rectified, especially our mistakes concerning Christ. See Gen. 21. 19. 2 Kings 6. 15—17. Christ's presence with us, in a stormy day, is enough to make us of good cheer, though clouds and darkness be round about us. He said, It is I. He doth not tell them who he was, (there was no occasion,) they knew his voice, as the sheep know the voice of their own shepherd, John 10. 4. How readily doth the spouse say, once and again, It is the voice of my Beloved! Cant. 2. 8.—9.

2. He said, I Peter—im—I am he; or, I am: it is God's name, when he comes to deliver Israel, Exod. 3. 14. So it is Christ's, now that he comes to deliver his disciples. When Christ said to those that came to apprehend him by force, I am he, they were struck down by it, John 18. 6. He saith to these, that come to apprehend him by faith, I am he, they are raised up by it, and comforted.

6. He went up to them into the ship, embarked in the same bottom with them, and so made them perfectly easy. Let them but have their Master with them, and all is well. And as soon as he was come into the ship, the wind ceased. In the former storm that was upon the sea, he said, Be of good cheer; but now he saith to them, He who had mocked the winds, and said to the sea, Peace, be still; (ch. 4. 39,) but here we read of no such formal command given, only the wind ceased all of a sudden. Note, Our Lord Jesus will be sure to do his own work always effectually, though not always alike solemnly, and with observation. Though we hear not the command given, yet, if thus the wind cease, and we have the comfort of a calm, say, It is because Christ is in the ship, and his decree is gone forth, or ever we are aware, Cant. 6. 12. When we come with Christ to heaven, the wind ceaseth presently; there are no storms in the upper region.

7. They were more surprised and astonished at this miracle than did become them, and there was that at the bottom of their astonishment, which was really culpable; They were sore amazed in themselves, were in a perfect ecstasy; as if it were a new and incredible thing, as if Christ had never been the like before, and they had no reason to expect he should do it now; they ought to admire the power of Christ, and to be confirmed hereby in their belief of his being the Son of God; but why all this confusion about it? It was because they considered not the miracle of the loaves; had they given that its due weight, they would not have been so much surprised at this; for his multiplying the bread was as great an instance of his power as his walking on the water. They were strangely stupid and unthinking, and their heart was hardened, or else they would not have thought it a thing incredible that Christ should command a calm. It is for want of a right understanding of Christ's former works, that we are transported at the thought of his present works, as if there never were the like before.

V. When they came to the land of Gennesaret, which lay farther, they came into Capernaum, the people bid them very welcome; The men of that place presently knew Jesus. (v. 54.) and knew what mighty works he did wherever he came, what a universal Healer he was; they knew likewise that he used to stay but a little while at a place, and therefore they were concerned to improve the opportunity of this kind visit which he made them; They ran through that whole region round about, to carry the tidings, and persuade the people to receive him, v. 55. They laid the sick in the streets, to be in his way, and begged leave for them to touch if it were but the border of his garment, as the woman who had a bloody flux. But though this method of application was first brought in; and as many as touched were made whole. We do not find that they were desirous to be taught by him, only to be healed. If ministers could now cure people's bodily diseases, what multitudes would attend them? But it is sad to think how much more concerned the most of men are about their bodies than about their souls.
CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's dispute with the Scribes and Pharisees about eating meat with unwashed hands; v. 1 . . 13. and the needful instructions he gave to the people upon that occasion, and further explained to his disciples, v. 14 . . 23. II. His curing of the woman of Canaan's daughter that was possessed, v. 24 . . 30. III. The relief of a man that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech, v. 31 . . 37.

I. THEN came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the Scribes, which came from Jerusalem. 2. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashed, hands, they found fault. 3. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands off, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. 4. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. 5. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? 6. He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. 7. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 8. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. 9. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. 10. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: 11. But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. 12. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; 13. Making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. 14. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: 15. There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him: 19. Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20. And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22. Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

One great design of Christ's coming, was, to set aside the ceremonial law which God made, and to put an end to it: to make way for which, he begins with the ceremonial law which men had made, and added to the law of God's making, and discharges his disciples from the obligation of that; which here he doth fully, upon occasion of the offence which the Pharisees took at them for the violation of it. These Pharisees and Scribes, with whom he had this argument, are said to come from Jerusalem down to Galilee—perhaps from a hundred miles, to pick quarrels with our Saviour there, where they supposed him to have the greatest interest and reputation. Had they come so far to be taught by him, their zeal had been commendable; but to come so far to oppose him, and to check the progress of his gospel, was great wickedness. It should seem that the Scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem pretended not only to a preeminence above, but to an authority over, the country clergy, and therefore kept up their visitations, and sent inquisitors among them, as they did to John when he appeared, John 1. 19.

Now, in this passage, we may observe, I. What the tradition of the elders was: by it all were enjoined to wash their hands before meat; a cleanly custom, and no harm in it; yet as much to be over-nice in it, as to be scrupulous about religious business in the earth, as of the earth: but they placed religion in it, and would not leave it indifferent, as it was in its own nature; people were at their liberty to do it or not to do it; but they interposed their authority, and commanded all to do it, upon pain of excommunication; this they kept up as a tradition of the elders. The Papists pretend to a zeal for the authority and antiquity of the church and its canons, and talk much of councils and fathers, when really it is nothing but a zeal for their own wealth, interest, and dominion, that governs them; and so it was with the Pharisees.

We have here an account of the practice of the Pharisees and all the Jews, v. 3. 4. 1. They washed their hands oft; they washed them, σαφείαν; the critics find a great deal of work about that word, some making it to denote Jewish frequency of their washing; (so we render it;) others think it signifies the pains they took in washing their hands; they washed with great care, they washed their hands to their wrists; (so some;) they lifted up their hands when they were wet, that the water might run to their elbows. 2. They particularly washed before they ate bread; that is, before they sat down to a solemn meal; for that was the rule; they must be sure to wash before they eat the bread on which they hope to receive a blessing. "Whosoever eats the bread over which they recite the benediction, Blessed be he that produceth bread, must wash his hands before and after," or else he was thought to be de
filed. 3. They took special care, when they came in from the markets, to wash their hands; from the judgement seat, so that nothing should infect them to uncleanse where there were people of all sorts; and, it might be supposed, some heathen or Jews under a ceremonial pollution, by coming near to whom they thought themselves polluted; saying, **Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou**, Isa. 65. 5. They say, **The rule of the rubins was—that, if they washed their hands well in the morning, the first thing they did, it was, concerning the place of dinner, if it happened thus; but, if they went into company, they must not, at their return, either eat or pray till they had washed their hands; thus the elders gained a reputation among the people for sanctity, and thus they exercised and kept up an authority over their consciences. 4. They added to this the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, which they suspected had been made use of by heathens, or persons polluted; till, they said, the very tables on which they ate their meat. There were many cases in which, by the law of Moses, washings were appointed; but they added to them, and enforced the observation of their own impositions as much as of God's institutions.**

II. What the practice of Christ's disciples was; they knew what the law was, and the common usage; but those respecting themselves were not so well, that they could not be bound up by it; they ate bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, v. 2. Eating with unwashed hands, they called eating with defiled hands; thus men keep up their superstitious vanities by putting every thing into an ill name that contradicts them. The disciples knew (it is probable) that the Pharisees had their eye upon them, and yet they would not honour them by a compliance with their traditions, but took their liberty as at other times, and ate bread with unwashed hands; and herein their righteousness, however it might seem to come short, did really exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, Matth. 5. 20.

III. The offence which the Pharisees took at this; They found fault; (v. 2.) they censured them as profane, and men of a loose conversation, or rather as men that would not submit to the power of the civil authority, and ceremonies, and therefore rebellious, factious, and schismatical. They brought a complaint against them to their Master, expecting that he should check them, and order them to conform; for they that are fond of their own inventions and impositions, are commonly ready to appeal to Christ, as if he should countenance them, and as if his authority must interpose for the enforcing of them, and the rebuking of those that do not, or persist not in them, they so to do. Why do not thy disciples do as we do? (Though that is what they meant, coveting to make themselves the standard.) But why do not they walk according to the tradition of the elders? v. 5. To which it was easy to answer, that, by receiving the doctrine of Christ, they had more understanding than all their teachers, yea, more than the ancients.**

IV. Christ's vindication of them; in which, 1. He argues with the Pharisees concerning the authority by which this ceremony was imposed; and they were the fittest to be discoursed with, concerning that, who were the great sticklers for it: but this he did not speak of publicly to the multitude, (as appears by his calling the people to him, v. 14.) lest he should have seemed to stir them up to faction and discontent at their governors; but specifying it to the scribes and Pharisees; for the rule is, **Sustin cuique—Let every one have his own.**

(1.) He reproves them for their hypocrisy in pretending to honour God, when really they had no such design in their religious observances; (v. 6, 7.) They honour me with their life, they pretend it is for the glory of God that they impose those things, distinguishing themselves from the heathen; but really their heart is far from God, and is governed by nothing in ambition and covetousness. They would be thought hereby to appropriate themselves as a holy people to the Lord their God, when really it is the farthest thing from their thought. They rested in the outside of all their religious exercises, and their hearts were not right with God in them, and this was, was gloried in, and prized in vain; for neither was he pleased with such sham devotions, nor were they profited by them.

(2.) He reproves them for placing religion in the inventions and injunctions of their elders and rulers; They taught for doctrines the traditions of men. When they should have been pressing upon people the great principles of religion, they were enforcing the canons of their church, and judged of people being Jews or no, according as they did, or did not, conform to them, without any consideration had, whether they lived in obedience to God's laws or no. It was true there were divers washings imposed by the law of Moses, (Heb. 9. 10.) which were intended to signify that inward purification of the heart from worldly fleshly lusts, which God requires as absolutely necessary to our communion with him; but their keeping up of the older, and making it, in the spirit of a pharisaical pride, or some curiously added to the ceremony, and were very nice in washing pots and cups; and observe, he adds, Many other such like things ye do, v. 8. Note, Superstition is an endless thing. If one human invention and institution be admitted, though seemingly ever so innocent, as this of washing hands, behold, a troop comes, a door is opened for many other such things.

(3.) He reproves them for having aside the commandment of God, and overlooking that, not urging that in their preaching, and in their discipline conviving at the violation of that, as if that were no longer of force, v. 8. Note, It is the mischief of impositions, that too often they who are zealous for them, have little zeal for the essential duties of religion, but can contentedly see them laid aside. Nay, they rejected the commandment of God, v. 9. that it is a thing of no effect, and even by your traditions make the word of God of no effect, v. 13. God's statutes shall not only be forgotten, as antiquated obsolete laws, but they shall in effect stand repealed, that their traditions may take place. They were intrusted to expand the law, and to enforce it; and under pretence of using that power, they violated the law, and dissolved the bonds of it; destroying the text with the comment. This he gives them a particular instance of, and a flagrant one—God commanded children to honour their parents, not only by the law of Moses, but, antecedent to that, by the law of nature; and whose revileth, or speaketh evil of, father or mother, let him die the death, v. 4. Hence it is easy to infer, that it is the duty of children, if their parents be poor, to relieve them, according to their ability: and if those children are worthy to die, that curse their parents, much more those that starve them. But if a man will but confine himself, in all points, to the tradition of the elders, they will find him out an expedient by which he may be discharged from this obligation, v. 11. If his parents be in want, and he has wherewithal to help them, but has no mind to do it, let him swear by the Corban, that is, by the gold of the temple, and the gift without, so that if those children should not be profited by him, that he will not relieve them; and, if they ask any thing of him, let him tell them this, and it is as if by the obligation of this wicked vow he had discharged himself from the obligation of God's holy law; thus
Dr. Hammond understands it: and it is said to be an ancient canon of the rabbins. That vows take place in things commanded by the law, as well as in things indifferent; so that, if a man makes a vow which cannot be ratified without breaking a commandment, the vow must be ratified, and the commandment violated; so Dr. Whitby. Such doctrine as this the Papists teach, discountenancing all obligation to their parents by their monastic vows, and their entrance into religion, as they call it. He concludes, And many such like things do ye. Where will men stop, when once they have made the word of God give way to their tradition? These eager imposers of such ceremonies, at first only made light of God's commandments, in comparison with their tradition; but, like Papists, they proceed, if they stand in competition with them. All this, in effect, Isaiah prophesied of them; what he said of the hypocrites of his own day, was applicable to the Scribes and Pharisees, v. 6. Note, When we see, and complain of, the wickedness of the present times, yet we do not inquire wisely of that matter, if we say, that all the former days were better than these, Eccl. 7. 10. The worst of hypocrites and evil doers, scarce had their predecessors.

2. He instructs the people concerning the principles upon which this ceremony was grounded. It was requisite that this part of his discourse should be public, for it related to daily practice, and was designed to rectify a great mistake which the people were led into by their elders; he therefore called the people unto him, (v. 14.) and bid them hear and understand. Not enough for the common people to hear, but they must understand what they hear. When Christ would run down the tradition of the Pharisees about washing before meat, he strikes at the opinion which was the root of it. Note, Corrupt customs are best cured by rectifying corrupt notions.

Now that which he goes about to set them right in, is, what the pollution is, which we are in danger of being damaged by, v. 15. (1.) Not by the meat we eat, though it be eaten with unwashed hands; that is but from without, and goes through a man. But, (2.) It is by the breaking out of the corruption that is in our hearts; the mind and conscience are defiled, guilt is contracted, and we become odious in the sight of God, by that which comes out of us; our wicked thoughts and affections, words and actions, those things which our souls are, Our care must therefore be, to wash our hearts from all unrighteousness.

3. He gives his disciples, in private, an explication of the instructions he gave the people. They asked him, when they had him by himself, concerning the parable; (v. 17.) for to them, it seems, it was a parable. Now, in answer to their inquiry, (1.) He reproves their dullness; "Are ye so without understanding also? Are ye dull also, as dull as the people that cannot understand, as dull as the Pharisees that will not? Are ye so dull?" He doth not expect they should understand every thing; "But are ye so weak as not to understand this?" (2.) He explains this truth to them, that they might perceive it, and then they would believe it, for it carried its own evidence along with it. Some truths prove themselves, if they be but rightly explained and understood, which cannot be understood, as dull seen. Pharisees that will not? Are ye so dull?" He doth not expect they should understand every thing; "But are ye so weak as not to understand this?"

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24. And from hence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it; but he could not be hid. 25. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet: 26. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophcenian by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. 27. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. 28. And she answered and said unto him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. 29. And he said unto her, For this saying go out from the heart, the corrupt heart, that defiles us. As by the ceremonial law, whatsoever (almost) comes out of a man, defiles him, (Lev. 15. 2. Dent. 23. 13.) so what comes out from the mind of a man, is that which defiles him before God, and calls for a religious washing; (v. 21.) From within, out of the heart of men, which they boast of the goodness of, he and think is the best part of them, that serves to defiles, proceeds, thence comes all the mischief. As a corrupt fountain sends forth corrupt streams, so doth a corrupt heart send forth corrupt reasonings, corrupt appetites and passions, and all those wicked words and actions which are produced by them. Divers particulars are specified, as in Matthew; we had one there, which is not here, and that is this, that they destroy the good name of God and of his law, and do not let him have his name and authority.
thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. 30. And when she was come to his house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

See here, 1. How humbly Christ was pleased to conceal himself. 2. The power man was so far rid of as he was in Galilee, and therefore, to teach us, though not to decline any opportunity of doing good, yet not to be fond of popular applause, he rose from thence, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where he was little known; and there he entered, not into a synagogue, or place of concourse, but into a private house, and he would have no man know it; because it was foretold concerning him, He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall his voice be heard in the streets. Not but that he was willing to preach and heal here as well as in other places, but for this he would be sought unto. Note, As there is a time to appear, so there is a time to retire. Or, he would not be known because he was upon the borders of Tyre and Sidon, among Gentiles, to whom he would not be so forward to shew himself as to the tribes of Israel, whose glory he was to be. 11. How graciously he was pleased to manifest himself, notwithstanding. Though he would not carry on a harvest of miraculous cures into those parts, yet, it should seem, he came on purpose to drop a handful, to let fall this one which we have here an account of. He could not be hid; for, though a candle may be put under a bushel the sun cannot. Christ was too well known to be long unnoticed, anywhere; the oil of gladness which he was adorned with, and the ointment of the right hand, would betray itself, and fill the house with its odours. Those that had only heard his fame, could not converse with him, but they would soon say, This must be Jesus. Now observe, 1. The application made to him by a poor woman in distress and trouble. She was a Gentile, a Greek, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, an alien to the covenant of promise; yet he was by education a Syrian, and not in the degré prostrated in the Jewish religion; she had a daughter, a young daughter, that was possessed with the devil. How many and grievous are the calamities that young children are subject to! Her address was, (1.) Very humble, pressing, and importunate; She heard of him, and came, and fell at his feet. Note, Those that would obtain mercy from Christ, must throw themselves at his feet; must refer themselves to him, humble themselves before him, and give up themselves to be ruled by him. Christ never turns away from him that fell at his feet, which a poor trembling soul may do that has boldness and confidence to throw itself into his arms. (2.) It was very particular; she tells him what she wanted. Christ gave poor suppliants leave to be thus free with him; she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter, v. 26. Note, The greatest blessing we can ask of Christ for our children is, that he would break the power of Satan, that is, the power of sin, in their souls; and particularly, that he would cast forth the unclean spirit, that they may be temples of the Holy Ghost, and he may dwell in them. 2. The discouragement he gave to this address; (v. 27.) He said unto her, Let the children first be filled; let the Jews have all the miracles wrought for them; though he had had occasion for, who are in a particular manner God's chosen people, and who had that which was intended for them, be thrown to those who are not of God's family, and who have not that knowledge of him, and interest in him, which they have, and who are as dogs to them, snarling at them, spiteful towards them, and ready to worry them. Note, Where Christ knows the faith of poor suppliants to be strong, he sometimes delights to try it, and put it to the stretch. But his saying, Let the children first be filled, intimates that there was mercy in reserve for the Gentiles, and not far off; for the Jews began already to dispute concerning the same, whether he had performed them; he had desired him to depart out of their coasts. The children began to play with their meat, and their leavings, their leavings, would be a feast for the Gentiles. The apostles went by this rule, Let the children first be filled, let the Jews have the first offer; and if their full souls boast this honey-comb, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles! The turn she gave to the word of Christ, which made against her, and her improvement of it, to make for her, v. 28. She said, Yes, Lord, I own it is true that the children's bread ought not to be cast to the dogs; but they were never denied the crumbs of that bread, nay, it belongs to them, and they are allowed a place under the table, that they may be ready to receive them. I ask not for a loaf, no, nor for a morsel, only for a crumb; do not refuse me the crumbs. This she speaks, not as ungrateful to the mercy, or even with the idea of magnifying the abundance of miraculous cures with which she heard the Jews were feasted, in comparison with which a single cure was but as a crumb. Gentiles do not come in crowds, as the Jews do; I came alone. Perhaps she heard of Christ's feeding five thousand late at once, after which, even when they had gathered up the fragments, there could not but be some crumbs left for the dogs. 3. The grant Christ gave her, more than in her request. Is she thus humble, thus earnest? For this saying, Go thy way, thou shalt have what thou camest for, the devil is gone out of thy daughter, v. 29. This encourages us to pray and not to faint, to continue instant in prayer, not doubting but to prevail at last; the vision, at the end, shall speak, and not be. Christ's saying that it was done, did it effectually, as at other times, his saying, Let it be done to me, for I know not what I say, v. 29. She came to him, pleasing, depending upon the word of Christ, that her daughter was healed, and so she found it, the devil was gone out. Note, Christ can conquer Satan at a distance; and it was not only when the demonics saw him, that they yielded to his power, (as ch. 3. 11.) but when they saw him not, for the Spirit of the Lord is not bound, or bounded. She found her daughter not in any tos or agitation, but very quietly lain on the bed, and rejoicing herself, waiting for her mother's return, to rejoice with her, that she was so finely well.

31. And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. 32. And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. 33. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; 34. And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. 35. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. 36. And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published
it; 37. And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Our Lord Jesus seldom stood long in a place, for he knew where his work lay, and attended the changes of it. When he had cured the woman of Canaan's daughter, he had done what he had to do in that place, and therefore presently left those parts, and went to the sea of Galilee, whereabout his usual residence was; yet he did not come directly thither, but fetched a compass through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis, which lay mostly on the other side Jordan; such long walks did our Lord Jesus take, when he went about doing good.

Now here we have the story of a cure that Christ wrought, which is not recorded by any other of the evangelists; it is of one that was deaf and dumb.

I. His case was sad, v. 32. There were those that brought to him one that was deaf; some think, born deaf, and then he must be dumb of course; others think, that by some distemper or disaster he was become deaf, or, at least, thick of hearing; and he had an impediment in his speech. He was

\[\text{μωσαλεις}\]; some think that he was quite dumb; others, that he could not speak but with great difficulty, or could only speak a few words, or had some of his speech stammering. This was not detected by those that heard him. He was tongue-tied, so that he was perfectly unfit for conversation, and deprived both of the pleasure and of the profit of it; he had not the satisfaction either of hearing other people talk, or of telling his own mind. Let us take occasion from hence to give thanks to God for preserving to us the sense of hearing, especially that we may be capable of hearing the word of God, and the faculty of speech, especially that we may be capable of speaking God's praises; and let us look with compassion upon those that are deaf or dumb, and treat them with great tenderness. They that brought this poor man to Christ, besought him that he would put his hand upon him, as the prophets did upon those whom they blessed in the name of the Lord. It is not said, They besought him to cure him, put his hand upon him, but to give him assistance in his case, and put forth his power to do to him as he pleased.

II. His cure was solemn, and some of the circumstances of it were singular.

1. Christ took him aside from the multitude, v. 33.Ordinarily, he wrought his miracles publicly before all the people, to shew that they would bear the strictest scrutiny and inspection; but this he did privately, to shew that he did not seek his own glory, and to teach us to avoid every thing that savours of ostentation. Let us learn of Christ to be humble, and to do good where no eye sees, but his that is all eye.

2. He used more significant actions, in the doing of this cure, than usual. (1.) He put his fingers into his ears, as if he would syringe them, and fetch out that which stopped them up. (2.) He spit upon his own finger, and then touched his tongue, as if he would moisten his mouth, and so loosen that with which his tongue was tied; these were no causes that could in the least contribute to his cure, but only signs of the exerting of that power which Christ had in himself to cure him, for the encouraging of his faith and their's that brought him. The application was all from himself, it was his own fingers that he put into his ears, and his own spittle that he put upon his tongue; for he alone heals.

3. He looked up to heaven, to give his Father the praise of what he did: for he sought his praise, and did his will, and, as Mediator, acted in dependence on him and with an eye to him. Thus he signified that it was by a divine power, a power he had as the Lord from heaven, and brought with him from heaven; for he did this; for the hearing ear and the seeing eye the Lord has made, and can make like both of them. He also hereby directed his patient, who could see, though he could not hear, to look up to heaven for relief. Moses with his stammering tongue is directed to look that way; (Exod. 4. 11.) Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing or blind? Have not I the Lord's Spirit? He says so, as if he found any difficulty in working this miracle, or obtaining power to do it from his Father; but thus he expressed his pity of the miseries of human life, and his sympathy with the afflicted in their afflictions, as one that was himself touched with the feeling of their infirmities. And as to this man, he sighed, not because he was loath to do him this kindness, or did it with reluctance; but because of the many temptations which he would be exposed to, and the sins he would be in danger of, the tongue-sins, after the restoring of his speech to him which before he was free from. He had better be tongue-tied still, unless he have grace to keep his tongue as with a bridle, Ps. 39. 1.

5. He said, Elyphas! that is, Be opened. This was nothing that looked like spell or charm, such as they used who had familiar spirits, who feasted and interested the Caeans by their raps and barks, and pretended authority, and power went along with the word. Be opened, served both parts of the cure; "Let the ears be opened, let the lips be opened, let him hear and speak freely, and let the restraint be taken off," and the effect was answerable; (v. 35.) Straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue loosened, and all was well; and happy he who, as soon as he had his hearing and speech, had the blessed Jesus so near him, to converse with.

Now this cure was, (1.) A proof of Christ's being the Messiah; for it was foretold that by his power the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb should be made to speak, Is. 35. 5. 

6. It was a specimen of the operations of his gospel upon the minds of men. The great command of the gospel, and grace of Christ, to poor sinners, is, to open the minds of men, to allow the Spirit to understand and to live by the word of power. It opens the heart, as he did Lydia's, and thereby opens the ear to receive the word of God, and opens the mouth in prayer and praises.

6. He ordered it to be kept very private, but it was made very public. (1.) It was his humility, that he charged them they should tell no man, v. 36. Most men will proclaim their own goodness, or, at least, desire that others should proclaim it; but Christ, though he was himself in no danger of being puffed up with it, knowing that we are, would thus set us an example of self-denial, as in other things, so especially in praise and applause. We should take pleasure in doing good, but should not glory even in its doing, so as to magnify it, and to shew that, though he charged them to say nothing of it, they published it, before Christ would have had it published. But they meant honestly, and therefore it is to be reckoned rather an act of indiscretion than an act of disobedience, v. 37. But they that told it, and the that heard it, were beyond measure astonished, more than above measure; they were so remarkably affected with it, and this was said by every body, it was the common verdict, He has done all things well; (v. 37.) whereas there were those that hated and persecuted him as an Evil-doer, they are ready to witness for him, not only that he has done no evil, but that he has done a great deal of good, and has done it well, modestly and humbly,
and very devoutly, and all gratis, without money, and without price, which added much to the luster of his good works. He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; and that is well, it is well for them, it is well for their relations, to whom they had been a burden; and therefore they are excusable who speak ill of him.

CHAPTER VIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ’s miraculous feeding of four thousand with seven loaves and a few small fishes, v. 1. to 9. II. His refusal to give the Pharisees a sign from heaven, v. 10. to 13. III. His cautioning his disciples to take heed of the leave of Pharisaism and Herodiasm, v. 14. to 21. IV. His giving of sight to a blind man at Bethsaida, v. 22. to 26. V. Peter’s confession of him, v. 27. to 30. VI. The notice he gave his disciples of his own approaching sufferings, (v. 31. to 33.) and the warning he gave them to prepare for sufferings likewise, v. 31. to 35.

1. IN those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, 2. I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. 4. And his disciples answered him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? 5. And he asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. 6. And he commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. 7. And they had a few small fishes: and he blessed them, and commanded to set them also before them. 8. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. 9. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and he sent them away.

We had the story of a miracle very like this before, in this gospel, (ch. 6. 35.) and of this same miracle; (Matth. 15. 32.) and here is little or no addition or alteration as to the circumstances. Yet observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus was greatly followed; The multitude was very great; (v. 1.) notwithstanding the wicked arts of the Scribes and Pharisees to blashm him, and to blast his interest, the common people, who had more honesty, and therefore more true wisdom, than their leaders, kept up their high thoughts of him. We may suppose that this multitude was generally of the meaner sort of people, with such Christ conversed, and was familiar; for he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and thus encouraged the meanest to come to him for life and grace.

2. Those that followed him underwent great deal of difficulty in following him; They were with him three days, and had nothing to eat; that was hard service. Never let the Pharisee say, that Christ’s disciples fast not. There were those, probably, that brought some food with them from home: but by this time it was all spent, and they had a great way home: and yet they continued with Christ, and did not speak of leaving him till he spake of dismissing them. Note, True zeal makes nothing of hardships in the way of duty. Those that have a full feast for their souls, may be content with slender provisions for their bodies. It was an old saying among the Puritans, Brown bread and the gospel are good fare.

3. As Christ has a compassion for all that are in want and straits, so he has a special concern for those that are reduced to strict Christ to live on, and diligence in attending on him. Christ said, I have compassion on the multitude. Whom the proud Pharisees looked upon with disdain, the humble Jesus looked upon with pity and tenderness; and thus must we honour all men. But that which he chiefly considers, is, They have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat. Whatever losses we sustain for hardships we go through, for Christ’s sake, and in love to him, he will take care that they shall be made up to us one way or other. They that seek the Lord shall not long want any good thing. Ps. 34. 10. Observe with what sympathy Christ saith, (v. 3.) If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for hunger. Christ knows and considers our frame; and he is for the body, if with it we glorify him, verily we shall feed and be satisfied. He considered that many of them came from far, and had a great way home. When we see multitudes attending upon the word preached, it is comfortable to think that Christ knows whence they all come, though we do not. I know they works, and where thou dwellest. Rev. 2. 13. Christ would by no means have them go home fasting, for it is not his manner to send those empty away from him, that in a right manner attend on him.

4. The doctrine of Christ is sometimes made to work for the magnifying of the power of Christ. The disciples could not imagine whence so many men should be satisfied with bread here in this wilderness, v. 4. That therefore must needs be wonderful, and appear so much the more so, which the disciples looked upon as impossible.

5. Christ’s time to act for the relief of his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity; when nothing can be done for them but by Christ’s providence for them. That he might not invite them to follow him for the loaves, he did not supply them but when they were utterly reduced, and then he sent them away.

6. The bounty of Christ is inexhaustible, and to evidence that, Christ repeated this miracle, to shew that he is still the same for the succour and supply of his people that attend upon him. His favours are still the same, as our wants and necessities are. The former miracle, Christ used all the bread he had, which was five loaves, and fed all the guests he had, which were five thousand, and so he did now; though he might have said, “If five loaves would feed five thousand, four may feed four thousand,” he took all the seven loaves, and fed with them the four thousand; for he would teach us to take things as they are, and accommodate ourselves to them; to use what we have, and make the best of that which is. Here it was, as in the dispensing of the manna, He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.

7. In our Father’s house, in our Master’s house, there is bread enough, and to spare; there is a fullness in Christ, which he communi cates to all that passes through his hands; so that from it we receive, and grace for grace, John 1. 16. Those need not fear want, that have Christ; and Christ feeds them all. Christ’s sheep must abide by the
flock, and go forth by their footsteps, and verily they shall be fed.

10. And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples, and came in the parts of Dalmanutha. 11. And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why do they this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given to this generation.

13. And he left them, and entering into the ship again departed to the other side. 14. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. 15. And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. 16. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. 17. And when Jesus knew it, he saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? 18. Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? 19. When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. 20. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven. 21. And he said unto them, How is it that ye do not understand?

Still Christ is upon motion; now he visits the parts of Dalmanutha, that no corner of the land of Israel might say that they had not had his presence with them. He came thither by ship; (v. 13.) but meeting with occasions of dispute there, and not with opportunities of doing good, he entered into the ship again, (v. 13.) and came back. In these verses we are told,

I. How he refused to gratify the Pharisees, who challenged him to give them a sign from heaven. They came forth on purpose to question with him; not to propose questions to him, that they might earn of him, but to cross question with him, that they might ensnare him. 1. The Pharisees had of him a sign from heaven, as if the signs he gave them on earth, which were more familiar to them, and were more capable of being examined and inquired into, were not sufficient. There was a sign from heaven at his baptism, in the descent of the dove, and the voice; (Matth. 3. 16, 17.) it was public enough; and, if they had attended John's baptism as they ought to have done, they might have had the same. When he was nailed to the cross, they prescribed a new sign; Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him; thus obstinate infidelity will still have something to say, though ever so unreasonable. They demanded this sign, temptning him; not in hopes that he would give it them, that they might be satisfied, but in hopes that he would not, that they might imagine themselves to have a pretence for their infidelity.

2. He denied them their demand; He sighed deeply in his spirit, (v. 12.) He groaned, (so some,) being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, and of the Pharisees, who had been with Christ, to which pressing grace he had been, and to which God had opposed them. Note, The infidelity of those that had long enjoyed the means of conviction, is a great grief to the Lord Jesus; it troubles him, that sinners should thus stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. (1.) He expostulates with them upon this demand; Why doth this generation seek after a sign? this generation, that is so unenlightened by the gospel as to have any sign accompanying it; this generation, that so greedily swallows the tradition of the elders, without the confirmation of any sign at all; this generation, into which, by the calculating of the times prefixed in the Old Testament, they might easily perceive that the coming of the Messiah must fail; this generation, that has had such plenty of sensible and specious signs given them in the cure of their sick? What an absurdity is it for them to desire a sign! (2.) He refuses to answer their demand; Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign, no such sign, be given to this generation. When God spake to particular persons in a particular case, out of the road of his common dispensation, they were encouraged to ask a sign, as Gideon and Ahaz; but when he speaks generally, and makes himself known to all, by the long and gospel sending each with their own evidence, it is presumption to prescribe other signs than what he has given. Shall any teach God knowledge? He denied them, and then left them, as men not fit to be talked with; if they will not be convinced, they shall not, leave them to their strong delusions.

II. How he warned his disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod. Observe here,

1. What the caution was; (v. 15.) "Take heed, beware, lest ye partake of the leaven of the Pharisees, lest ye embrace the tradition of the elders, which they are so wedded to, lest ye be proud, and hypocritical, and ceremonious, like them." Matthew adds, and of the Sadducees; Mark adds, and of Herod; whence some gather, that Herod and his courtiers were generally Sadducees, that is, Deists, men of no religion. Others give this sense. The Pharisees demanded a sign from heaven; and Herod was long desirous to see some miracle wrought by Christ, (Luke 23. 18.) such as he should prescribe, so that the leaven of both was the same; they were unsatisfied with the signs they had, and would have others of their own devising; Take heed of this leaven. If they did not take heed of the leaven which Christ was to come, how many miracles ye have seen, and covert not to see more."

2. How they misunderstood this caution. It seems, at their putting to sea this time, they had forgotten to take bread, and had not in their ship more than one loaf, v. 14. When therefore Christ bid them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, they understood it as an intimation to them, not to apply themselves to the use of this miraculous blessing. Afterward, when he came to the other side, for they had lately been offended at them for eating with unwashed hands. They reasoned among themselves, what should be the meaning of this caution, and concluded, "It is because we have no bread; he saith this, to repress us for being so careless as to go to sea, and go among strangers, with but one leaf of bread; he deth, in effect, tell us, you are not worthy to eat, and must eat our bread by weight." They reasoned it—i.e., they disputed about it; one said, "It was owing to you;" and the other said, "It was owing to you, that we are so ill provided for this voyage." Thus distrust of God makes Christ's disciples quarrel among themselves.

3. The reproof Christ gave them for their un easiness in this matter; as it argued a disbelief of his power to supply them, notwithstanding the
abundant experience they had had of it. The reproof is given with some warmth, for he knew their hearts, and knew they needed to be thus soundly chidden. *Peregrine.* "Do you not remember that which you have had so many demonstrations of? Have ye your hearts yet hardened, so as that nothing will make any impression upon them, or bring them to compliance with your Master's designs? Having eyes, see ye not that which is plain before your eyes? Having ears, hear ye not that which you have been so often told? How strangely stupid and senseless are ye? Do you not mention that which I did the other day, when I brake the five loaves among the five thousand, and soon after, the seven loaves among the four thousand? Do ye not remember how many baskets full ye took up of the fragments?" Yes, they did remember, and could tell that they took up twelve baskets full one time, and seven another; "Why then," saith he, "how is it that ye do not understand? As if he that multiplied five loaves, and seven, could not multiply one." They seemed to suspect that that one was not matter enough to work upon, if he should have a mind to entertain his hearers a third time: and if that was their thought, it was indeed a very senseless one, as if it were not all alike to the Lord, to save by many or few, and as easy to make one loaf to feed five thousand as five. It was therefore proper to remind them, not only of the sufficiency, but of the overplus, of the former. 

Note, (1.) The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in the way of duty, greatly aggravate our distrust of him, which is therefore very provoking to the Lord Jesus. (2.) Our not understanding of the true intent and meaning of God's favours to us, is equivalent to our not remembering of them. (3.) We are therefore overheard, overheard with present cares and distrusts, because we do not understand, and remember, what we have known and seen of the power and goodness of our Lord Jesus. It would be a great support to us, to consider the days of old, and we are wanting both to God and ourselves if we do not. (4.) When we thus forget the works of God, and distrust him, we should chide ourselves severely for it, as Christ doth his disciples here; "Are ye this without understanding? How is it that my heart is thus hardened?"

22. And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. 23. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw aught. 24. And he looked up, and said, I see men, as trees, walking. 25. After that, he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly. 26. And he sent him away to his house, saying, Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.

This cure is related only by this evangelist, and there is something singular in the circumstances.

1. Here is a blind man brought to Christ by his friends, with a desire that he would touch him, v. 22. Here appears the faith of those that brought him—they doubted not but that one touch of Christ's hand would recover him his sight; but the man himself showed not that earnestness for, or expectation of, a cure that other blind men did. If those that are spiritually blind, do not pray for themselves, yet let their friends and relations pray for them, that Christ would be pleased to touch them.

2. Here is the case of the blind man leading him, v. 23. He did not bid his friends lead him, but (which speaks his wonderful condescension) he himself took him by the hand, and led him, to teach us to be as Job was, eyes to the blind, Job 29.15. Never had poor blind man such a Leader. He led him out of the town. Had he herein only designed privacy, he might have led him into a house, or into a corner; but he intended hereby to upbraid Bethsaida with the mighty works that had in vain been done in her, (Matt. 11. 21.) and was telling her in effect, she was unworthy to have any more done within her walls. Perhaps Christ took the blind man out of the town, that he might have a larger prospect in the open fields, to try his sight with, than he could have in the close streets.

3. Here is the cure of the blind man, by that blessed Oculist, who came into the world to unction the recovering of sight to the blind, (Luke 4. 18.) and to give what he preached. In this cure we may observe, 1. That Christ used a sign; he spat on his eyes, (spat into them, some,) and put his hand upon him. He could have cured him, as he did others, with a word speaking, but thus he was pleased to assist his faith with a material sign, and help him against his unbelief. And this spitted the eye-salve wherewith Christ anoints the eyes of those that are spiritually blind, Rev. 3. 18. 2. That the cure was wrought gradually, which was not usual in Christ's miracles. He asked him if he saw aught, v. 23. Let him tell what condition his sight was in, for the satisfaction of those about him, and he looked up; so far he recovered his sight, that he could see things. He put his hands again upon his eyes, and made them look up; he could not distinguish man from trees, otherwise than that he could discern them to move. He had some gimmers of sight, and betwixt him and the sky could perceive a man erect like a tree, but could not discern the form thereof, Job 4. 16. But, 3. It was soon completed; Christ never doth his work by the halves, nor leaves it till he can say, It is finished. He put his hands again upon his eyes, and made them look up, and he saw every man clearly, v. 25. Now Christ took this way, (1.) Because he would not tie himself to a method, but would show with what liberty he acted in all he did. He did not cure by rote, as I may say, and in a road, but varied as he thought fit. Providence gains the same end in different ways, that men may attend its motions with an implicit faith. (2.) Because it should be to the patient according to his faith; and perhaps this man's faith was at first very weak, but afterward gathered strength, and accordingly his cure was. Not that Christ always went by this rule, but thus he would sometimes put a rebufk upon those who came to him, doubting. (3.) Thus Christ would show how, and in what method, those are healed by his grace, who by nature are spiritually blind; at first, their knowledge is confused, they see men as trees walking; but, like the light of the morning, it shines more and more to the perfect day, and then they see all things clearly, Prov. 4. 18. Let us inquire, then, if we see aught of those things which faith is the substance and evidence of; and if through grace we see any thing of them, we may hope that we shall see yet more and more, for Jesus Christ will perfect for ever those that are sanctified.

IV. The directions Christ gave the man had cured, not to tell it to anyone in the town of Bethsaida, nor so much as to go into the town, where, probably, there were some expecting him to come back, who had
seen Christ lead him out of the town, but, having been eye-witnesses of so many miracles, had not so much as the curiosity to follow him: let not those be gratified with the sight of him when he was cured, who would not shew so much respect to Christ as to go a step out of the town to see this cure wrought. Christ doth not forbid him to tell it to others, but he must not tell it to any in the town. Slighting Christ's favours is forfeiting them; and Christ will make those know the worth of their privileges, by the want of them, that would not know them otherwise. Bethesda, in the day of her visitation, would not know the things that belonged to her peace, and now they are hid from her eyes. They will not see, and therefore shall not see.

27. And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea-Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? 28. And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, one of the prophets. 29. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answered saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. 30. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him. 31. And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. 33. But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. 34. And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

We have read a great deal of the doctrine Christ preached, and the miracles he wrought, which were many, and strange, and well-attested, of various kinds, and wrought in several places, to the astonishment of the multitudes that were eye-witnesses of them. It is now time for us to pause a little, and to consider what these things mean; the wondrous works which Christ then forbade the publishing of, being recorded in these sacred writings, are thereby published to all the world, to us, to all ages; now what shall we think of them? Is the record of those things designed only for an amusement, or to furnish us with matter for discourse? No, certainly these things are written, that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; (John 20. 31.) and this discourse which Christ had with his disciples, will assist us in making the necessary reflections upon the miracles of Christ, and a right use of them. Three things we are here taught to infer from the miracles Christ wrought.

1. They prove that he is the true Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world: this the works he did witnessed concerning him; and this his disciples, who were the eye-witnesses of those works, here profess their belief of; which cannot but be a satisfaction to us in making the same inference from them.

2. Christ inquired of them what the sentiments of the people were concerning him; Who do men say that I am? v. 27. Note, Though it is a small thing for us to be judged of man, yet it may sometimes do us good to know what people say of us, not that we may seek our own glory, but that we may hear of our faults. Christ asked them, not that he might be informed, but that they might observe it themselves, and inform one another.

3. The account they gave him, was such as plainly estimated the high things that the people said of him. Though he was not, in the short of the thing, convienced by his miracles that he was an Extraordinary Person, sent from the invisible world with a divine commission. It is probable that they would have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, if they had not been possessed by their teachers with a notion that the Messiah must be a temporal Prince, appearing in external pomp and power, which the figure Christ made would not concur with; yet (whatever the Pharisees said, whose copyhold was touched by the strictness and spirituality of his doctrine) none of the people said that he was a Deceiver, but some said that he was John Baptist, others Elias, others one of the prophets, v. 28. All agreed that he was one risen from the dead.

4. The account they gave him of their own sentiments concerning him, informed their abundant satisfaction and joy, and in their having left all to follow him, which now, after some time of trial, they see no reason to repent; But who say ye that I am? To this they have an answer ready, Thou art the Christ, the Messiah often promised, and long expected, v. 29. To be a Christian indeed, is, sincerely to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to act accordingly; and that he is so, plainly appears by his wondrous works. This they knew, and must shortly publish and maintain; but for the present they must keep it secret, (v. 30.) till the proof of it was completed, and they were completely qualified to maintain it, by the pouring out of the Holy Ghost; and then let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ, Acts 2. 36.

5. The miracles of Christ take off the offence of the cross, and assure us that Christ was, in it, not conquered, but a Conqueror. Now that the disciples are convinced that Jesus is the Christ, they may bear to hear of his sufferings, which Christ now begins to give them notice of, v. 31.

1. Christ taught his disciples that he must suffer many things. Though they had got over the vulgar error of the Messiah's being a temporal Prince, far as to believe their Master to be the Messiah, notwithstanding his present meanness, yet still they retained it, so far as to expect that he would shortly appear in outward pomp and grandeur, and restore the kingdom of Israel; and therefore, to rectify that mistake, Christ here gives them a prospect of the contrary, that he must be rejected of the elders, and
the chief priests, and the scribes, who, they expected, should be brought to own and confess; that, instead of being crowned, he must be killed, he must be crucified, and after three days he must rise again to a heavenly life, and to be no more in this world. This he spake openly, (v. 32.) τεταρταίον. He said it freely and plainly, and did not wrap it up in ambiguous expressions. The disciples might easily understand it, if they had not been very much under the power of prejudice: or, it intimates that he spake it cheerfully, and without any terror, and would have them to hear it so: he spake that saying boldly, as one that not only knew he must suffer and die, but was resolved he would, and made it his own act and deed.

2. Peter opposed it; He took him, and began to rebuke him. Here Peter showed more love than discretion, a zeal for Christ and his safety, but not adequate to the power of prejudice: or, it intimates that Peter and his disciples did not understand it, that they had not the knowledge of the foundation of this dispensation, nor could discern there were such a word and a deed, such a sign and a promise. The disciples took hold of him, as it were to stop and hinder him, took him in his arms, and embraced him; (so some understand it;) he fell on his neck, as impatient to hear that his dear Master should suffer such hard things; or, he took him aside privately, and began to rebuke him. This was not the language of the least authority, but of the greatest affection, of that jealousy for the welfare of these and that of himself, as John 21. 18. He did not allow his disciples to be free with him, but Peter here took too great a liberty.

3. Christ checked him for his opposition; (v. 33.) He turned about, as one offended, and looked on his disciples, to see if the rest of them were of the same mind, and concurred with Peter in this, that, if they did, they might take the reproof to themselves, while he was now at least to give to Peter; and he said, Get thee behind me, Satan. Peter little thought to have had such a sharp rebuke for such a kind dissuasive, but perhaps expected as much commendation now for his love as he had lately had for his faith. Note, Christ sees that amiss in what we say or do, which we ourselves are not aware of, and knows what manner of spirit we are of, when we ourselves do not. (1.) Peter spake as one that did not rightly understand, nor had only considered, the purposes and counsels of God. When he heard such proofs, as he every day saw, of the power of Christ, he might conclude that he could not be compelled to suffer; the most potent enemies could not overpower him whom diseases and deaths, whom winds, and waves, and devils themselves, were forced to obey and yield to; and when he saw so much of the wisdom of Christ every day, he might conclude also, that he could not be made to suffer, or to bear any very great and glorious purposes; and therefore he ought not thus to have contradicted him, but to have acquiesced. He looked upon his death only as a martyrdom, like that of the prophets, which he thought might be prevented, if either he would take a little care not to provoke the chief priests, or to keep out of the way; but he knew not that the thing was necessary for the glory of God, the destruction of Satan, and the salvation of man, that the Captain of our salvation must be made perfect through sufferings, and so must bring many sons to glory. Note, The wisdom of man is perfect folly, when it pretends to give measures to the divine counsels. The cross of Christ, the greatest instance of God's power and wisdom, was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness. (2.) Peter spake as one that did not rightly understand, nor had duly considered, the nature of the Christ, that it was temporal and human, whereas it is spiritual and divine. Thou savourrest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men; ἐστινοιμίνι.—thou mindest not; so the word is rendered, Rom. 8. 5. Peter seemed to mind more the things that relate to the lower world, and the life that now is, than those which relate to the upper world, and the life to come. Mind ing the things of men, more than the things of God, our own credit, ease, and safety, more than the things of God, and his glory and kingdom, is a very great sin, and the root of much sin, and very common among Christ's disciples; and it will appear in suffering times, those times of temptation, when those, in whom the things of men have the ascendancy, are in danger of falling off. Non sanctus—Thou art not holy: so it may be read by them who do not understand the things of men. It is important to consider in what generation we appear wise in, Luke 16. 8. It seems policy to shun trouble, but if with that we shun duty, it is fleshly wisdom, (2 Cor. 1. 12.) and it will be folly in the end.

III. These miracles of Christ should engage us all to follow him, whatever it costs us, not only as confirmations of his mission, but as they were explications of his design, and the tendency of that grace which he came to bring; plainly intimating, that, by his Spirit, he would do that for our blind, deaf, lame, leprous, diseased, possessed, souls, which he did for the bodies of those many who in those distresses applied themselves to him. Frequent notice had been taken of the great flocking that there was to him for help in various cases: now this is written, that we may make sure, that these miracle cures, which are the means of souls, and may become his patients, and submit to his regimen; and here he tells us upon what terms we may be admitted; and he called all the people to him, to hear this, who modestly stood at some distance when he was in private conversation with his disciples. This is that which all are concerned to know, and consider, if they expect Christ should heal their sicknesses.

I. They must not be indulgent of the ease of the body; for, (v. 34.) "Whosoever will come after me for spiritual cures, as these people do for bodily cures, let him deny himself, and live a life of self denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; let him not pretend to be his own physician, but renounce all confidence in himself and his own righteousness and strength, and let him take up his cross, conforming himself to the pattern of a crucified Jesus, and adopt an acknowledging him to the will of God in all the afflictions he lies under; and thus let him continue to follow me;" as many of those did whom Christ healed. Those that will be Christ's patients must attend on him, converse with him, receive instruction and reproof from him, as those did that followed him, and must resolve they will never forsake him.

2. They must not be solicitous, no not for the life of the body, when they cannot keep it without quitting Christ, v. 35. Are we invited by the words and works of Christ to follow him? Let us sit down, and count the cost, whether we can prefer our advantages by Christ before life itself, whether we can bear to think of losing our life for Christ's sake and the gospels. When the devil is drawing away disciples and servants after him, he conceals the worst of it, tells them only of the pleasure, but nothing of the peril, of his service; Ye shall not surely die; but what there is of trouble and danger in the service of Christ, he tells us of it before, tells us we shall suffer, perhaps we shall die, in the cause; and represents the discouragements not less, but greater, than commonly they prove, that it may appear he deals fairly with us, and is not afraid that we should know the worst; because the advantages of his service abundantly be to balance the discouragements, if we will but impartially set them one over against the other. In short,

(1.) We must not dread the loss of our lives, provided it be in the cause of Christ; (v. 33.) Whoever will save his life, by declining Christ, and refusing to
come to him, or by disowning and denying him after he has in profession come to Christ, he shall lose it, shall lose the comfort of his natural life, the root and fountain of his soul: and all his lives of eternal life; such a bad bargain will he make for himself. But whosoever shall lose his life, shall be truly willing to lose it, shall venture it, shall lay it down, when he cannot keep it without denying Christ, he shall save it, he shall be an unspayable gainer; for the loss of his life shall be made up to him in a better life. It is looked upon to be some kind of recompense to those who lose their lives in the service of their prince and country, to have their memories honoured and their families provided for: but what is that to the recompense which Christ makes in eternal life to all that die for him?

(2.) We must dread the loss of our souls, yea, though we should gain the whole world by it; (v. 36, 37.) For it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? "True it is," said Bishop Hooper, the night before he suffered martyrdom, "that life is sweet, and death is bitter, but eternal death is more bitter, and eternal life is more sweet." As the happiness of heaven, with Christ, is enough to countervail the loss of life itself for Christ, so the gain of all the world would not be sufficient to countervail the ruin of the soul by sin.

What that is that men do, to save their lives and gain the world, he tells us, (v. 38.) and of what fatal consequences it will be to them; Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed. Something like this we had, Matt. 10. 33. But it is here expressed more fully. Note, [1.] The disadvantage of the cause of Christ labours under in this world, that it is to be owned and professed in an adulterous and sinful generation; such the generation of mankind is, gone a whoring from God, in the impure embraces of the world and the flesh, lying in wickedness; some ages, some places, are more especially adulterous and sinful, as that was in which Christ lived, in such a general manner, the cause of Christ is opposed and run down, and those that own it are exposed to reproach and contempt, and every where ridiculed and spoken against. [2.] There are many, who, though they cannot but own that the cause of Christ is a righteous cause, are ashamed of it, because of the reproach that attends the professing of it; they are ashamed of their relation to Christ, and ashamed of the credit they cannot but give to his words; they cannot bear to be found upon and despised, and therefore throw off their profession, and go on in the stream of a prevailing apostasy. [3.] There is a day coming, when the cause of Christ will appear as bright and illustrious as now it appears mean and contemptible; when the Son of man comes in the glory of his Father with his holy angels, as the true Shechinah, the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the brightness of his Father's countenance. [4.] For those that are ashamed of Christ in this world, where he is despised, he will be ashamed of in that world where he is evermore adored. They shall not share with him in glory then, that were not willing to share with him in his disgrace now.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, v. 1. 13. II. His casting of a spell against evil spirits, when the disciples could not do it, v. 14. 29. III. His prediction of his own sufferings and death, v. 30. 32. IV. The dread he put his disciples for disputing who should be greatest; (v. 33. 37.) and to John for rebuking one who cast out devils in Christ's name, and did not follow with them, v. 38. 41. V. Christ's discourse with his disciples of the danger of offending one of his little ones, (v. 42.) and of indulging that in ourselves, which is an offence and an occasion of sin to us; (v. 43. 50.) most of which passages we had before, Matth. 17. and 18.

1. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. 2. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. 3. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them. 4. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 6. For he wist not what to say: for they were sore afraid. 7. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 8. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead. 10. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. 11. And they asked him, saying, Why say the Scribes that Elias must first come? 12. And he answered and told them, Elias verily came first, and restoreth all things, and how it is written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at nought. 13. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him.

Here is,

1. A prediction of Christ's kingdom now near approaching, v. 1. That which is foretold, is, 1. That the kingdom of God would come, and would come so as to be seen; the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up in the world by the utter destruction of the Jewish polity, which stood in the way of it; this was the restoring of the kingdom of God among men, which had been in a manner lost by the woful degeneracy both of Jews and Gentiles. 2. That it would come with power, so as to make its own way, and bear down the opposition that was given to it. It came with power, when the promise was taken on the Jews for crucifying Christ, and when it conquer- ed the idolatry of the Gentile world. 3. That it would come while some now present were alive; There are some standing here, that shall not taste of death, till they see it; this speaks the same with Matth. 24. 34. This generation shall not pass, till
It is good for us to be here, v. 5. Though Christ was transfigured, and was in discourse with Moses and Elias, yet he gave Peter leave to speak to him, and to be as free with him as he used to be. Note, Our Lord Jesus, in his exaltation and glory, doth not at all abate of his condescending kindness to his people. Many when they are in their greatness, oblige their glass, cannot bear to see the glory of others; if they did, it might be good for them; but not for others. Jesus truest lovers have access with boldness, and freedom of speech with him. Even in this heavenly discourse there was room for Peter to put in a word; and this it is, “Lord, it is good to be here, it is good for us to be here; here let us make tabernacles; let this be our rest for ever.” Note, Gracious souls reckon it good to be in communion with Christ, good to be near him, good to be in the mount with him, though he be not daily break, place, it is to be here retired from the world, and alone with Christ: and if it is good to be with Christ transfigured only upon a mountain with Moses and Elias, how good will it be to be with Christ glorified in heaven with all the saints? But observe, While Peter was for staying here, he forgot what need there was of the presence of Christ, and the preaching of his apostles, among the people. At this very time, the churches were breaking up, and despising them. When it is well with us, we are apt to be mindless of others, and in the fulness of our enjoyments to forget the necessities of our brethren; it was a weakness in Peter to prefer private communion with God before public usefulness. Paul is willing to abide in the flesh, rather than depart to the mountain of glory, (though that be far better,) when he sees it needful for the church, Phil. 1. 24. 23. Peter talked of making three distinct tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and Christ, which was meddlesome contrivance; for such a perfect harmony there is between the law, the prophets, and the gospel, that one tabernacle will hold them all; they dwell together in unity. But whatever was incongruous in what he said, he may be excused, for they were all sore afraid; and he, for his part, what not what to say, (v. 6.) not knowing what would be the end thereof.

6. The voice that came from heaven, was an attestation of Messiahship, v. 7. There was a cloud that overshadowed them, and was a shelter to them. Peter had talked of making tabernacles for Christ and his friends; but while he yet spake, see how his project was superseded; this cloud was unto them instead of tabernacles, for their shelter; (Isa. 4. 5.) while he spake of his tabernacles, God created his tabernacle not made with hands. Now out of this cloud (which was but a shade to the excellent glory Peter speaks of, whence this voice came it was said, This is my beloved Son, hear him. God owns him, and accepts him, as his beloved Son, and is ready to accept of us in him; we must then own and accept him as our beloved Saviour, and must give up ourselves to be ruled by him.

7. The vision, being designed only to introduce this voice, when that was delivered, disappeared; (v. 8.) Suddenly they had looked round about, as men amazed to see where the vision was gone, they saw no man any more. Elias and Moses were vanished out of sight, and Jesus only remained with them, and he not transfigured, but as he used to be. Note, Christ doth not leave the soul, when extraordinary joys and comforts leave it. Though more sensible and ravishing communications may be withdrawn, Christ’s disciples have, and shall have, his ordinary presence with them always, even to the end of the world, and that is it we must depend upon. Let the happy heart be not disheartened, and not expect a continual feast on this side heaven.

8. We have here the discourse between Christ and his disciples, as they came down from the mount. (1.) He charged them to keep this matter very
spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not. 19. He an-
swereth him and saith, O faithless generation! how long shall I be with you? how
long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me. 20. And they brought him unto him:
and when he saw him, straightway the spir-
it tare him; and he fell on the ground, and
wallowed foaming. 21. And he asked his
father, How long is it since this came un-
to him? And he said, Of a child: 22. And
oftimes it hath cast him into the fire,
and into the waters, to destroy him: but if
thou canst do any thing, have compassion
on us, and help us. 23. Jesus said unto
him, If thou canst believe, all things are
possible to him that believeth. 24. And
straightway the father of the child cried out,
and said, Thou art of no profit unto us, be
thou mine unbelief. 25. When Jesus saw
that the people came running together, he
rebuked the soul spirit, saying unto him,
Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee,
Come out of him, and enter no more into
him. 26. And the spirit cried, and rent
him sore, and came out of him; and he was
as one dead, insomuch that many said, He
is dead. 27. But Jesus took him by the
hand, and lifted him up, and he arose. 28.
And when he was come into the house, his
disciples asked him privately, Why could
not we cast him out? 29. And he said,
unto them, This kind can come forth by
nothing, but by prayer and fasting.

We have here the story of Christ's casting
the devil out of a child, somewhat more fully related
than it was, Matt. 17. 14, 8c. Observe here,
I. Christ's return to his disciples, and the per
plexity he found them in. He laid aside his robes
of glory, and came to look after his family, and to
inquire what was become of them. Christ's glory
above does not make him forget the concerns of his
church below, which he visits in great humility, v.
14. And he came very seasonably, when the dis-
ciples were embarrassed and run about; the scribes,
who were sworn enemies both to him and them,
had gained an advantage against them. A child pos-
sessed with a devil was brought to them, and they
could not cast out the devil, whereupon the scribes
insulted over them, and reflected upon their Master,
and triumphed as if the day were their own. He
found the scribes questioning with them, in the hear-
ing of the multitude, some of whom began to be
shocked by it. Thus Moses, when he came
down from the mount, found the camp of Israel in
great disorder; so soon were Christ and Moses
missed. Christ's return was very welcome, no
doubt, to the disciples, and unwelcome to the scribes.
But particular notice is taken of its being very sur
prising to the people, who perhaps were ready to say,
And for this Jesus, we were not what is become of
him; but when they beheld him coming to them
again, they were greatly amazed; (some copies add,
και ἐκείθεν ἀρχήνο- and they were afraid;) and run
ning to him, (some copies, for προτεητα, read προ-
τεητα—congratulating him, or bidding him
welcome,) they saluted him. It is easy to give a

private, till he was risen from the dead, which would
complete the proof of his divine mission, and then
this must be produced with the rest of the evidence,
multiplying, would have publicly taken notice
of, that might seem disagreeable to such a state; for
to that he would in every thing accommodate him-
self. This enjoining of silence to the disciples, would
likewise be of use to them, to prevent their boasting
of the intimacy they were to be admitted to, that
they might not be puffed up with the abundance
of the revelations. It is a mortification to a man, to be
thought to have availed himself of his advancements, and may
help to hide pride from him.

(2.) The disciples were at a loss what the rising
from the dead should mean; they could not form any
notion of the Messiah's dying. (Luke 18. 34.) and
therefore were willing to think that the rising he
speaks of, was figurative, his rising from his present
mean and low estate to the dignity and dominion
they were in expectation of. But if so, here is an
other thing that embarrasses them; (v. 11.) Why
say the Scribes, that before the appearing of the
Messiah in his glory, according to the order settled
in the prophecies of the Old Testament, Elias must
first come? But Elias was gone, and Moses too.
Now that which raised this difficulty, was, that the
Scribes taught them to expect the person of Elias,
whereas the prophet intended one in the spirit and
function of Elias. Note. The misunderstanding
of scripture is a great prejudice to the entertainment
of truth.

(3.) Christ gave them a key to the prophecy con-
cerning Elias; (v. 12, 13.) "It is indeed prophesied that
Elias will come, and will restore all things, and
set them to rights; and (though you will not under-
stand it) it is also prophesied of the Son of man, that
he must suffer many things, and be set at nought,
must be a Reproach of men, and despised of the peo-
ple; and though the Scribes do not tell you so, the
scriptures do, and you have as much reason to ex-
pect that as the other, and should not make so strange
of it; but as to Elias, I tell you he is come; and if you
consider a little, you will understand whom I mean,
it is one to whom they have done whatsoever they
did, which was very applicable to the ill usage they
had in the hands of the Scribes. Moreover, the
Popish writers generally, think, that beside the
coming of John Baptist in the spirit of Elias, him-
self in his own person is to be expected, with Enoch,
before the second appearance of Christ, where the
prophecy of Malachi will have a more full accom-
plishment than it had in John Baptist. But it is a
groundless fancy; the true Elias, as well as the true
Messiah promised, is come, and we are to look for
no other. These words as it is written of him, refer
not to their doing to him whatsoever they listed, (that
comes in a parenthesis,) but only to his coming. He
is come, and hath been, and done, according as was
written of him.

14. And when he came to his disciples, he saw a
great multitude about them, and the Scribes question-
ing with them. 15. And straightway all the people, when they
beheld him, were greatly amazed, and run-
ning to him saluted him. 16. And he asked
the Scribes, What question ye with them? they
answered, and said, Master, I have brought unto thee
my son, which hath a dumb spirit: 18. And wheresoever he taketh him, he tear-
eth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth his teeth, and pineth away; and I

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reason why they should be glad to see him; but why were they amazed, greatly amazed, when they beheld him? Probably, there might remain something unusual in his countenance; as Moses's face shone when he came down from the mount, which made the people afraid to come near him. (Deut. 34. 50.)

So perhaps did Christ's face, in some measure; at least, instead of seeming fatigued, there appeared a wonderful briskness and sprightliness in his looks, which amazed them.

II. The case which perplexed the disciples, brought before him. He asked the scribes, who, he knew, were always vexatious to his disciples, and teaching them up every occasion. "That generation what is it that are" (Verse 24.) The scribes made no answer, for they were confounded at his presence; the disciples made none, for they were comforted, and now left all to him. But the father of the child opened the case, v. 17, 18. 1. His child is possessed with a dumb spirit: he has the falling-sickness, and in his fits is speechless; his case is very sad, for, whereasover the fit takes him, the spirit tears him, throws him into such violent contortions, as almost kills him to pieces; and, which is very grievous to himself, and frightful to those about him, he foams at the mouth, and grashes with his teeth, as one in pain and great misery; and though the fits go off presently, yet they leave him so weak, that he junics away, is worn to a skeleton; his flesh is dried away; so the word signifies, Ps. 102. 3—5. This was a constant affliction to a tender father.

2. The disciples cannot give him any relief; "I desired they would cast him out, as they had done many, and they would willingly have done it, but they could not; and therefore I could not have come in better time; Master, I have brought him to thee."

III. The rebuke he gave to them all; (v. 19.) O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Dr. Hammond understands this as spoken to the disciples for not exhorting them for not exerting the power he had given them, and because they did not fast and pray, as in some cases he had directed them to do. But Dr. Whitby takes it as a rebuke to the scribes, who gloried in this disappointment that the disciples met with, and hoped to run them down with it. They call a faithless generation, and speaks as one weary of being with them, and of bearing with them, and no longer to bear them; which set Christ at defiance, and hoped to be too hard for him too, and to keep possession in spite of him. The child fell on the ground, and walloped foaming. We may put another construction upon it—that the devil raved, and had so much the greater wrath, because he knew that his time was short, Rev. 12. 12. Christ asked, How long since this came to him? And, it seems, the disease was of long standing. "It is a spirit of a child, (v. 21.) which makes the case the more execrable; the cure therefore more difficult. We are all by nature children of disobedience, and in such evil spirit works, and has done so from our childhood; for foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, and nothing but the mighty grace of Christ can cast it out.

V. The pressing instances which the father of the child makes with Christ for a cure; (v. 22.) Often it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him. Note, The devil aims at the ruin of those in whom he rules and works, and seeks whom he may devour. But if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. (v. 23.) He is not the disciple of Christ; but an if of the will; (Matt. 8. 2.) If thou wilt, thou canst. This poor man referred himself to his good-will, but put an if on his power, because his disciples, who cast out devils in his name, had been non-plussed in this case. Thus Christ suffers in his honour by the difficulties and follies of his disciples.

VI. The answer Christ gave to his address; (v. 23.) If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Here. 1. He tacitly checks the weakness of his faith. The sufferer put it upon Christ's power, If thou canst do any thing, and reflected on the want of power in the disciples; but Christ turns it upon him, and puts him upon questioning his own faith, and will have him impute the disappointment to the want of that; If thou canst believe. 2. He graciously encourages the strength of his desire; "All things are possible, will appear possible to him that believes the almighty power of God, to which all things are possible." or, "That shall be done by the grace of God, for them that believe in the promise of God, which seemed utterly impossible." Note, In dealing with Christ, very much is put upon our believing, and very much promised to it. Canst thou believe? Darest thou believe? Art thou willing to venture by the hands of Christ, the resources of thy spiritual concern for him? Canst thou find in thy heart to do this? If so, it is not impossible but that, though thou hast been a great sinner, thou mayest be reconciled; though thou art very mean and unworthy, thou mayest get to heaven. If thou canst believe, it is possible that thy hard heart may be softened, thy spiritual diseases may be cured; and that, weak as thou art, thou shalt be able to hold out to the end.

VII. The profession of faith which the poor man made, hereupon; (v. 24.) He cried out: Lord, I believe; I am fully persuaded both of thy power and of thy pity; my cure shall not be prevented by the want of faith; Lord, I believe. He adds a prayer for grace to enable him more firmly to rely upon the assurances he had of the ability and willingness of Christ to save; help thou my unbelief. Note, 1. Even the grace he had of believing, he had reason to complain of their unbelief; that they cannot so readily apply to themselves, and their own case, the word of Christ as they should, nor so cheerfully depend upon it. 2. Those that complain of unbelief, must look up to Christ for grace to help them against it; his grace shall be sufficient for them. Help mine unbelief, help me to a pardon for it, help me with power against it; help out what is wanting in my faith with thy grace, the strength of which is perfected in our weakness.

VIII. The cure of the child, and the conquest of this raging devil in the child. Christ saw the people come running together, expecting to see the issue of this trial of skill, and therefore kept them in suspense no longer, but rebuked the foul spirit; the unclean spirit, so it should be rendered, as in other places. Observe, 1. Christ cast out the devil in answer to Christ's command; Thou wilt and shalt. 2. The words of Christ were to this unclean spirit: Thou dumb and deaf spirit, that makest the poor child dumb and deaf, but shalt thyself be made to hear thy doom, and not be able to say anything against it, Come out of him immediately, and enter no more into him. Let him not only be brought out of this fit, but let his fits never return. Note, Whom Christ cures, he cures effectually; Satan must go out himself, and yet recover possession; but if Christ cast him out, he will keep him out. 2. How the un
clean spirit took it; he grew yet more outrageous, he cried, and rent him sore, gave him such a twitch at parding, that he was as one dead; so loath was he to quit his hold, so exasperated at the superior power of Christ, so malicious to the child, and so desirous was he to kill him. Many said, He is dead. Thus the toxin that a soul is in at the breaking of Satan's power in it, may perhaps be frightful for the present, but opens the door to lastimg comfort.

3. How the child was perfectly restored; (v. 27.) Jesus took him by the hand, ayaiaias—took fast hold of him, and strongly bore him up, and he arose and recovered, and all was well.

IX. The reason he gave to the disciples why they could not cast out this devil. They inquired of him privately why they could not, that wherein they were defective might be made up another time, and they might not be again thus publicly shamed; and he told them, (v. 29.) This kind can come forth by nothing but prayer and fasting. Whatever other difference there really might be, none appears between this and other kinds, but that the unclean spirit had had possession of this poor patient from a child, and that strengthened his interest, and confirmed his hold. When vicious habits are rooted by long usage, and begin to plead prescription, like chronic diseases they are hardly cured. Can the Ethiopian change his skin? The disciples must not think to do their work always with a like ease: some services call them to take more than ordinary pains: but Christ can do that with a word's speaking, which they must prevail for the doing of by prayer and fasting.

30. And they departed thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. 31. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. 32. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. 33. And he came to Capernaum; and being in the house, he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? 34. But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. 35. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and sith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. 36. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me. 38. And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. 39. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. 40. For he that is not against us is on our part.

Here,

I. Christ foretells his own approaching sufferings. He passed through Galilee with more expedition than usual, and would not that any man should know it. (v. 27.) Because he had done so many good works among them in vain, they shall not be invited to see them, and have the benefit of them, as they have been. The time of his sufferings drew nigh, and therefore he was willing to be private awhile, and to converse only with his disciples, to prepare them for the approaching trial, v. 31. He said to them, The Son of man is delivered by the determination of God, into the hands of men, (v. 51.) and they shall kill him. Had he been delivered into the hands of devils, and they had feared him, it had not been so strange; but that men, who have reason, and should have love, that they should be thus spiteful to the Son of man, who came to redeem and save them, is unaccountable. But still it is observable that when Christ spake of his death, he always spake of his resurrection, which took away the reproach of it from himself, and should have taken away the grief of it from his disciples. But they understood not that saying, v. 32. The words were plain enough, but they could not be reconciled to the thing, and therefore would suppose them to have some mystical meaning which they did not understand, and they were not able to understand it, like a father and a son.

II. He rebukes his disciples for magnifying themselves. When he came to Capernaum, he privately asked his disciples what it was that they disputed among themselves by the way. This was very well what the dispute was, but he would know it from them, and would have them to confess their fault and folly in it. Note, 1. We must all expect to be called to an account by our Lord Jesus, concerning what passes while we are in the way in this state of passage and probation. 2. We must in a particular manner be called to an account about our discourses among ourselves; for by our words we must be justified or condemned. 3. As our other discourses among ourselves by the way, so especially our disputes, will be all called over again, and we shall be called to an account about them. 4. Of all disputes, Christ will be sure to reckon with his disciples for their disputes about precedence and superiority: that was the subject of the debate here, who should be the greatest, v. 34. Nothing would be more contrary to the two great laws of Christ's kingdom, lessons of his school, and instructions of his example, which are humility and love, than desiring preeminence in the world, and disputing about it. This ill temper he took all occasions to check, both because it arose from a mistaken notion of his kingdom, as if it were of this world, and because it tended so directly to the debasing of the honour, the corrupting of the purity, of his gospel, and he foresaw, would be so much the bane of the church.

Now, (1.) They were willing to cover this fault, (v. 34.) they held their peace. As they would not ask, (v. 32.) because they were ashamed to own their ignorance, so here they would not answer, because they were ashamed to own their pride. (2.) He was willing to answer them, but he was difficult of being brought them to a better temper; and therefore sat down, that he might have a solemn and full discourse with them about this matter: he called the twelve to him, and told them, [1.] That ambition, and affectation of dignity and dominion, instead of gaining them preferment in his kingdom, would but
postpone their preferment; \textit{If any man desire, and run to be first, he shall be last; he that exalts himself shall be abased, and men's pride shall bring them low.} [2.] That there is no preferment to be had unsanctly, but an opportunity to, so much the more labor and consecration; \textit{If any man desire to be first, when he is so, he must be much the more busy and serviceable to every body. He that desires the office of a bishop, desires a good work, for he must, as St. Paul did, labour the more abundantly, and make himself the servant of all.} [3.] That those who are most humble and self-denying, shall be richest, and shall be most truly owned by him. This he taught them by a sign: \textit{He took a child in his arms, that had nothing of pride and ambition in it. } ye look at him, saith he; \textit{whosoever shall receive one like this child, receives me.} Those of a humble meek mild disposition are such as I will own and countenance, and encourage every body else to do so too, and will take what is done to them as done to myself; and so will my Father too, for he who thus receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me, and it shall be placed to his account, and repaid with interest. 

III. He rebukes them for wilifying all but themselves, while they are striving of which of them should be greatest, they will not allow those who are not in communion with them to be any thing. Observe. 1. The account which John gave him of the restraint they had laid upon one from making use of the name of Christ, and that he labored in the name of Christ, and that he should be sustained by him. This he taught them by a sign: \textit{He took a child in his arms, that had nothing of pride and ambition in it. } ye look at him, saith he; \textit{whosoever shall receive one like this child, receives me.} Though they were ashamed to own their contests for preferment, they seem to boast of this exercise of their authority, and expected their Master would not only justify them in it, but commend them for it; and hoped he would not blame them for desiring to be great, when they would thus use their power for the maintaining of the honour of the same name. 30. And saith John, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, but he follows not us, v. 38. (1.) It was strange that one who was not a professed disciple and follower of Christ should yet have power to cast out devils in his name, for that seemed to be peculiar to those whom he called, ch. 6, 7. But some think that he was a disciple of John, who made use of the name of the Messiah, not as come, but as near at hand, not knowing that Jesus Christ was him, and it would rather seem that he made use of the name of Jesus Christ, who claimed him for the disciple of Christ, as the other apostles did. And why might not he receive that power from Christ, whose Spirit, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, without such an outward call as the apostles had? And perhaps there were many more such. Christ's grace is not tied to the visible church. (2.) It was strange that one who cast out devils in the name of Christ, did not join himself to the apostles, and follow Christ with them, but should continue to act in separation from them. I know of nothing that could hinder him from following them, unless because he was loath to leave all to follow them: and if so, that was an ill principle. The thing did not look well, and therefore the disciples forbade him to make use of Christ's name as they did, unless he would follow them as they did. This was the motion Joshua made concerning Eldad and Medad, that prophesied in the camp, and went not up with the rest to the desert, Ezek. 2:6; and Joshua made; \textit{My lord Moses, forbid them; } (Num. 11, 28. ) restrain them, silence them, for it is a schism. (3.) This apt are we to imagine that those who do not follow Christ at all, who do not follow him with us, and that those do nothing well, who do not just as we do. But the Lord know them that are his, however they are objected; and this instance gives us a needful caution, to take heed lest we be carried, by an excess of zeal for the unity of the church, and for that which we are sure is right and good, to oppose that which yet may tend to the enlargement of the church, and the advancement of its true interests, another way.

2. The mistake he gave them for this; (v. 39.) Jesus said, \textit{Forbid him not, nor any other that do likewise.} This was like the check Moses gave to Joshua; \textit{Enviest thou for my sake? } Note, That which is good, and death good, must not be prohibited, though there may be some defect or irregularity in the manner of doing it, casting out devils, and so destroying Satan's kingdom, doing this in Christ's name, and so owning him to be sent of God, and giving honour to him as the fountain of grace, preaching down sin, and preaching with Christ, are good things, very good things, which ought not to be forbidden to any, merely because they follow not us. If Christ be preached, Paul therein doth, and will, rejoice, though he be eclipsed by it, Phil. 1. 18. Two reasons Christ gives why such should not be forbidden. (1.) Because we cannot suppose that any man, who makes use of Christ's name in working miracles, should blaspheme his name, as the Scribes and Pharisees did. There were these indeed that did in Christ's name cast out devils, and yet in other respects were workers of iniquity; but they did not speak evil of Christ. (2.) Because those that differed in communion, while they agreed to fight against Satan under the banner of Christ, ought to look upon one another as on the same side, notwithstanding that difference. \textit{He that is not against us is on our part.} As to the controversy between Christ and Beelzebub, he had said, 
\textit{He that is not with me is against me, Matth. 12. 30. } He that will not own Christ, owns Satan. But among those that own Christ, though not in the same circumstances, that follow him, though not with us, we must reckon, that, though these differ from us, they are not against us, and therefore are on our part, and we must not be any hindrance to their usefulness.

41. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward. 42. And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea. 43. And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 44. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 45. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter hallowed to life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: 46. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 47. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: 48. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. 49. For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.
Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

Here,
1. Christ promiseth a reward to all those that are any way kind to his disciples; (v. 41.) Whosoever shall give you a cup of water when ye announce him, and it shall be a reward to you, because ye belong to Christ, and are of his family, he shall not lose his reward.” Note. 1. It is the honour and happiness of Christians, that they belong to Christ, they have jointed themselves to him, and are owned by him; they wear his livery as retainers to his family; nay, they are more nearly related, they are members of his body. 2. They who belong to Christ must be reduced to such straits as to be in need of a cup of water;
2. The relieving of Christ’s poor, in their distresses, is a good deed, and will turn to a good account; he accepts it, and will reward it. 4. What kindness is done to Christ’s poor, must be done them for his sake, and because they belong to him; for that is it that sanctifies the kindness, and puts a value upon it in the sight of God. 5. This is a reason why we must not discontinue and discourage those who are serving the interests of Christ’s kingdom, though they are not in every thing of our mind and way. It comes in here as a reason why those must not be hindered, that cast out devils in Christ’s name, though they did not follow him; for (as Dr. Hammond paraphrased it,) “It is not only the great eminent performances which are done by you my constant attendants and followers, that are acceptable to me, but every the least degree of sincere faith and Christian performance, proportionable but to the expressing the least kindness, as giving a cup of water to a disciple of mine for being such, shall be accepted and rewarded.” If Christ reckons kindnesses to us services to him, we ought to reckon services to him kindesses to us, and to encourage them, though done by those that are not with us. He threatens those that offend his little ones, that wilfully are the occasion of sin or trouble to them, v. 42. Whosoever shall grive any true Christians, though they be of the weakest, shall oppose their entrance into the ways of God, or discourage and obstruct their progress in these ways, shall either restrain them from doing good, or draw them in to commit sin, it were better for him that a millstone were fastened upon his neck, and he were cast into the sea; his punishment will be very great, and the death and ruin of his soul more terrible than such a death and ruin of his body would be. See Matth. 18. 6.
3. He warns all his followers to take heed of ruining their own souls. This charity must begin at home; if we must take heed of doing anything to hinder others from God, and to occasion their sin, much more careful must we be to avoid anything that will take us off from our duty, or lead us to sin; and that which doth so must we part with, though it be ever so dear to us. This we had twice in Matthew, ch. 5. 29, 30, and ch. 18. 8, 9. It is here urged somewhat more largely and pressingly; certainly this requires our serious regard, which is so much insisted upon. We are supposed, that our own hand, or eye, or foot, offends us; that the impure corruption we indulge is as dear to us as an eye or a hand; or that that which is to us as an eye or a hand is become an invisible temptation to sin, or occasion of it. Suppose the beloved is become a sin, or the sin beloved. Suppose we cannot keep that which is dear to us, but it will be a snare and a stumbling-block; suppose we must part with it, or part with Christ and a good conscience.
4. The duty prescribed in that case; Pluck out the eye, cut off the hand and foot, mortify the darling lust, kill it, crucify it, starve it, make no provision for it. Let the idols that have been delectable things be cast away as delectable things; keep at a distance from that which is a temptation, though it be so pleasing. It is necessary that the part that is gained should be taken off for the preservation of the whole. Immediatly vulnerus ene recidendum est, ne parva sinerita trahatur.—The part that is incurably wounded must be cut off, lest the parts that are sound be corrupted. We must put ourselves to pain, that we may not bring ourselves to ruin; self must be denied, that it may not be destroyed.
5. The necessity of doing the good. The flesh must be mortified, that we may enter into life, (v. 43. 45.) into the kingdom of God, v. 47. Though, by abandoning sin, we may, for the present, feel ourselves as if we were half and maimed, (it may seem to be a force put upon ourselves, and may create us some uneasiness,) yet it is for life; and all that men have, they will give for their lives: it is for a kingdom, the kingdom of God, which we cannot otherwise obtain; these bulks and mainins will be the marks of the Lord Jesus, will be in that kingdom scars of honour.
6. The danger of not doing this. The matter is brought to this issue, that either sin must die, or we must die. If we will lay this Delilah in our bosom, it will betray us; if we be ruled by sin, we shall inevitably be ruined by it; if we must keep our two eyes, our heart, and two feet, we must with them be cast into hell. Our Saviour often pressed our duty upon us, from the consideration of the terrors of hell, which we run ourselves into if we continue in sin. With what an emphasis of terror are those words repeated three times here, Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. The words are quoted from Isaiah 66. 24. (1.) The terrors and reproaches of the sinner’s own conscience are the torment, that dieth not; which will cleave to the damned soul as the worms do to the dead body, and prey upon it, and never leave it till it is quite devoured. Son, remember, will set this worm a gnawing; and how terribly will it bite with that word, (Prov. 5. 12, 23.) How have I hated instruction! The soul that is food to this worm dies not; and the worm is bred in it, and one with it, and therefore neither doth that die. Damned sinners will be to eternally accusing, condemning, and upbraiding, themselves with their own follies, which, how much soever they are now in love with them, will at the last bite like a serpient, and sting like an adder. (2.) The wrath of God fasting upon a guilty and polluted conscience, is the fire that is not quenched; for it is the wrath of the living God, the eternal God, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall. There are no operations of the Spirit of grace upon the souls of damned sinners, and therefore there is nothing to alter the nature of the fuel, which must remain for ever combustible; nor is there any application of the merit of Christ to them, and therefore there is nothing to appease or quench the violence of the fire. 5. What the terrors of the remnants of hell was not only the constant faith of the Christian church, but had been so of the Jewish church. Josephus says, The Pharisees held that the souls of the wicked were to be punished with perpetually punishment; and that there was appointed for them a perpetual prison. And Philo saith, The punishment of the wicked is to live for ever dying, and to be for ever in pains and griefs that never cease.
7. The two last verses are somewhat difficult, and interpreters agree not in the sense of them; for every one in general, or rather every one of them that are cast into hell, shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Therefore
have salt in yourselves. [1.] It was appointed by the L. of Moses, that every sacrifice should be salted with salt, not to preserve it, (for it was to be immediately consumed,) but because it was the food of God's table, and no flesh is eaten without salt; it was therefore particularly required in the meat-offerings, Lev. 2. 13. [2.] The nature of man, being corrupt, and as such being called flesh, (Gen. 6. 3. Ps. 78. 39.) some way or other must be salted, in order to its salvation in regard to God. The salting of fish (and I think of other things) they call the curing of it. [3.] Our chief concern is, to present ourselves living sacrifices to the grace of God, (Rom. 12. 1.) and, in order to our acceptableness, we must be salted with salt, our corrupt affections must be subdued and mortified, and we must have in our souls a savour of grace. Thus the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles, is said to be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, as the sacrifices were salted, Rom. 15. 16. [4.] Those that have the salt of grace must make it appear that they have it; that they have salt in themselves, a living principle of grace in their hearts, which works out all corrupt dispositions, and everything in the soul that tends to pollution and sin, and would offend our God, or our own consciences, as unsavoury meat doth. Our affections must be always with grace seasoned with this salt that no corrupt communication may savor or smell of the mouth, but we may loath it as much as we would to put putrid meat into our mouths. [5.] As this gracious salt will keep our own consciences void of offence, so it will keep our conversation with others so, that we may not offend any of Christ's little ones, but may be at peace one with another. [6.] We must not only have this salt of grace, but we must retain the rest and salt of it. If this salt lose its savour, if a Christian receive from his Christianity, if he lose the savour of it, and be no longer under the power and influence of it, what can recover him, or wherewith will he season him? This was said, Mat. 5. 13. [7.] Those that present not themselves living sacrifices to God's grace, shall be made for ever dying sacrifices to his justice, and, since they would not give honour to him, he will give no honour upon them; they would not be salted with salt; and from the grace of God, they will not submit that to subdue their corrupt affections, no, they would not submit to the operation, could not bear the corrosives that were necessary to eat out the proud flesh, it was to them like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye; and therefore in hell they shall be salted with fire; coals of fire shall be scattered upon them, (Ezek. 10. 2.) as salt upon the meat, and brimstone, (Job 18. 15.) as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom; the pleasures they had lived in, shall eat their flesh, as it were fire, Jer. 5. 3. The pain of mortifying the flesh now is no more to be compared with the punishment for not mortifying it, than salting with burning. And since he had said, that the fire of hell shall not be quenched, but it might be objected, that the fuel will not last always, he here intimates, that by the power of God it shall be made to last always; for those that are cast into hell, will feed the fire to have not only the corroding quality of salt, but its preserving quality; whence it is used to signify that which is lasting; a covenant of salt is a perpetual covenant, and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt, made a remaining monument of divine vengeance. Now since this will certainly be the doom of those that do not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, let us, knowing this terror of the Lord, be persuaded to do it.

Chap. X.

[In this chapter we have, I. Christ's dispute with the Pharisees concerning divorce, v. 1. 12. II. The kind exter-
II. We have him disputed with by the Pharisees, who envied the progress of his spiritual arms, and did all they could to obstruct and oppose it; to divert him, to perplex him, and to prejudice the people against him.

Here is, 1. A question they started concerning divorce; (v. 2.) Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? This was a good question, if it had been well put, and with a humble desire to know the mind of God. But they did not construe it, tempt him, seeking an occasion against him, and an opportunity to expose him, which side soever he should take of the question. Ministers must stand upon their guard, lest, under pretence of being advised with, they be ensnared.

2. Christ's reply to them with a question; (v. 3.) What did Moses command you? This he asked them, to testify his respect to the law of Moses, and to shew that he came not to destroy it; and to engage them to a universal impartial respect for Moses's writings, and to compare one part of them with another.

3. The fair account they gave of what they found in the law of Moses, expressly concerning divorce, v. 4. Christ asked, What did Moses command you? They answered, Moses only suffered or permitted a man to write his wife a bill of divorce, and to put her away. Deut. 24. 1. If you will do it, you must do it in writing, delivered into her own hand, and so put her away, and never return to her again.

4. The answer that Christ gave to their question, in which he abides by the doctrine he had formerly laid down in this case, (Matt. 5. 32.) That whatever is put away his wife, except for fornication, causeth her to commit adultery. And, to clear this, he here shews,

(1.) That the reason why Moses, in his law, permitted divorce, was such, as that they ought not to make use of that permission; for it was only for the hardness of their hearts, (v. 5.) lest, if they were not permitted to divorce their wives, they should murder them; so that none must put away their wives but such as are willing to own that their hearts were so hard as to need this permission.

(2.) That the account which Moses, in this history, gives of the institution of marriage, affords such a reason against divorce, as amounts to a prohibition of it. So that if the question be, What did Moses command? (v. 3.) it must be answered, "Though by a temporary proviso he allowed divorce to the Jews; yet in eternal reason he forbade it to all the children of Adam and Eve, and that is it which we must abide by." Moses tells us, [1.] That God made man male and female, one male, and one female; so that Adam could not put away his wife and take another, for there was no other to take, which was an intention to all his sons, that they must not. [2.] When this male and this female were, by the ordinance of God, joined to one another, and married, but the law warranted, a man must leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; (v. 7.) which intimates not only the nearness of the relation, but the perpetuity of it; he shall so cleave to his wife as not to be separated from her. [3.] The result of the relation is, That, though they are two, yet they are one, they are one flesh, v. 6. The union between them is the most holy thing, next to the worship of God, the marriage is a man's duty, which commends it, a sacred thing that must not be violated. [4.] God himself has joined them together; he has not only, as Creator, fitted them to be comforts and helps meet for each other, but he has, in wisdom and goodness, appointed them, who are thus joined together, to live together in love till death part them. Marriage is not an invention of men, but a divine institution, therefore is to be religiously observed, and the more, because it is a figure of the mystical inseparable union between Christ and his church.

Now from all this he infers, that men ought not to put their wives away from them, whom God has put so near to them. The bond which God himself has tied, is not to be lightly untied. They who are for divorcing their wives for every offence, would do well to consider what would become of them, if God should in like manner deal with them. See Isa. 5.'

5. Christ's discourse with his disciples, in private, about this matter, v. 10, 11. It was an advantage to them, that they had opportunity of personal converse with Christ, not only about gospel-mysteries, but about moral duties, for their further satisfaction. No more is here related of this private conference, than the law Christ laid down in this case—That it is adultery for a man to put away his wife, and marry another; it is adultery against the wife he puts away, it is a wrong to her, and a breach of his contract with her, v. 11. He adds, If a woman shall put away her husband, that is, from him, leave him by consent, and be married to another, she commits adultery, (v. 12.) and it will be no excuse at all for her, to say, that it was with the consent of her parents, or of her husband. But, unless the love reigning in the heart, will make these commands easy, which to the carnal mind may be as a heavy yoke.

13. And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. 14. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them. Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. 15. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. 16. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

It is looked upon as the indication of a kind and tender disposition, to take notice of little children, and this was remarkable in our Lord Jesus; which is an encouragement not only to little children to apply themselves to Christ when they are very young, but to grown people, who are conscious to themselves, through manifold infirmities, helpless and useless, like little children. Here we have,

I. Little children brought to Christ, v. 13. Their parents, or whoever they were that had the nursing of them, brought them to him, that he should touch them, in token of his commanding and conferring a blessing on them. It doth not appear that they needed it, for when they came, they were not crying, being being taught; but it seems, 1. They that had the care of them were mostly concerned about their souls, their better part, which ought to be the principal care of all parents for their children; for that is the principal part, and it is well with them, if it be well with their souls. 2. They believed that Christ's blessing would do their souls good; and therefore, if he could but, or they might with him, touch them, knowing that he could reach their hearts, when nothing their parents could say to them, or do for them, would reach them. We may present our children to Christ, now that he is in heaven, from thence he can reach them with his blessing, and therein we may act faith upon the fulness and extent of his grace, the kind intimations he hath always given of favour to the seed of the Faithful, the tenor of the covenant with Abraham, and
the promise to us and to our children, especially that great promise of pouring his Spirit upon our seed, and his blessing upon our offspring, Isa. 44. 3.

II. The discouragement which the disciples gave to the bringing of children to Christ: They rebuked those who brought them to him. This was not because they knew their Master's mind in this matter, whereas he had lately cautioned them not to despise the little ones.

III. The encouragement Christ gave to it. 1. He took it very ill that his disciples should keep them off; 'When he saw it, he was much displeased,' v. 14. "What do you mean? Will you hinder me from doing good, from doing good to the rising generation, to the flocks of the flock?" Christ is very angry with his own disciples, if they discountenance any in coming to him themselves, or in bringing their children to him. 2. He ordered that they should be brought to him, and nothing said or done to hinder them; suffer little children, as soon as they are capable, to come to me, to offer up their supplications to me, and to receive instructions from me. Little children are welcome betimes to the throne of grace with their Hosannas. 3. He owned them as members of his church, as they had been of the Jewish church. He came to set up the kingdom of God among men, and took this occasion to declare that that kingdom admitted little children to be the subjects of it, and gave them a title to the privileges of subjects. Nay, the kingdom of God is to be kept up by such: they must be taken in when they are little children, that they may be secured for hereafter. See how he beareth the children. That they must be something of the temper and disposition of little children found in all that Christ will own and bless. We must receive the kingdom of God as little children; (v. 15.) that is, We must stand affected to Christ and his grace, as little children do to their parents, nurses, and teachers. We must be inquisitive, as children, must learn as children, (that is, the learning age,) and in learning must believe, Oftentimes dissenting credibly: A learner must believe. The mind of a child is white paper, (tabula rosa, a mere blank;) you may write upon it what you will; such must our minds be to the pen of the blessed Spirit. Children are under government; so must we be. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? We must receive the kingdom of God as the child Samuel did, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Little children depend upon their parent's wisdom and authority, and are carried in their arms, go where they send them, and take what they provide for them; and thus must we receive the kingdom of God, with an humble resignation of our selves to Jesus Christ, and an easy dependence upon him, both for strength and righteousness, for tuition, provision, and a portion. 5. He received the children, and gave them what was desired; (v. 16.) He took them up in his arms, in token of his affectionate concern for them; put hands upon them, and was savour, and blessed them, he gave the assurance of the desires of these parents; they begged he would touch them, but he did more. (1.) He took them in his arms. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 40. 11.) He shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom. Time was, when Christ himself was taken up in old Simeon's arms, Luke 2. 28. And now he took up these children, not complying with the bounds, so Moses did, when he was bid to carry Israel, that peevish child in his arms, as a nursing father bears the sucking child, Num. 11. 12.) but pleased with it. If we in a right manner bring our children to Christ, he will take them up, not only in the arms of his power and providence, but in the arms of his pity and grace; (as Ezek. 16. 8.) under them are the everlasting arms. (2.) He put his hands upon them, denoting the bestowing of his Spirit upon them, for that is the hand of the Lord; and his setting them apart for himself. (3.) He blessed them with the spiritual blessings he came to give. Our children are happy, if they have but the Mediator's blessing for their portion. It is true, we do not read that he baptized these children, baptism was not fully settled as the door of admission into the church, till after Christ's resurrection; but he asserted their visible church-membership, and by another sign bestowed those blessings upon them, which are now appointed to be conveyed and conferred by baptism, the seal of the promise, which is to us and to our children.

17. And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? 18. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. 19. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. 22. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. 23. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 24. And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! 25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27. And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible. 28. Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. 29. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, 30. But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers; and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. 31. But
many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Here is,

I. A happy[ful] meeting between Christ and a young man

1. He came running to Christ, which was an indication of a heart's desire. He had aside the gravity and grandeur of a ruler, when he came to Christ; thus too he manifested his earnestness and importance; he ran as one in haste, and longing to be in conversation with Christ. He had now an opportunity of consulting this great Prophet, in the things that belonged to his peace, and he would not let slip the opportunity.

2. He came to him when he was in the way, in the midst of company: he did not insist upon a private conference with him by night, as Nicodemus did, though like him he was a ruler, but when he shall find him without, will embrace that opportunity of advising with him, and not be ashamed, Cant. 8. 1.

3. He kneeled to him, in token of the great value and veneration he had for him, as a Teacher come from God, and his earnest desire to be taught by him. He bowed the knee, as one who would not do obedience to him now, but would yield obedience to him always; he bowed the knee, as one that meant to bow the soul to him.

4. His address to him was serious and weighty: Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? Eternal life was an article of his creed, though then denied by the Sadducees, a prevailing party; he thinks it a thing possible, that he may inherit eternal life, looking upon it not as an assurance but as a thing offered to us, as but as offered to us; he asks, What shall he do now, that he may be happy for ever! Most men inquire for good to be had in this world, (Ps. 4. 6.) any good; he asks for good to be done in this world, in order to the enjoyment of the greatest good in the other world; not, Who will make us to see good? But, "Who will make us to do good?" He inquires for happiness in the way of duty; he submits to the will of God, chief good which Solomon was in quest of was that good for the sons of men which they should do, Eccl. 2. 3. Now this was, (1.) A very serious question in itself; it was about eternal things, and his own concern in those things. Note, There begins to be some hope of people, when they begin to inquire solicitously, what they shall do to get to heaven. (2.) It was proposed to a right Person, one that was every way fit to answer it, being him whom the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the true way to life, to eternal life; who came from heaven, on purpose, first to lay open for us, and then to lay open to us; first to make, and then to make known, the way to heaven. Note, Those who would know what they shall do to be saved, must apply themselves to Christ, and not him only; but him him; it is peculiar to the Christian religion, both to the Gospel and the Christian life, and he shew the way to it. (3.) It was proposed with a good design—to be instructed. We find this same question put by a lawyer, not knowing, but standing up, (Luke 10. 25.) with a bad design, to pick quarrels with him; he tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do? It is not so much the good words, as the good instance of them, that Christ looks at.

5. Christ encouraged this addressant (by asking his faith, v. 17.) He called him good Master; Christ would have him mean thereby, that he looked upon him to be God, since there is none good but one, that is God, who is one, and his name one, Zech. 14. 9. Our English word, God, doubtless hath affinity with good; as the Hebrews name God by his power, Elohim, the strong God; so we by his goodness, the good God. (2.) By directing his practice; (v. 19.) Keep the commandments; and thou knowest what they are. He mentions the six commandments of the first table, which prescribe our duty to our neighbour; he inverts the order, putting the seventh commandment before the sixth, to intimate that adultery is a sin no less heinous than murder itself. The fifth commandment is here put last, as that which should especially be remembered and observed, to keep us to all the rest. Instead of the tenth commandment, Thou shalt not covet, our Saviour gives him the second table, which prescribes our duty to our neighbour; he inverts the order, putting the seventh commandment before the sixth, to intimate that adultery is a sin no less heinous than murder itself. The fifth commandment is here put last, as that which should especially be remembered and observed, to keep us to all the rest. Instead of the tenth commandment, Thou shalt not covet, our Saviour gives him the second table, which prescribes

6. The young man bid fair for heaven, having been free from any open gross violations of the divine commands. Thus far he was able to say in some measure, (v. 20.) Master, all these have I observed from my youth. He thought he had, and his neighbours thought so too. Note, Ignorance of the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, makes people think themselves in a better condition than really they are. Paul was alive without the law. But when he saw that to be spiritual, he saw himself to be under the law. The law could say he was free from scandalous sin, went further than many in the way to eternal life. But though we know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified.

7. Christ had a kindness for him; Jesus beholding him, loved him, v. 21. He was pleased to find that he had lived inoffensively, and pleased to see that he was inquisitive how to live better than he did. Christ could say he was free from scandalous sin, went further than many in the way to eternal life. But though we know nothing by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified.

II. Here is a sorrowful parting between Christ and this young man.

1. Christ gave him a command of trial, by which it would appear whether he did in sincerity aim at eternal life, and press towards it: he seemed to have heart much upon it, and to do, he is what he should be; but has he indeed his heart upon it? Bring him to the touchstone. (1.) Can he find in his heart to part with his riches for the service of Christ? He hath a good estate, and now, shortly, at the first founding of the Christian church, the necessity of the case will require that those who have lands, sell them, and lay the money at the apostles' feet; and how will he dispense with that? Acts 4. 35. For a while, tribulation and persecution will arise, because of the word; and he must be forced to sell his estate, or have it taken from him, and how will he like that? Let him know the worst now; if he will not come up to these terms, let him quit his pretensions; as good at first as at last. "Sell whatsoever thou hast above and above what is necessary for thy support." probably, he has not, says Balley, the right idea, but see a father to the poor and make them his heirs. Every man, according to his ability, must relieve the poor, and be content, when there is occasion, to straiten himself to do it. Worldly wealth is given us, not only as maintenance to bear our charges through this world, according to our place in it, but as a talent to be used and employed for the glory of our great Master in the world; so we are to be concerned; Rom. 14. 7. He always with us as his receivers. (2.) Can he find in his heart to go through the hardest costliest services he may be called to as a disciple of Christ, and depend upon him for a recompense in heaven? He asks Christ what he shall do, more than he has done, to obtain eternal life; and Christ puts it to him,
whether he has indeed that firm belief of, and that high value for, eternal life, that he seems to have. Dost he really believe there is a treasure in heaven sufficient to make up all he can leave, or lose, or lay out, for Christ and his church, to deal with the French trust? Can he give his credit for all he has worth; and be willing to hear a present cross, in expectation of a future crown?

2. Upon this he flew off; (v. 22.) He was sad at that saying; was sorry that he could not be a follower of Christ, upon any easier terms than leaving all to follow him; that he could not lay hold on eternal life, and keep hold of his temporal possessions too. But, since he could not come up to the terms of discipleship, he was so far as not to pretend to it; He went away grieved. Here appeared the truth of that, (Matt. 6. 24.) Ye cannot serve God and mammon; while he held to mammon, he did in effect despise Christ, as all those do who prefer the world before him. He bids for what he has a mind for in the market, yet goes away grieved, and leaves it, because he cannot have it at his own price. Two words to a bargain. Motions are not marriages. That which ruined this young man, was, he had great possessions; thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, and those who spend their days in wealth, are tempted to say to God, Depart from us; or to their hearts, Depart from God.

III. Here is Christ’s discourse with his disciples. We are tempted to wish that Christ had mollified that saying which frightened this young gentleman from following him, and, by any explanation, taken off the harshness of it: but he knew all men’s hearts; he would not court him to be his follower, because he was a rich man and a ruler; but, if he will go, let him go. Christ will keep no man against his will; and therefore we do not find that Christ called him back, but took this occasion to instruct his disciples in two things.

1. The difficulty of the salvation of those who have an abundance of this world; for there are few, who have a deal to leave, that can be persuaded to leave it for Christ, or to lay it out in doing good.

(1.) Christ asserts this here; He looked about upon his disciples, because he would have them all take notice of what he said, that by it they might have their judgments rightly informed, and their mistakes rectified, concerning worldly wealth, which they were apt to over-rate; How hardly shall they who have two coats, enter into the kingdom of God? v. 23. They have many temptations to grapple with, and many difficulties to get over, which lie not in the way of poor people. But he explains himself, v. 24. where he calls the disciples children, because as such they should be taught by him, and portioned by him with better things than this young man left Christ to cleave to; and whereas he had said, How hardly will those that have riches get to heaven! here he tells them, that they are both so much more than they, having riches as from the trusting to them, and placing their confidence in them, expecting protection, provision, and a portion, from them; saying that to their gold, which they should say only to their God, Thou art my hope, Job 31. 24. They that have such a value as this for the wealth of the world, will never be brought to put a right value upon Christ and his grace. They that have riches, and trust in them to provide for them, little do they see the vanity of them, and their utter insufficiency to make a soul happy, have got over the difficulty, and can easily part with them for Christ: but they that have ever so little, if they set their hearts upon that little, and place their happiness in it, it will keep them from Christ. He enforces this assertion with, v. 25. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man, that trusts in riches, or inclines to do so, to enter into the kingdom of God. The disproportion here seems so great, (though the more so, the more it answers the intention,) that some have laboured to bring the camel and the eye of the needle a little nearer together. They say, we might as well ask whether a needle or a wicket-gate, or door, to Jerusalem, commonly known by the name of the needle’s eye, for its straitness, through which a camel could not be got, unless she were unloaded, and made to kneel, as those camels, Gen. 24. 11. So a rich man cannot get to heaven, unless he be willing to part with the burden of his worldly wealth, and stoop to the duties of a humble religion, and so enter in at the strait gate. (2.) Others suggest that the word we translate a camel, sometimes signifies a cable rope, which, though not to be got through a needle’s eye, yet is of greater affinity to it. A rich man, compared with the poor, is as a cable to a single thread, stronger, but not so pliable, and it will not go through the needle’s eye, unless it be untwisted. So the rich man must be lanced and disentangled from his riches, and then there is some hope of him, that thread by thread he may be got through the eye of the needle, otherwise he is good for nothing but to cast anchor in the earth.

(2.) This truth was very surprising to the disciples; They were astonished at his words, v. 24. They were astonished out of measure, and said among themselves, Who then can be saved? They knew what were generally the sentiments of the Jewish teachers, after this manner, that God chooses to reside upon rich men; nay, they knew the abundance of promises there were, in the Old Testament, of temporal good things; they knew likewise that all either are rich, or fail would be so, and that they who are rich have so much the larger opportunities of doing good, and therefore were amazed to hear that it should be so hard for rich people to go to heaven.

(3.) Christ reconciled them to it, by referring it to the almighty power of God, to help even rich people over the difficulties that lie in the way of their salvation; (v. 23.) He looked upon them, to engage their attention, and said, "With men it is impossible;" rich people cannot by their own skill or resolution get over these difficulties, but the grace of God can do it, for with him all things are possible. If the righteous scarcely are saved, much more may we say so of the rich; and therefore, when any get to heaven, and it is known to all the world to whom it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do.

2. The greatness of the salvation of those that have but a little of this world, and leave it for Christ. This he speaks of, upon occasion of Peter’s mentioning what he and the rest of the disciples had left to follow him; Behold, (saith he,) we have left all, to follow thee. v. 28. He, You have done well, saith Christ, "and it will prove in the end that you have been right, and I also will prove that I have been right in accepting you; you shall all be abundantly rewarded, who have left but a little, but those that have ever so much, though it were so much as this young man had, that could not persuade himself to quit it for Christ; yet they shall have much more than an equivalent for it. (1.) The loss is supposed to be very great; he specifies, [1.] Worldly wealth; houses are here put first, and lands last. If a man only quits his house, he only quits a place of residence and shelter; but his land, which should be for his maintenance, and so make himself a beggar and an outcast, this has been the choice of suffering saints; * Farewell houses and lands, though ever so convenient and desirable, though the inheritance of fathers, for the house which is from heaven, and the inheritance of the saints in light, where are many mansions.* [2.] Dear relations, father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters; in these, as much as in
any temporal blessing, the comfort of life is bound up; (without these, the world would be a wilderness;) yet, when we must either forsake these, or Christ, we must remember, that we stand in nearer relation to Christ than we do to any creature; and therefore, to keep in with him, we must be content to break with all the world, and say to father and mother, as Levi did, I have not known you. The greatest trial of a good man's constancy, is, when his love to Christ comes to stand in competition with a love that is lawful, nay, that is his duty. It is easy to such a one to forsake a lust for Christ, for he hath that within him which resists it; but to forsake a father, a brother, a wife, for Christ, that is, to forsake those whom he knows he must love, is hard. And yet he must do so, rather than deny or disown Christ. Thus great is the loss supposed to be; but it is for Christ's sake, that he may be honoured, and the gospel's, that that may be promoted and propagated. It is not the suffering, but the cause, that makes the martyr. And therefore, (2.) The advantage will be great. [1.] They shall receive a hundred-fold in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters; not in specie, but that which is equivalent. He shall have abundance of comfort while he lives, sufficient to make up all his losses; his relation to Christ, his communion with his saints, and his title to eternal life, shall be to him brethren, and sisters, and houses, and all. God's providence gave Job double to what he had, but suffering Christians shall have a hundred-fold in the comforts of the Spirit, sweetening their creature-comforts. But observe, It is added here in Mark, with persecutions. Even when they are gainers by Christ, let them still expect to be sufferers for him; and not to be out of the reach of persecution, till they come to heaven. Nay, The persecutions seem to come in here among the receivings, in this present time; for upon them it is given not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his name; yet this is not all. [2.] They shall have eternal life in the world to come. If they receive a hundred-fold in this world, one would think they should not be encouraged to expect any more. Yet, as if that were a small matter, they shall have life eternal into the bargain; which is more than ten thousand-fold, ten thousand times told, for all their latter end is prepared from the beginning, even as Noah in the ark, and shipwrecked men more than became them, of leaving all for Christ. He tells them, though they were first called, that there should be disciples called after them, that should be preferred before them; as St. Paul, who was one born out of due time, and yet labour more abundantly than all the rest of the apostles, 1 Cor. 15. 10. Then the first were last, and the last first.

32. And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him, 33. Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the Scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: 34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. 35. And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. 36. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? 37. They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. 38. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask; can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? 39. And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: 40. But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. 41. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. 42. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. 43. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever shall be great among you, shall be your minister: 44. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. 45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Here is,
1. Christ's prediction of his own sufferings; this string he harped much upon, though in the ears of his disciples it sounded very harsh and unpleasant.
2. See here how bold he was; when they were going up to Jerusalem, Jesus went before them, as the Captain of our salvation, that was now to be made perfect through sufferings, v. 32. Thus he shewed himself forward to go with his undertaking, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Now that the time was at hand, he said, Lo, I come; so far was he from drawing back, that he went on in them than ever, he pressed forward. Jesus went before them, and they were amazed. They began now to consider what imminent danger they ran themselves into, when they went to Jerusalem; how very malicious the Sanhedrim, which sat there, was against their Master and them; and they were ready to tremble at the thought of it. To hear them, therefore, Christ went before them. "Come," saith he "surely you will venture where your Master ventures." Note, When we see ourselves entering upon sufferings, it is encouraging to see our Master go before us. Or, He went before them, and therefore they were amazed, they admired to see with what cheerfulness and alacrity he went on, though he knew he was going to suffer and die. Note, Christ's courage and constancy in going on with his undertaking for our salvation, are, and will be, the wonder of all his disciples.
3. See here how timorous and faint-hearted his disciples were; As they followed, they were afraid, afraid for themselves, as being apprehensive of their own danger; and justly might they be ashamed of their being thus afraid. Their Master's courage should have put spirit into them.
3. See here what method he took to silence their fears. He did not go about to make the matter better than it was, nor to feed them with hopes that he might escape the storm, but told them again, what he had often told before, that God was with him. He knew the worst of it, and therefore went on thus boldly, and he will let them know the worst of it. Come, be not afraid; for, (1.) There is no remedy, the matter is determined, and cannot be avoided. (2.) It is only the Son of man that shall suffer; their time of suffering was not at hand, he will now provide for their security. (3.) He shall rise again; the issue of his sufferings will be glorious to himself, and advantageous to all that are his, vs. 23, 34. The method and particulars of Christ's sufferings are more largely foretold here than in any other of the predictions—that he shall first be delivered up by Judas to the chief priests and the Scribes; that they shall condemn him to death, but, not having power to put him to death, shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to the Roman powers, and they shall mock him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and kill him. Christ had a perfect foresight, not only of his own death, but of all the aggravating circumstances of it; and yet he thus went forth to meet it. 

II. The check he gave to two of his disciples for their ambitious request. This story is much the same here as we had it in Matth. 20. 20. Only there they are said to have made their request by their mother, here they are said to make it themselves; she introduced them, and presented their petition, and then they seconded it, and assented to it. 

Note, 1. As, on the one hand, there are some that do not use, so, on the other hand, there are some that abuse, the great encouragement Christ has given us in prayer. He hath said, Ask, and it shall be given you; and it is a commendable faith to ask for the great things he has promised; but it was a culpable presumption in these disciples to make such a boundless demand upon their Master; We would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we desire. We had much better leave it to him to do for us what he sees fit, and he will do more than we can desire, Eph. 3. 20. 

2. We must be cautious how we make general promises. Christ would not engage to do for them whatever they desired, but would know from them what it was they did desire; What would ye that I should do for you? He would have them go on with their petition, that they might be made ashamed of it. 

Mark 6. 34. It might have been led into a snare by false notions of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world, and like the kingdoms of the potentates of this world. James and John conclude, If Christ rise again, he must be a king, and if he be a king, his apostles must be peers, and one of these would willingly be the Primus par regni—The first peer of the realm, and the other next him, like Joseph in Pharaoh's court, or Caius in Cæsar's. 

4. Worldly honour is a glittering thing, with which the eyes of Christ's own disciples have many a time been dazzled. Whereas to be good should be more our care than to look great, or to have the pre-eminence. 

5. Our weakness and short-sightedness appear as much in our prayers as in any thing. We cannot order our speech, when we speak to God, by reason of darkness, by being concerned in and concerning great things. It is folly to prescribe to God, and wisdom to subscribe. 

6. It is the will of Christ that we should prepare for sufferings, and leave it to him to recompense us for them. He needs not be put in mind, as Ahasuerus did, of the services of his people, nor can he forget their work of faith and labour of love. Our care must be, that we may have wisdom and grace to know how to suffer with him, and then we may trust him to provide in the best manner how we shall reign with him, and when, and where, and what, and the degrees of our glory shall be. 

46. And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimæus, the son of Timœus, sat by the highway side, begging. 47. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 48. And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but
he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 49. And Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee. 50. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus. 51. And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. 52. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.

This passage of story agrees with that, Matth. 20. 29, &c. Only that there we were told of two blind men; here, and Luke 18. 35, only of one: but if there were more, the near the door was named First; and the others being a blind beggar that was much talked of; he was called Bartimeus, that is, the son of Timeus; which, some think, signifies the son of a blind man; he was the blind son of a blind father, which made the case worse, and the cure the more wonderful, and the mere proper to typify the spiritual cures wrought by the grace of Christ; on those that not only are born blind, but are born of those that are blind.

1. This blind man sat begging; as they do with us. Note, Those who by the providence of God are disabled to get a livelihood by their own labour, and have not any other way of subsisting, are the most proper objects of charity; and particular care ought to be taken of them.

II. He cried out to the Lord Jesus for mercy; Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David. Misery is the object of mercy, his own miserable case he recommends to the compassion of the Son of David, of whom it was foretold, that, when he should come to save us, the eyes of the blind should be opened, Isa. 35. 5. In coming to Christ for help and healing, we should have an eye to him as the promised Messiah, the Trustee of mercy and grace.

III. He encouraged him to hope that he should find mercy; for he stood still, and commanded him to be called. We must never reckon it a hindrance to us in our way, to stand still, when it is to do a good work. Those about him, who had discouraged him at first, perhaps were now the persons that signified to him the gracious call of Christ; "Be of good comfort, rise, he calleth thee; and if he call thee, he will cure thee." Note, The gracious invitations Christ gives us to come to him, are great encouragements to our hope, that we shall speed well if we come to him, and shall have what we come for. Let the guilty, the empty, the tempted, the hungry, the naked, be of good comfort, for he calleth them to be pardoned, to be supplied, to be succored, to be filled, to be clothed, to have all that is done for them which their case calls for.

IV. He hereupon, made the best of his way to Christ; He cast away his loose upper garment, and came to Jesus; (v. 50.) he cast away every thing that might be in danger of throwing him down, or might any way hinder him in coming to Christ, or retard his motion. Those who would come to Jesus, must cast away the garment of their own sufficiency, must strip themselves of all conceit of that, and must free themselves from every weight, and the sin that, like long garments, doth easily betwixt them, Heb. 12. 1.

V. The particular favour he begged, was, that his eyes might be opened; so that he might be able to work for his living, and might be no longer burdensome to others. It is a very desirable thing to be in a capacity of earning our own bread; and, where God has given men their limbs and senses, it is a shame for men, by their foolishness and slothfulness, to make themselves, in effect, blind and lame.

VI. This favour he received; his eyes were opened; (v. 52.) and two things Mark here adds, which intimate, 1. How Christ made a double favour to him, by putting the honour of it upon his faith; "Thy faith hath made thee whole; faith in Christ as the Son of David, and in his pity and power; nor any one opportunity of thy faith, setting him on work, or rather Christ setting thy faith on work." Those supplies are most comfortable, that are fetched in by our faith. 2. How he made it a double favour to himself; When he had received his sight, he followed Jesus by the way. By this he made it appear that he was thoroughly cured, that he no more needed one to lead him, but could go himself; and by this he evidenced the grateful sense he had of Christ’s kindness to him, that, when he had his sight, he made this use of it. It is not enough to come to Christ for spiritual healing, but, when we are healed, we must continue to follow him; that we may do honour to him, and receive instruction from him. Those that have spiritual eye-sight, see that beauty in Christ, that will effectually draw them to run after him.

CHAP. XI.

We are now come to the Passion Week, the week in which Christ died, and the great occurrences of that week. I. Christ’s riding in triumph into Jerusalem, v. 1. 11. II. His entry of the barran fig-tree, v. 12. 14. III. His driving of those out of the temple, that turned it into an exchange, v. 15. 19. IV. His discourse with his disciples concerning the power of faith and efficacy of prayer, on occasion of the withering of the fig-tree he cursed, v. 20. 26. V. His reply to them who questioned his authority, v. 27. 33.

1. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem, unto Bethpage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, 2. And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon no man sat; loose him, and bring him. 3. And if any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither. 4. And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met; and they loose him. 5. And certain of them that stood there said unto them, What do ye, loosing the colt? 6. And they said unto them even as Jesus had commanded: and they let them go. 7. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and cast their garments on him; and he sat upon him. 8. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strayed them in the way. 9. And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: 10. Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that
cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest. 11. And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple: and when he had looked round about on all things, and now the sabbath was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

We have here the story of the public entry Christ made into Jerusalem, four or five days before his death. And he came into town thus remarkably, 1. To shew that he was not afraid of the power and malice of his enemies in Jerusalem. He did not steal into town, as it is said by some; or, 2. His face, as one that did not know himself, or 3. To shew for whom he came, he comes in with observation. This would be an encouragement to his disciples that were timorous, and cowed at the thought of their enemies' power and rage; let them see how bravely their Master sets them all at defiance.

1. The outside of this triumph was very mean; he rode upon an ass's colt, which being an ass, looked contemptible, and made no figure; and being but a colt, wherorn never man sat, we may suppose, was rough and untrained, and not only so, but rude and ungovernable, and would disturb and disturb the solemnity. This colt was borrowed too. Christ went upon the water in a borrowed boat, ate the passover in a borrowed chamber, was buried in a borrowed sepulchre, and here rode on a borrowed ass. Let not Christians scorn to be beheld one another, and, when need is, to go a borrowing, for our Master did not. He had no rich trappings; they threw their cloths upon the colt, and so he sat upon him, v. 7. The persons that attended were mean people; and all the show they could make, was, by spreading their garments in the way, and strewning branches of trees in the way, (v. 8.) as they used to do at the feast of tabernacles. All these were marks of his humiliation; even when he would be taken notice of, he would be taken notice of for his meanness; and they are instructions to us, not to mind high things, but to converse to descent of them that are in lowly 

2. The inside of this triumph was very great; not only as it was the fulfilling of the scripture, (which is not taken notice of here, as it was in Matthew,) but as there were several rays of Christ's glory shining forth in the midst of this meaness.

1. Christ shewed his knowledge of things distant, and his power over the wills of men, when he sent his disciples for the colt, v. 4-5. By this it appears that he can do every thing, and no thought can be withheld from him. 2. He shewed his dominion over the creatures in riding on a colt that was never backed. The subject of the inferior part of the creation to man is spoken of, (Ps. 8. 5. 6.) with application to Christ; (Ps. 8. 5. 6. compared with Heb. 2. 8.) for to him it is owing, and to his mediation, that we have any remaining hope; for without the grant God made to man, of a sovereignty in this world, we were Gen. 1. 28. And perhaps Christ, in riding the ass's colt, would give a shadow of his power over the spirit of man, who is born as the wild ass's colt, Job 11. 12. 3. The colt was brought from a place where two ways met, (v. 4.) as if Christ would shew that he came to direct those into the right way, who had two ways before them, and were in danger of taking the wrong. 4.

Christ received the joyful hosannas of the people; that is, both the welcome they gave him, and their good wishes to the prosperity of his kingdom, v. 9. It was God that put it into the hearts of these people to cry, and impress the matter with approbation brought to it, as those who, when afterward cried, Crucify, crucify. Christ reckons himself honoured by the faith and praises of the multitude, and it is God that brings people to do him this honour beyond their own inclinations.

(1.) They welcomed his person; (v. 9.) Blessed is he that cometh; the iexuxv to be he that should come, so often promised, so long expected; he comes in the name of the Lord, as God's Ambassador to the world; Blessed be he: let him have our applause, and best affections; he is a blessed Saviour, and brings blessings to us, and blessed be he that sent him. Let him be blessed in the name of the Lord, and let all nations and ages call him Blessed, and think and speak highly and honourably of him.

(2.) They wished well to his interest, v. 10. They believed that, mean a figure as he made, he had a kingdom, which should shortly be set up in the world, that it was the kingdom of their fathers David, (that father of his country,) the kingdom promised to him and his seed for ever; a kingdom that came in the name of the Lord, supported by a divine authority, Blessed be this kingdom; let it take place, let it get ground, let it come in the power of it, and let all opposing rule, principality, and power, he put down; let it go conquering, and to conquer. Hosanna to this kingdom; prosperity be to it; all things attend it. The proper significations of Hosanna is that which we find, Rev. 7. 10. Salvation to our God, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb; success to religion, both natural and revealed. Hosanna in the highest. Praises be to our God, who is in the highest heavens over all, God blessed for ever; or, Let him be praised by his angels, that are in the highest heavens, let our hosannas be an echo to their.'

Christ thus attended, thus applauded, came into the city, and went directly to the temple. Here was no banquet of wine prepared for his entertainment, nor the least refreshment; but he immediately applied himself to his work, for that was his meat and drink. He went to the temple, that the scripture might be fulfilled; "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, without sending any immediate notice before him; he shall surprise them, and they shall be filled with day of salvation, for he shall be like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." He came to the temple, and took a view of the present state of it, v. 11. He looked round about upon all things, but as yet said nothing. He saw many disorders there, but kept silence, Ps. 50. 21. Though he intended to suppress them, he would not go about the doing of it all on a sudden, lest he should seem to have done it rashly; he let them be as they were for this night, intending the next morning to apply himself to the necessary reformation, and to take the day before him. We may be confident that God sees all the wickedness that is in the world, though he do not presently reckon for it, nor cast it out. Christ, having made his remarks upon what he saw in the temple, retired in the evening to a friend's house at Bethany, because there he would be more out of the noise of the town, and out of the way of being suspected, as designed to head a faction.

12. And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: 13. And seeing a fig tree afar off, having leaves he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found
nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. 14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it. 15. And they came to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; 16. And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. 17. And he taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. 18. And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people was astonished at his doctrine. 19. And when even was come, he went out of the city. 20. And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. 21. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. 22. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23. For verily I say unto you, that whatsoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. 24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. 25. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have offended against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Here is,

1. Christ's cursing of the fruitless fig-tree. He had a convenient resting place at Bethany, and therefore thither he went at resting time; but his work lay at Jerusalem, and thither therefore he returned in the morning, at working time; and so intent was he upon his work, that he went out from Bethany without breakfast, which, before he was gone far, he found the want of, and was hungry, (v. 12.) for he was subject to all the sins and iniquities of our nature. Finding himself in want of food, he went to a fig-tree, which he saw at some distance, which being well adorned with green leaves, he hoped to find enriched with some sort of fruit. But he found nothing but leaves; he hoped to find some fruit, for the time of gathering in figs, though it was near, yet was not yet; so that it could not be pretended that it had had fruit, but that it was gathered and gone; for the season had not yet arrived. Or, He found none, for indeed it was not a season of figs, it was no good fig year. But this was worse than any other fig-tree, for there was not so much as one fig to be found upon it, though it was so full of leaves. However, Christ was willing to make an example of it, not to the trees, but to the men, of that generation, and therefore cursed it with that curse which is the reverse of the first blessing, Be fruitful; he said unto it, Never let any man eat of thee for ever. And the tree was not, according to the doom in the parable, immediately cut down, yet, according to this in the history, blindness and hardness befell them, (Rom. 11. 8, 25.) so that they were from henceforth good for nothing. The disciples heard what sentence Christ passed on this tree, and took notice of it. Woes from Christ's mouth are to be observed and kept in mind, as well as blessings.

2. His clearing of the temple of the market people that frequented it, and of those that made it a thoroughfare. We do not find that Christ met with food elsewhere, when he missed of it on the fig-tree; but the zeal of God's house so ate him up, and made him forget himself, that he came, hungry as he was, to Jerusalem, and went straight to the temple, and began to reform those abuses which the day before had not been cure. And the Redeemer came to Zion, his errand was, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, (Rom. 11. 26.) and that he came not, as he was falsely accused, to destroy the temple, but to purify and refine it, and reduce his church to its primitive rectitude.

3. He cast out the buyers and sellers, overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and threw the money to the ground. He cast down the seats of them that sold doves. This he did as one having authority, as a Son in his own house. The filth of the daughter of Zion is purged away, not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning. And he did it without opposition; for what he did was manifested to be right and good, even in the consciences of those that had celebrated it, and condemned it, and reproved it, and made a lark of it, and often encouraged Zealous reformers, that frequently the purging out of corruptions, and the correcting of abuses, prove an easier piece of work than was apprehended. Prudent attempts sometimes prove successful beyond expectation, and there are not those lions found in the way, that were feared to be.

4. He would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel, any sort of goods or wares, through the temple, or any of the courts of it, because it was the nearer way, and would save them the labour of going about, v. 16. The Jews owned that it was one of the instances of honour due to the temple, not to make the mountain of the house, or the court of the Gentiles, a road, or common passage, or to come into it with any bundle.

5. He gave a good reason for this; because it was written, My house shall be called all nations, The house of prayer, v. 17. So it is written, Isa. 56. 7. It shall pass among all people under that character. It shall be the house of prayer to all nations; it was so in the first institution of it; when Solomon dedicated it, it was with an eye to the sons of the strangers, 1 Kings 8. 41. And it was prophesied that it should be yet more magnified and enlarged, when the Gentile church shall have the temple, as a type of the gospel church, be 2 Cor. 1. A house of prayer. After he had turned out the oxen and doves, which were things for sacrifice, he re-
vived the appointment of it a house of prayer, to teach us, that, when all sacrifices and offerings should be abolished, the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise should continue and remain for ever. 

(2.) That it should be so to all nations, and not to the people of the Jews only; for whatsoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, though not of the seed of Jacob, according to the flesh. It was therefore insufferable for them to make it a den of thieves, which would prejudice those nations against it, whom they should have added to the fame of Christ. 

Dr. Doddridge says, that the house of prayer, where Christ drove out the buyers and sellers at the beginning of his ministry, he only charged them with making the temple a house of merchandise; (John 2:16.) but now he chargeth them with making it a den of thieves, because since then they had twice gone about to stone him in the temple; (John 8:59. -10. 31.) or because the traders there were grown notorious for cheating the poor, and imposing upon the ignorance and necessity of the country people, which is no better than down-right thievery. Those that suffer vain worldly thoughts to lodge within them when they are at their devotions, turn the house of prayer into a house of merchandise; but they that make long prayers, for a pretence to devour widows’ houses, turn it into a den of thieves. 

4. The scribes and the chief priests were extremely variegated andainted to be reformed by him; and yet they feared him, lest he should next overturn their seats, and expel them, being conscious to themselves of the profaning and abusing of their power. They found that he had a great interest, that all the people were astonished at his doctrine, and that every thing he said was an oracle and a law to them; and that which he not attempt, and I could be not effect, being thus sought, as if they were concerned to show how they might make their peace with him, but how they might destroy him. A desperate attempt, and which, one would think, they themselves could not but fear was fighting against God. But they care not what they do, to support their own power and grandeur. 

III. His discourse with his disciples, upon occasion of the fig tree's withering away, which he had cursed as usual, he went out of the city, (v. 12.) to Bethany; but it is probable that it was in the dark, so that they could not see the fig tree; but the next morning, as they passed by, they observed the fig tree dried up from the roots, v. 20. More is included many times in Christ's curses than is expressed, as appears by the effects of them. The curse was no more than that it should never bear fruit again, but the effect goes further, it is dried up from the roots. If it bear no fruit, it shall bear no leaves to cheat people. Now observe, 

1. How the disciples were affected with it. Peter remembered Christ's words, and said, with surprise, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursed art withered away, v. 21. Note, Christ's curses have wonderful effects, and make those to wither presently, that flourish like the green bay tree. This is the judgment-cusheth they are cursed by. This represented the character and state of the Jewish church: which, from henceforward, was a tree dried up from the roots; no longer fit for food, but for fuel only. The first establishment of the Levitical priesthood was ratified and confirmed by the miracle of a dry rod, which in one night huddled, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. (Num. 17. 8.) a happy omen of the fruitfulness and flourishing of that priesthood. This was a contrary miracle, and a contrary impression of that priesthood, not ratified by a flourishing tree dried up in a night; the just punishment of those priests that had abused it. And this seemed very strange to the disciples, and scarcely credible that the Jews, who had been so long God's own, his only professing people in the world, should be thus abandoned; they could not imagine how a fig tree should so soon wither away; but this comes of rejecting Christ, and being rejected by him. 

2. The good instructions Christ gave them from it; for of those even this withered tree was fruitful. 

(1.) Christ teacheth them from hence to pray in faith; (v. 22.) Have faith in God. They admired the power of Christ's word of command; Why. He willed it, and it was done. Christ saith, in the power of thy faith, great a power into your prayers, v. 23. 24. If howev - ever saith to this mountain, this mount of Olives, He is removed, and be cast into the sea; if he hath but any word of God, general or particular, to build his faith upon, and if he shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that these things which he saith, according to the warrant he has from what God hath said, shall come to pass, he shall accomplish whatsoever he saith. "Through the strength and power of God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore, (v. 24.) "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them; and believe, that ye do receive them, and he that has power to give them saith, Ye shall have them. I say unto you, Ye shall," v. 24. For truly I say unto you, Ye shall." 

Note, That the miracle of the mountain was taken as an instance of the infinite wisdom and power of God, and of the possibility of removing mountains. The apostle speaks of a faith which would do that, and yet might be found where holy love was not, 1 Cor. 13. 2. [2] It may be applied to that miracle of faith, which all true Christians are endued with, which overcomes mountains of guilt, and makes them mountains of holiness, and spiritual. It justifies us, (Rom. 5. l.) and so removes mountains of corruption, and makes them plains before the grace of God, Zech. 4. 7. It is by faith that the world is conquered, Satan's fiery darts quenched, a soul is crucified with Christ, and yet the tree grows, and does not wither, but is full of fruit for ever, and see him that is invisible, and have him present to our minds; and this is effectual to remove mountains, for the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, the mountains were not only moved, but removed, Ps. 114. 6, 7. 

(2.) This is added here that necessary qualification of the prevailing prayer, that we freely forgive those who have been any way injurious to us, and stand in charity with all men, (v. 25, 26.) God in Christ, the greatest difficulty shall be got over, and the thing shall be effected. And therefore, (v. 24.) "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them; and believe, that ye do receive them, and he that has power to give them saith, Ye shall have them. I say unto you, Ye shall," v. 24. For truly I say unto you, Ye shall." 

Note, Standing is no improper posture for prayer; it was generally used among the Jews; hence they called their prayers their standings; when they would say how the world was kept up by prayer, they expressed it thus, Stationibus stat mundus - The world is upheld by standings. But the primitive christians generally used the more humble and reverent gesture of kneeling, especially on fasting days, though not on Lord's days. When we are at prayer, we must remember to pray for others, particularly for our enemies, and those that have wronged us; now we cannot pray sincerely that God would do them good, if we bear malice to them, and wish them ill. If we have injured others before we pray, we must go and be reconciled to them, Matt. 5. 23. But if they have injured us, we go a nearer way to deserve wounds in things because this is a good step towards obtaining the for - don of our own sins: Forgive, that your Father may forgive you; that is, that you may be qualified to receive forgiveness, that he may forgive you with-
out injury to his honour, as it would be, if he should suffer those to have such benefit by his mercy, as are so far from being conformable to the pattern of it. 2. Because the want of this is a certain bar to the obtaining of the pardon of our sins; "If ye do not forgive those who have injured you, if ye have harmed their persons, bear them a grudge, meditate revenge, and take all occasions to speak ill of them, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." This ought to be remembered in prayer, because one great errand we have to the throne of grace, is, to pray for the pardon of our sins: and care about it ought to be the daily care, because prayer is a part of our daily work. Our Saviour often insists on this, for it was his great design to engage his disciples to love one another.

27. And they come again to Jerusalem: and as he was walking in the temple, there come to him the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders, 28. And say unto him, By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority to do these things? 29. And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one question, and answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? answer me. 31. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then did ye not believe him? 32. But if we shall say, Of men; they feared he people: for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. 33. And they answered and said unto Jesus, We cannot tell. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

We have here Christ examined by the great Sanhedrin concerning his authority; for they claimed a power to call prophets to an account concerning their mission. They came to him when he was walking in the temple, not for his diversion, but teaching the people, first one company and then another: "The Peripatetic philosophers were so called from the custom they had of walking when they taught. The cloisters, or piazzas, in the courts of the temple, were fitted for this purpose. The great men were vexed to see him followed and heard with attention, and therefore came to him with some solemnity, and did as it were arraign him at the bar with this question, By what authority dost thou these things? v. 28. Now observe, 1. How they designed hereby to run him aground, and to embarrass him. If they could make it out before the people, that he had not a legal mission, then the people were resolved to find some flaw or other in his commission, and will conclude it invalid, if it be not produced and ratified in their court. Thus the Papists resolve their controversy with us very much into the mission of our ministers, and if they have but any pretence to overthrow that, they think they have gained their point, though we have the scripture ever so much on our side. But this is indeed a question, which all that act either as magistrates or as ministers, ought to be furnished with a good answer to, and often put to themselves, By what authority do I these things? For how can men preach except they be sent? Or how can they act with comfort, or confidence, or hope of success, except they be authorized? Jer. 33. 32.

II. How he effectually ran them aground, and embarrassed them, with this question, "What are your thoughts concerning the baptism of John? Was it from heaven, or of men? By what authority did John preach, and baptize, and gather disciples? Answer me, v. 30. Deal fairly and ingenuously, they said, give us your answer concerning the other. By the resolving of their question into this, our Saviour intimates how near akin the doctrine and baptism were to John's; they had the same original, and the same design and tendency—to introduce the gospel-kingdom. Christ might with better grace put this question to them, because they had sent a committee of their own house to examine John, John 1. 23. "Now," said Christ, "what was the result of your inquiries concerning him?" They knew what they thought of this question; they could not but think that John Baptist was a man sent of God. But the difficulty was, what they should say to it now. Men that oblige not themselves to speak as they think, (which is a certain rule,) cannot avoid perplexing themselves thus. 1. If they own the baptism of John to be from heaven, as they were, were they not to themselves, for Christ will presently turn it upon them, Why did ye not then believe him, and receive his baptism? They could not bear that Christ should say this, but they could bear it that their own consciences should say so, because they had an art of stifling and silencing them, and because what conscience said, though it might gall and grate them a little, would not shame them; and then they would do well enough, who looked no further than Saul's care, when he was convicted, Honour me now before this people, 1 Sam. 15. 30.

2. If they say, "It is of men, he was not sent of God, but his doctrine and baptism were inventions of his own," they expose themselves, the people will be ready to do them a mischief, or at least clamour upon them; for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed, and therefore could not bear that he should be reflected on. Note, There is a carnal slavish fear, which not only wicked subjects but wicked rulers likewise are liable to, which God makes use of as a means to keep the world in some order, and to suppress violence, that it shall not all ways grow up into a rod of wickedness. Now by this dilemma to which Christ brought them, (1.) They were confounded and baffled, and forced to make a dishonourable retreat; to pretend ignorance — We cannot tell, (and that was mortification enough to those proud men,) but really to discover the greatest malice and wilfulness. What Christ did by his wisdom, we must labour to do by our well-doing—put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. 2. 15. (2.) Christ came off with honour, and justified himself in refuting to them their invidious demand; Neither tell you by what authority I do these things. They did not deserve to be told; for it was plain that they contended not for truth, but victory; nor did he need so tell them; for the works which he did, told them plainly that he had authority from God to do what he did; since no man could do those miracles which he did, unless God were with him. Let them wait but a little while, and his resurrection shall tell them who gave him his authority, for by that he will be declared to be the Son of God with power, as by their rejecting of him, notwithstanding, they will be declared to be the enemies of God.
CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The parable of the vineyard let out to untimely husbandmen, representing the sin and ruin of them that despise the divine grace. 10. 11. The parable of those who thought to ensnare him with a question about paying tribute to Caesar, v. 13...17. 111. His silencing of the Sadducees, who attempted to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, v. 18...19. IV. His conference with a scribe about the first and great command of the law, v. 28...34. V. His puzzling of the Scribes with a question about Christ's being the Son of David, v. 35...37. VI. The caution he gave the people, to take heed of the Scribes, v. 38...40. VII. His commendation of the poor widow that cast her two mites into the treasury, v. 41...44.

1. A ND he began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. 2. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. 3. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. 4. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. 5. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. 6. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. 7. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. 8. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. 9. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. 10. And have ye not read this scripture: The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner: 11. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! 12. And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way. 11. Those whom God lets out his vineyard to, he sends his servants to, to put them in mind of his just expectations from them, v. 2. He was not hasty in his demands, nor high, for he did not send for the rent till they could make it, at the season; nor did he put them to the trouble of making money of it, but was willing to let it be

2. II. 44. He marvellous out of it, which the people, who cast it among the ruins of. This parable we had just as we have it here, Matth. 21. 33. We may observe here, I. They that enjoy the privileges of the visible church, have a vineyard let out to them, which is capable of great improvement, and from the occupiers of which rent is justly expected. When God shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel; (Ps. 147. 19.) when he set up his temple among them, his ordinances, his good laws, and his other ordinances, then he let out to them the vineyard he had planted; which he hedged, and in which he built a tower, v. 1. Members of the church are God's tenants, and they have both a good landlord and a good bargain, and may live well upon it, if it be not their own fault.

1. Though those who plant the vineyard, as Christ did, and their disciples, he sends his servants to, to make it fruitful, and to watch over it, they are yet sometimes engaged with the son, who is the true owner of the vineyard.

2. These whom God lets out his vineyard to, he sends his servants to, to put them in mind of his just expectations from them, v. 2. He was not hasty in his demands, nor high, for he did not send for the rent till they could make it, at the season; nor did he put them to the trouble of making money of it, but was willing to let it be

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the builders rejected, notwithstanding that, is become the Head of the corner, is highly advanced as the Head-stone, and of necessary use and influence as the Corner-stone. God will set Christ as his King, upon his holy hill of Zion, in spite of their pro-
jects, who would break his bonds asunder. And all the world shall see and own this to be the Lord's doing, in justice to the Jews, and in compassion to the Gentiles. The exaltation of Christ was the Lord's doing, and it is his doing to exalt him in our hearts, and to set up his throne there; and if it be done, it cannot but be marvellous in our eyes. Now what had this passed up, but the chief priests and scribes, whose conviction was designed by it? They knew he spake this parable against them, v. 12. They could not but see their own faces in the glass of it; and, one would think, it shewed them their sin so very heinous, and their ruin so certain and great, that it should have frightened them into a compliance with Christ and his gospel, should have prevailed to bring them to repentance, at least, to make them desist from their malicious purpose against him; but, instead of that, (1.) They sought to lay hold on him, and make him their prisoner immediately, and so to silence what he had just now said they would do to him, v. 8. (2.) No-	hing restrained them from it but the awe they stood in of the people; they did not reverence Christ, nor had any fear of him, but they thought, so far, as if they should publicly lay hold on Christ, the mob would rise, and lay hold on them, and rescue him. (3.) They left him, and went their way; if they could not do hurt to him, they resolved he should not do good to them, and therefore they got out of the hearing of his powerful preaching; lest they should be converted and healed. Note, If men's prejudices be not conquered by the evidence of truth, they are but confirmed; and if the corruptions of the heart be not subdued by faithful reproofs, they are but enraged and exasperated. If the gospel be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death.

13. And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words. 14. And when they were come, they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? 15. Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why tempt ye me? bring me a penny, that I may see it. 16. And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Caesar's. 17. And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marveled at him. When the enemies of Christ, who thirsted for his blood, could not find occasion against him from what he said against them, they tried to ensure him, by putting questions to him. Here we have him tendered rather, with a question, about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar. We had this narrative, Matth. 22. 15.

I. The persons they employed, were, the Pharisees and the Herodians, men that in this matter were contrary to one another, and yet concurred against Christ, v. 13. The Pharisees were great sticklers for the liberty of the Jews, and, if he should say, It is lawful to give tribute to Caesar, they would insist that he should be absent from them entirely. The Herodians would, underhand, assist them in it. The Herodians were great sticklers for the Roman power, and if he should disown the paying of tribute to Caesar, they would incense the governor against him, yea, and the Pharisees, against their own principles, would join with them in it. It is no new thing for these that are at variance in other things, to stand in a confederacy against him. 11. The pretence they made, was, that they de-
sired him to resolve them a case of conscience, which was of great importance in the present jun-
ture; and they took on them to have a high opinion of his ability to resolve it, v. 14. They compli-
mented him at a high rate, called him Master, owned him for a Teacher of the way of God, a Teacher of it in truth, one who taught what was good, and upon principles of truth, who would not be brought by smiles or frowns to depart a step from the rules of equity and goodness; Thou earnest for no man, nor regardest the person of men, thou art not afraid of offending either the jealous prince, on one hand, or the jealous people on the other; thou art right, and always in the right, and dest in a right manner declare good and evil, truth and falsehood. If they threw any difficulties in his way concerning Christ, when they said, We know that thou art right, their persecuting of him, and putting of him to death, as a Deceiver, was a sin against knowledge; they knew him, and yet crucified him. However, a man's testimony shall be taken most strongly against himself, and out of their own mouths are they judged; they knew that he taught the way of God in truth, and yet rejected the counsel of God against themselves. The pretences and pretences of hypocrites will be produced in evidence against them, and they will be self-condemned. But if they did not know or believe it, they lied unto God with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue.

III. The question they put, was, Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? They would be thought desirous to know their duty. In a nation the dead righteousmess, the law of God, the ordinances of justice, when really they desired nothing but to know what he would say, in hopes that, which side soever he took of the question, they might take occasion from it to accuse him. Nothing is more likely to ensnare ministers, than bringing them to meddle with controversies about civil rights, and to settle land-marks between the prince and the subject, which, if it should be done, while it is in his power to keep them, he should have the doing of it. They seemed to refer the determining of this matter to Christ; and he indeed was fit to determine it, for by him kings reign, and princes decree justice; they put the question fairly, Shall we give, or shall we not give? They seemed resolved to stand to his award; If thou sayest that we must pay tribute, if we will do it, though we be made beggars. If thou sayest we must not, though we be made traitors for it. Many seem desirous to know their duty, who are no ways disposed to do it: as those proud men, Jer. 42. 26.

IV. Christ determined the question, and evaded the snare, by referring them to their national con-
escions already made, by which they were pre-
ceded from disputing this matter, v. 15.-17. He knew their hypocrisy, that they were full of malice that was in their hearts against him, while with their mouth they showed all this love. Hypocrisy, though ever so artfully managed, cannot be concealed from the Lord Jesus. He sees the fomescher that is covered with the silver dross. He knew they intended to ensnare him, and therefore contrived the matter by
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as to ensue them, and to oblige them, by their own words, to do what they were unwilling to do, which war, to pay their taxes honestly and quietly, and yet at the same time to screen himself against their exceptions. He made them acknowledge, that the current money of their nation was Roman money, and that the emperor's image on one side, and his subj. sculation on the other, was for revenue, and might command their money for the public benefit, because he has the custody and conduct of the state, wherein he ought to have his charges borne; RENDER 2.3. TO CAESAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESAR’S. The circulation of the money is from him, as the fountain, and therefore it must return to him. As far as it is his, so far it must be rendered to him; and how far it is his, may be commanded by him, is to be judged by the consent of the government, according as it is, and hath settled the prerogative of the prince and the property of the subject. 2. Caesar might not command their consciences, nor did he pretend to it; he offered not to make any alteration in their religion. “Pay your tribute, therefore, without murmuring or disputing, but be sure to render to God the things that are God’s.” Perhaps he referred to the parable he had just now put forth, in which he had condemned them for not re- ducing the fruits to the Lord of the vineyard, v. 2. Many, that seem careful to give to men their due, are in no care to give to God the glory due to his name; whereas our hearts and best affections are as much due to him as ever rent was to a landlord, or tribute to a prince. All that heard Christ, mar- velled at the discretion of his answer, and how ingeniously he avoided the snare; but I doubt none were brought by it, as they ought to be, to render to God themselves and their devotions. Many will commend the wit of a sermon, that will not be com- manded by the divine laws of a sermon.

13. Then come unto him the Sadducees, which say there is no resurrection; and they asked him, saying, 19. Master, Moses wrote unto us, If a man’s brother die, and leave his wife behind him, and leave no children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 20. Now there were seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and dying left no seed. 21. And the second took her, and died, neither left he any seed: and the third likewise. 22. And the reeven had her, and left no seed: last of all, the woman died also. 23. In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them? for the seven had her to wife. 24. And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God? 25. For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven. 26. And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I AM the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? 27. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err.

The Sadducees, who were the disciples of that age, here attack our Lord Jesus, it should seem, not as the Scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, with any malicious design upon his person; they were not bigots and persecutors, but sceptics and infidels, and their design was upon his doctrine, to hinder the spreading of that: they denied that there was any resurrection, and endeavoured to overthrow the whole of the Jewish religion, and the Jewish rewards and punishments on the other side death: now those great and fundamental truths which they de- nied, Christ had made it his business to establish and prove, and had carried the notion of them much further than ever it was before carried; and therefore they set themselves to perplex his doctrine.

I. See here the method they take to entangle it; they place the law and the things of the law, as if, a man died without issue, his brother was obliged to marry his widow, v. 19. They suppose a case to happen, that, according to that law, seven brothers were success- sively the husbands of one woman, v. 20. Probably, these Sadducees, according to their wanted profan- ness, intended hereby to ridicule that law, and so to bring the whole frame of the Mosaic institution into contempt, as absurd and inconvenient in the practice of it. These who deny divine revelation, can only set themselves in opposition to divine laws and ordinances. But this was only by the by; their design was to ex- pose the doctrine of the resurrection; for they sup- pose, that, if there be a future state, it must be such a one as this, and then the doctrine, they think, is clogged either with this invincible absurdity, that a woman in that state must have seven husbands, or else with this insolvable difficulty, whose wife shall she be. See with what subtilty these heretics under- mine the truth; they do not deny it, nor say, There can be no resurrection; nay, they do not seem to doubt of it, nor say, If there be a resurrection, whose wife shall she be? (as the devil to Christ, If thou be the Son of God;) but, as though these beasts of the field were more subtle than the serpent him- self, they pretend to own the truth, as if they were not Sadducees, no, not they; Who said that they de- nied the resurrection? They take it for granted that there is a resurrection, and would be thought to de- sire instruction concerning it, when really they are designing to give it a fatal stab, and think that they shall do it. Note, It is the common artifice of heres- tics and Sadducees to perplex and entangle the truth, which they have not the impediment to deny.

II. See here the method Christ takes to clear and establish this truth, which they attempted to darken, and give a shock to. This was a matter of moment, and therefore Christ does not pass it over lightly, but enunciates upon it, that, if they should not be reclaim- ed, yet others might be confirmed.

1. He charges the Sadducees with error, and charges that upon their ignorance. They who ban- ter the doctrine of the resurrection, as some do in our age, would be thought the only knowing men, because the only free-thinkers, when really they are the fools in Israel, and the most enslaved and prejudiced thinkers in the world. “Do ye not then perceive ye can hardly be sensible of yourselves, and that the cause of your error is,” (1.) Because ye do not know the scriptures. Not but that the Sadducees had read the scriptures, and perhaps were ready in them; yet they might be truly said not to know the scriptures, because they did not know the sense and meaning of them, but put false constructions upon them; or they did not receive the scriptures as the word of God, but set them up contrary to the ordinary sense, and offered new constructions; the scriptures they would believe nothing but what they could see. Note, A right knowledge of the scripture, as the fountain whence all revealed religion now flows, and the foundation on which it is built, is the best preserva- tive against error. Keep the truth, the scripture-
truth, and it shall keep thee. (2.) Because ye know not the power of God. They could not but know that God is almighty, but they would not apply that doctrine to this matter, but gave up the truth to the objections of the impossibility of it, which would all have been answered, if they had but stuck to the doctrine of God's omnipotence, to which nothing is impossible. This therefore with which God spake once, we are concerned to hear twice, to hear and believe, to hear and apply—that power belongs to God, Ps. 62. 10. Rom. 4. 19–21. The same power that made soul and body, and preserved them while they were together, can preserve the body safe, and the soul active, when they are parted, and can unite them together again; for, behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened. The power of God was, in the turning of the spring, (Ps. 104. 30.) in the reviving of the corn, (John 12. 24.) in the restoring of an abject people to their prosperity, (Ezek. 37. 12–14.) in the raising of so many to life, miraculously, both in the Old Testament and in the New, and especially in the resurrection of Christ, (Eph. 1. 19, 20.) are all earnest of our resurrection by the same power; (Phil. 3. 21.) according to the mighty working whereby he is able to work in us. The power by which God hath spoken once, is the power to win and to keep those that have objections to it. 

Hence, He exhausts all the force of their objection, by setting the doctrine of the future state in a true light; (v. 25.) When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage. It is a folly to ask, Whose wife shall she be of the seven? For, the relation between husband and wife, though instituted in the earthly paradise, will not be known in the heavenly one. Turks and infidels expect sensual pleasures in their fool's paradise, but Christians know better things—that fresh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God; (1 Cor. 15. 50.) and expect better things—even a full satisfaction in God's love and likeness; (Ps. 17. 14, 15.) they are as the angels of God in heaven, and we know that they have neither wives nor children. It is no wonder if we confound ourselves with endless absurdities, when we measure our ideas of the world of spirits by the affairs of this world of sense.

III. He builds the doctrine of the future state, and of the blessedness of the righteous in that state, upon the covenant of God with Abraham, which God was pleased to own, being after Abraham's death, v. 26, 27. He appeals to the scriptures; Have ye not read in the book of Moses? We have some advantage in dealing with those that have read the scriptures, though we are not always to expect that they were as thoroughly learned as the Sadducees did, to their own destruction. Now, that which he refers them to, is, what God said to Moses at the bush, I am the God of Abraham; not only, I was so, but I am so; I am the Portion and Happiness of Abraham, a God all sufficient to him. Note, It is absurd to think that God's relation to Abraham should be continued, and thus solemnly recognised, if Abraham was annihilated, or that the living God shall deal with and regard the Happiness of a man that is dead, and must be for ever so; and therefore you must conclude, 1. That Abraham's soul exists, and acts in a state of separation from the body. 2. That therefore, some time or other, the body must rise again; for there is such an innate inclination in a human soul towards its body, as would make a total and everlasting separation inconsistent with the case, and recall much, nay, all the mind and soul of those souls that have the Lord for their God. Upon the whole matter, he concludes, Ye therefore do greatly err. Those that deny the resurrection, greatly err, and ought to be told so.

28. And one of the Scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? 29. And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord: 30. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. 31. And the second is like, namely, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: there is none other commandment greater than these. 32. And the Scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God, and there is none other but he. 33. And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole-burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 34. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

The Scribes and Pharisees were (however bad otherwise) enemies to the Sadducees; now one would have expected that, when they heard Christ argue so well against the Sadducees, they should have countenanced him, as they did Paul when he appeared against the Sadducees; (Acts 23. 24.) but it did not that effect; because he did not fall in with them in the ceremonial of religion, his agreeing with them in the essentials, gained him no manner of respect with them. Only we have here an account of one of them, a Scribe, who had so much civility in him as to take notice of Christ's answer to the Sadducees, and to own that he had answered well, and much to the purpose; (v. 28.) and we have reason to hope that he did not join with the other Scribes, in opposing Christ; for here we have his application to Christ for instruction, and it was such as became him; not tempting Christ, but desiring to improve his acquaintance with him.

I. He inquired, Which is the first commandment of all? (v. 28.) He doth not mean the first in order, but the first in weight and dignity. Which is that command which we ought to love in a manner to conquer an eye to, and our obedience to which will lay a foundation for our obedience to all the rest? Not that any commandment of God is little, (they are all the commands of a great God,) but some are greater than others, moral precepts than rituals, and of some we may say, They are the greatest of all.

II. Christ gave him a direct answer to this inquiry, v. 29–31. Those that sincerely mean to be instructed concerning the nature of Christianity, Christ will guide in judgment, and teach his way. He tells him, 1. That the great commandment of all, which is indeed inclusive of all, is, that of loving God with all our hearts; (1.) Where this is the commanding principle in the soul, there is a disposition to every other duty. Love is the leading affection of the soul; the love of God is the leading grace in the renewed soul. (2.) Where this is not, nothing else is that is good, is right, or done aright; or accepted, or done long. Loving God with all our heart, will effectually take us off from, and arm us against, all those things that are rivals with him for the throne in our souls, and will engage us to every thing by which he may be honoured, and with which he will be pleased; and no commandment will be grievous where this principle commands, and has the ascendant.
Now here in Mark, our Saviour prefixes to this command the great doctrinal truth upon which it is built: (v. 29.) Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord. He is Jehovah, who has all amiable perfec-
tions in himself, he is our God, to whom we stand related and obli-
ged, and therefore we ought to love him, to set our affections on him, let out our desire toward him, and take a delight in him; and he is one Lord, therefore he must be love him with our whole heart; he has the sole right to us, and therefore ought to have the sole possession of us. If he be our one, he must be one with him, and since there is no God besides, no rival must be admitted with him upon the throne. 

2. That the second great commandment is to love our neighbour as ourselves, (v. 31.) as truly and sincerely as we love ourselves, and in the same instances, and we must show it by doing as we would be done by, As we must therefore love God better than ourselves, because he is Jehovah, a Being infinitely better than we are, and must love him with all our heart, because he is one Lord, and there is no other like him; so we must love our neighbour as ourselves, because he is of the same nature with our-

selves; our hearts are fashioned alike, and my neighbour and myself are of one body, of one society, that of the world of mankind; and if a fellow-Christian, and of the same sacred society, the obligation is the stronger. Has not one God created us? (v. 32.) Mal. 2. 10. Has not one Christ redeemed us? Well might Christ say, There is no other commandment greater than these; for in these all the law is fulfilled, and if we make conscience of obedience to these, all other in-
stances of obedience will follow of course. 

III. The Scribe consented to what Christ said, and descended upon it, v. 32, 33. 1. He commends Christ’s decision of this question; Well, Master, thou hast said the truth. Christ’s assertions needed not the Scribe’s attestations; but this Scribe, being a man in authority, thought it would put a better

light upon what Christ said, to have it commended by him; and it shall be brought in evidence against those who persecuted Christ, as a Deceiver, that one of themselves, even a Scribe of their own, con-

fessed that he said the truth, and said it well. And thus must we subscribe to Christ’s sayings, must set to our seal that they are true. 2. He comments upon it. This is the great doctrine, That the Lord our God is one Lord: and this he not only as

sented to, but added, There is none other but he; and therefore we must have no other God besides.” This excludes all rivals with him, and secures the throne in the heart entire for him. Christ had laid down that great law, of loving God with all our heart; and this also he explains—that it is loving him with the understanding, as those that know what abundant reason we have to love him. Our love to God and his service must be, as it were, an earthy and an intelligent love; we must love him with all the under-

standing, &c. out of the whole understand- ing; our rational powers and faculties must all be set on work to lead out the affections of our souls toward God. Christ had said, “To love God and our neighbour is the greatest commandment of all;” and this Scribe, (v. 34.) saith, “Ye shall love the Lord your God, and neighbour as yourself.” There were those who held, that the law of sacrifices was the greatest command-

ment of all; but this Scribe readily agreed with our Saviour in this—that the law of love to God and our neighbour is greater than that of sacrifice, even than those whole-burnt-offerings, which were intended purely for the honour of God.

IV. Christ approved of what he said, and encour-

aged him to proceed in his inquiries of him, v. 34.

1. He owned that he understood well, as far as he went; so far, so good. Jesus saw that he answered


discretely, and was the more pleased with it, because he had said, That the Lord our God is one Lord, and has said, He is the only one that had a mind; as a rational, intelligent man, as one that had his wits about him; as one whose reason was not blinded, whose judgment was not biased, and whose fore-
thought was not fettered, by the prejudices which other Scribes were so much under the power of. He answered as one that allowed himself liberty and leisure to consider, and as one that had considered. 2. He owned that he stood fair for a further advance; “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace and glory; thou art in a likely way to be a Christian, a disciple of Christ. For the doc-

trine of Christ insists most upon these things, and is designed, and has a tendency direct, to bring thee to this. Note, There is hope of those who make a good use of the light they have, and go as far as that will carry them, that by the grace of God they will be led further, by the clearer discoveries God has to make to them. What became of this Scribe we are not told, but would willingly hope that he took the hint Christ hereby gave him, and that, having been told by him, so much to his satisfaction, what was the great commandment of the law, he proceeded to inquire of him, or his apostles, what was the great commandment of the gospel too. Yet, if he did not, but took up here, and went no further, we are not to think it strange; for there are many who are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither. Now, one would think, this should have invited many to consult him; but it had a contrary

effect; No man after that durst ask him any ques-
tion; every thing he said was spoken with such au-

thority and majesty, that every one stood in awe of him; those that desired to learn, were ashamed to

ask, and those that designed to callv, were afraid to

ask.

35. And Jesus answered and said, while he taught in the temple, How say the scribes that Christ is the Son of David? 36. For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 37. David therefore himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he then his Son? And the common people heard him gladly. 38. And he said unto them in his doctrine. Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the market places, 39. And the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; 40. Which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Here, 1. Christ shews the people how weak and defec-
tive the scribes were in their preaching, and how unable to solve the difficulties that occurred in the scriptures of the Old Testament, which they under took to expound. Of this he gives an instance, which is not so fully related here as it was in Mat-

thew. Christ was teaching in the temple: many things he said which were not written; but notice is taken of this, because it will stir us up to inquire concerning Christ, and to inquire of him; for nev
think, intimates that they prayed not for themselves only, but for others, and therein were very particular and very large; this they did for a pretence, that they might seem to love prayer, not only for God's sake, whom hereby they pretended to glorify but for their neighbour's sake, whom hereby they pretended to be serviceable to.

3. They herein aimed to advance themselves, they coveted applause, and were fond of it; they loved solatiaions in the market-places, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts; these pleased a vain fancy; to have these given them, they thought, expressed the value they had for them, who did know them, and gained them respect from those who did not.

4. They herein aimed to enrich themselves. They discouraged widows' house, made themselves masters of their estates by some trick or other; it was to screen themselves from the suspicion of dishonesty, that they put on the mask of piety; and, that they might not be thought as bad as the worst, they were studious to seem as good as the best. Let fraud and oppression be thought the worse of for their having profaned and disgraced long prayers; but let not prayers, no, nor long prayers, be thought the worse of, if made in vanity and sincerity, though found in their having been by some thus abused. But, as iniquity, thus disguised with a show of piety, is double iniquity, so its doom will be doubly heavy; These shall receive greater damnation; greater than those that live without prayer, greater than they should have received for the wrong done to the poor widows, if it had not been thus disguised. Note, The damnation of hypocrites will be, of all others, the greatest damnation.

41. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast much. 42. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. 43. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. 44. For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

This passage of story was not in Matthew, but is here and in Luke; it is Christ's commendation of the poor widow, that cast two mites into the treasury, which our Saviour, busy as he was in preaching, found leisure to take notice of. Observe,

I. There was a public fund for charity, into which contributions were brought, and out of which the poor had distribution made to them, and this in the temple; for works of charity and works of piety very fitly go together; where God is honoured by our worship, it is proper he should be honoured by the relief of his poor; and we often find prayers and alms in conjunction, as Acts 20. 1, 2. It is good to erect public receptacles of charity for the inviting and directing of private hands in giving to the poor; nay it is good for those who are of ability to have funds of their own, to lay by as God has prospered them, (1 Cor. 16. 2.) that they may have something ready to give when an object of charity offers itself, which is before dedicated to such uses.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye upon it; He sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into it; not grudging either that he had none to cast in, or had not the disposal of that which was
cast in, but observing what was cast in. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of what we contribute to pious and charitable uses; whether we give liberally or sparingly; whether cheerfully or with reluctance and ill-will: nay, he looks at the heart; he observes what principles we act upon, and what our views are, in giving alms; and whether we do it as unto the Lord, or only to be seen of men.

11. He saw many that were rich, cast in much; and when they had done, they did mock those that were charitable, to see many rich people so, and to see them not only cast in, but cast in much. Note, Those that are rich, ought to give richly; if God give abundantly to us, he expects we should give abundantly to the poor; and it is not enough for those that are rich, to say, that they give as much as others do, who perhaps have much less of the world than they have, but they must give in proportion to their estates; and if objects of charity do not present themselves, that require so much, they ought to inquire them out, and to devise liberal things.

IV. There was a poor widow that cast in two mites, which make a farthing; (v. 42,) and our Lord Jesus highly commended her; called his disciples to him, and bid them take notice of it; (v. 43,) told them that she could very ill spare that which she gave, she had scarcely enough for her subsistence; but she did it, and gave it all for that day, and perhaps a great part of what she had earned by her labour the day before; and that forasmuch as he knew she did it from a truly charitable disposition, he reckoned it more than all that put together, which the rich people threw in; for they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want, v. 44. Now many would have been ready to censure this poor widow; and to think she did ill; why should she give, when she has not enough for herself? Charity begins at home; or, if she would give it, why did she not bestow it upon some poor body that she knew? What occasion was there for her bringing it to the treasury to be disposed of by the chief priests, who, we have reason to fear, were partial in the disposal of it? It is so rare a thing to find any that would not blame this widow, that we cannot expect to find any that will imitate her. But if the widow was right, and God intended to be pleased with her, let us be sure we are right, or we shall not be pleased with ourselves.

If Christ saith, Well done, no matter who saith otherwise; and we must hence learn, 1. That giving alms, is an excellent, good thing, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus; and if we be humble and sincere in it, he will graciously accept of it, though in some circumstances there may not be all the discretion in the world. 2. Those that have but a little, ought to give alms out of their little. Those that live by their labour, from hand to mouth, must give to those that need, Eph. 4. 28. 3. It is very good for us to straiten and deny ourselves, that we may be able to give more to the poor; to deny ourselves not only superfluities, but even conveniences, for the sake of charity. We should in many cases pinch ourselves, that we may supply the necessities of others; this is loving our neighbours as ourselves. 4. Public charities should be encouraged, for they bring upon a nation public blessings; and though there may be some mismanagement of them, that is not a good reason why we should not bring in our quota to them. 5. Though we can give but a little in charity, yet if it be according to our ability, and be given with an upright heart, it shall be accepted of Christ, who requires according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not; two mites shall be put together and bring in, if given in a right manner, as if it had been two pounds. 6. It is much to the praise of charity, when we give not only to our power, but beyond our power, as the Macedonian churches, whose deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, 2 Cor. 8. 2, 3. When we can cheerfully provide for others, out of our own necessary provision; as the widow of Sarepta for Elijah, and Christ for his five thousand guests, and trust God to provide for us some other way, this is thankful worthy.

CHAP. XIII.

We have here the substance of that prophetic sermon which our Lord Jesus delivered, pointing at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the constant decay and desolation of all things that are the effect of the last of his sermons, and not ad populam—to the people, but ad clericum—to the clergy; it was private, preached only to four of his disciples, with whom his secret was hid, v. 1. II. The predictions themselves. 1. Of the rise of deceivers, v. 5, 6. 21, 22. 2. Of the wars of the nations, v. 7. 8. 3. Of the persecution of Christians, v. 9, 10, 15. 4. Of the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 14, 15. 5. Of the end of the world, v. 24, 25. III. Some general intimations concerning the time of them, v. 26, 32. IV. Some practical inferences from all, v. 33, 37.

1. AND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! 2. And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, opposite against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, 4. Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

We may here see,

I. How apt many of Christ’s own disciples are to idolize things that look great, and have been long looked upon as sacred. They had heard Christ complain of those who had made the temple a den of thieves; and yet, when he quitted it, for the wickedness that remained in it, they court him to be as much in love as they were with the stately structure and adorning of it. One of them said to him, Look, Master, what manner of stones, and what buildings are here, v. 1. We never saw the like in Galilee: O do not leave this fine place.

II. How little Christ values external pomp, where there is but little real purity. "Seest thou these buildings," (saith Christ,) “and admirest thou them? I tell thee, The time is at hand when there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down," v. 2. And the sumptuousness of the fabric shall be no security to it, no, nor move any compassion in the Lord Jesus towards it. He looks with folly upon the ruin of precious souls, and weeps over them, for on them he has put a great value; but we do not find him look with any pity upon the ruin of a magnificent temple, when he is driven out of it by sin; for that is of small value with him. With what little concern doth he say, Not one stone shall be left on another! Much of the strength of the temple lay in the largeness of the stones, and if these be thrown down, no footstep, no remembrance, of it will remain. While any part remained standing, there might be some hopes of the repair of it; but what hope is there, when not one stone is left upon another?

III. How natural it is to us to desire to know things to come, and the times of them; more inquisitive we are apt to be about that than about our duty. His disciples knew not how to digest this doctrine of
ruin of the temple, which they thought must be their Master's royal palace, and in which they expected their preferment, and to have the posts of honour; and therefore they were in pain till they got him alone, and got more out of him concerning this matter. As he was returning to Bethany, therefore, he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the temple, where he had a full view of it; and there four of them agreed to ask him privately, what he meant by the destroying of the temple, which they understood no more than they did the predictions of his own death, which he was willing then to tell them. Probably, though these four proposed the question, yet Christ's discourse, in answer to it, was in the hearing of the rest of the disciples, yet privately, that is, apart from the multitude. Their inquiry is, 

When shall these things be? They will not question, at least not seem to question, whether they shall be or no, (for their Master has said that they shall,) but are willing to hope it is a great way off. Yet they ask not precisely the day and year, (therein they were modest,) but say, “Tell us what shall be the sign, when all these things shall be fulfilled? What presages shall there be of them, and how may we prophesie their approach?”

5. And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you: 6. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 7. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. 8. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows. 9. But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, a testimony against them. 10. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. 11. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. 12. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. 13. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Our Lord Jesus, in reply to their question, sets himself, not so much to satisfy their curiosity, as to give them their consciences: leaving them still in the dark concerning the times and seasons, which the Father has kept in his own power, and which it was not for them to know; but gives them the cautious which were needful, with reference to the events that should now shortly come to pass. 1. They must take heed that they be not deceived by the seducers and impostors that should now short-
Therefore, lest you deceive yourselves with the hopes of outward prosperity, and such a temporal kingdom as you have been dreaming of, when it is through many tribulations that you must enter into the kingdom of God. Take heed lest you needlessly expose yourselves to trouble, and pull it upon your own head. Take heed what you say and do, for you will have many eyes upon you.

Observe,
1. What the trouble is which they must expect.
(1.) Their own relations shall betray them, those to whom they were most nearly allied, and on whom therefore they depended for protection; "They shall betray you, shall inform against you, and be your prosecutors." If a father has a child that is a Christian, he shall become void of natural affection, and shall all be swallowed up in bigotry, and shall be hate all men; trouble enough! The thoughts of being hated are grievous to a tender spirit, and the fruits of that hatred must needs be a constant vexation; those that are malicious will be mischievous. It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were hated, but for Christ's name's sake, because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them, because he loved them.
(2.) Their own relations shall betray them, those to whom they were most nearly allied, and on whom therefore they depended for protection; "They shall betray you, shall inform against you, and be your prosecutors." If a father has a child that is a Christian, he shall become void of natural affection, and shall all be swallowed up in bigotry, and shall be hate all men; trouble enough! The thoughts of being hated are grievous to a tender spirit, and the fruits of that hatred must needs be a constant vexation; those that are malicious will be mischievous. It was not for any thing amiss in them, or done amiss by them, that they were hated, but for Christ's name's sake, because they were called by his name, called upon his name, preached his name, and wrought miracles in his name. The world hated them, because he loved them.
(3.) Their church-rulers shall inflict their censures upon them; "You shall be delivered up to the great Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, and to the inferior courts and consistory in other cities, and shall be beaten in the synagogues, with forty stripes at a time," as offenders against the law which was read in the synagogue. It is no new thing for the church's artillery, the church-rulers, the magistrates, the preachers, the officers, to be turned against some of its best friends.

(4.) Governors and kings shall use their power against them. Because the Jews have not power to put them to death, they shall incense the Roman powers against them, as they did Herod against James and Peter; and they shall cause you to be cast to death, as enemies to the empire. They must resist unto blood, and still resist.

What they shall have to comfort themselves with, in the midst of these great and sore troubles. (1.) That the work they were called to should be carried on and prosper, notwithstanding all this opposition which they should meet with in it; (v. 10.) "The gospel shall, for all this, be published among all nations, and, before the destruction of Jerusalem, the sound of it shall go forth into all the earth; not only through all the nation of the Jews, but to all the nations of the earth." It is comfort to thee, or to them, when they suffer for the gospel, that, though they may be crushed and borne down, the gospel cannot: it shall keep its ground, and carry the day.
(2.) That their sufferings, instead of obstructing their work, should forward it; "Your being brought before governors and kings shall be for a testimony to them;" (so some read it, v. 9.) it shall give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to those before whom you are brought as criminals, to whom otherwise you could not have access. Thus St. Paul's being brought before Felix, and Festus, and Agrippa, and Nero, was a testimony to them concerning Christ and his gospel. Or, as we read it, it shall be for a testimony against them, against both the judges and the prosecutors, who pursue those with the utmost rage that appear, upon examination, to be not only innocent, but excellent persons. The gospel is a testimony to us concerning Christ and heaven; if we receive it, it will be a testimony for us, it will justify and save us; if not, it will be a testimony against us in the great day.
(3.) That, when they were brought before kings and governors for Christ's sake, they should have special assistance from heaven, to plead Christ's cause and their own; (v. 11.) "Take no thought before-hand what ye shall speak, be not solicitous how to address yourselves to great men, so as to obtain their favour; your cause is just and glorious, and needs not to be supported by premeditated speeches and harangues; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, whatever shall be suggested to you, and put into your minds, and into your mouths," (presumably on the spur of the occasion,) "that speak ye, and fear not the success of it, because it is off-hand, for it is not ye that speak, purely by the strength of your own wisdom, consideration, and resolution, but it is the Holy Ghost." Note, Those whom Christ calls out to be advocates for him, shall be furnished with full instructions; and when we are engaged in the service of Christ, we may depend upon the aids of the Spirit of Christ.

(4.) That heaven at last would make amends for all; "You will meet with a great deal of hardship in your way, but have a good heart on it, your warfare will be accomplished, and your testimony finished, and he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." v. 13. Perseverance gains the crown.
The salvation here promised is more than a deliverance from all the prevailing blessings, which shall be an abundant recompence for all their services and sufferings. All this we have, Matth. 10. 17, &c.

14. But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains: 15. And let him that is on the house-top not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: 16. And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment. 17. But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 18. And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. 19. For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, unto this time, neither shall be. 20. And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days. 21. And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there; believe him not: 22. For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. 23. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.

The Jews, in rebelling against the Romans, and in persecuting the Christians, were hastening their own ruin apace, both efficiently and meritoriously were setting both God and man against them; see 1 Thess. 2. 15. Now here we have a prediction of that ruin which came upon them within less than forty years after this; we had it before, Matth. 24. 15, &c. Observe,
1. What is here foretold concerning it.
2. That the Roman armies should make a descent
upon Judea, and invest Jerusalem, the holy city.

These were the abomination of desolation, which the Jews did abominate, and by which they should be made desolate. The country of thine enemy is called the land which thou abhorrest, Isa. 7. 10. Therefore it was an abomination, because it brought with it nothing but desolation. They had rejected Christ as an Abomination, who would have been their Salvation, and by which they were brought under the desolation that would be their desolation, thus spoken of by Daniel the prophet, (ch. 9. 27.) as that by which this sacrifice and offering should be made to cease. This army stood where it ought not, in and about the holy city, which the heathen ought not to have approached, nor should have been suffered to do, if Jerusalem had not first profaned the crown of their holiness by the corruption of the congregation.

The heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into the congregation; but sin made the breach, at which the glory went out, and the abomination of desolation broke in, and stood where it ought not. Now, let him that readeth this, understand it, and endeavour to take it right. Prophecies should not be too plain, and placed as these that search them; and they are best understood by comparing them first with one another, and at last with the event.

2. That when the Roman army should come into the country, there would be no safety any where but by quitting the country, and that with all possible expedition; it will be in vain to fight, the enemies will be too hard for them; in vain to abscond, the enemies will find them out; and in vain to capitulate, the enemies will give them no terms, they cannot have so much as his life given him for a prey, but by fleeing to the mountains out of Judea; and let him take the first alarm, and make the best of his way. If he be on the house-top, trying from thence to discover the motions of the enemy, and spies them coming, let him not go down, to take any thing out of the house, for it will occasion his losing of time, which is more precious than his best goods, and will but encumber him, and embarrass his flight. If he be in the field, and there discover the approach of the enemy, let him get away as he is, and not turn back again, to take up his garments, ver. 16. If he can save his life, let him reckon it a good bargain, though he can save nothing else, and be thankful to God, that, though he is cut short, he is not cut off.

3. That it would go very hard at that time with poor mothers and nurses; (ver. 17.) "Woe to them that are with child, that dare not go into strange places, that cannot shift for themselves, nor make haste, as others can. And woe to them that gave suck, that know not how either to leave the tender infants behind them, or to carry them along with them." Such is the vanity of the creature, that the time may often be, when the greatest comforts may become the greatest grievance; when provision of food and lodging are very uncomfortable, if they should be forced to flee in the winter, (ver. 18.) when the weather and ways were bad, when the roads will be scarcely passable, especially in those mountains to which they must flee. If there be no remedy but that trouble must come, yet we may desire and pray that, if it be God's will, the circumstances of it may be so ordained, the graces of the Holy Spirit be imparted to them, and by the help of these, what things are bad, we ought to consider they might have been worse. It is bad to be forced to flee, but it would have been worse if it had been in the winter.

4. That throughout all the country of the Jews, there should be such destruction and desolation made, as could not be paralleled in any history; (ver. 19.) In those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of time; that is, of the creation which God created, for time and the creation are of equal date, unto this day, neither shall be to the end of time; such a complication of miseries, and of such continuance. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans was very terrible, but this exceeded it. It threatened a universal slaughter of all the people of the Jews; so barbarously did they devour one another, and the Romans devour them all, that, if their wars had continued a little longer, no flesh could have been left alive; but in the midst of wrath God remembered mercy; and, (1.) He shortened the days; he let fall his controversy before he had made a full end. As a church and nation the ruin was complete, but many particular persons had their lives given them for a prey, by the storm's subsiding when it did. (2.) It was for the elect's sake that those that were not destroyed were delivered, and made the better for the sake of the few among them that believed in Christ, and were faithful to him. There was a promise, that a remnant should be saved, (Isa. 10. 22.) and that God would not, for his servants' sakes, destroy them all; (Isa. 65. 8.) and these promises must be fulfilled. God's own elect cry day and night to him, and their prayers must be answered. Luke 2. 25.

II. What directions are given to the disciples with reference to it.

1. They must shift for the safety of their lives; "When you see the country invaded, and the city invested, flatter not yourselves with thoughts that the enemy will retire, or that you may be able to make your part good with them; but, without further deliberation or delay, let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains, ver. 14. Meddle not with strife that belongs not to you; let the partizans strive with the partizans of the earth, but do you go out of the ship when you see it sinking, that you die not the death of the unrighteous in heart."

2. They must provide for the safety of their souls; "Seducers will be busy at that time, for they love to fish in troubled waters, and therefore then you must double your guard; then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or, Lo, he is there, you know he is in heaven, and will come again, at the end of time, to judge the world, and therefore believe them not; having received Christ, be not drawn into the snares of any antichrist; for false christs, and false prophets, shall arise," ver. 22. When the gospel-kingdom was in the setting up, Satan mustered and impend all manner of seducers, and with all his wiles; and God permitted it, for the trial of the sincerity of some, the discovery of the hypocrisy of others, and the confusion of those who rejected Christ, when he was offered to them. False christs shall rise, and false prophets that shall preach them up; or such as, though they pretend not to be christs, set up for profets, and undertake to fore-tell things to come, and they shall shew signs and wondrous works; so early did the mystery of iniquity begin to work, 2 Thess. 2. 7. They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect; so plausible shall their pretences be, and so industrious shall they be to impose upon people, that they shall draw away many that were forward and zealous professors of religion, many that were very likely to have persevered; for nothing was so apt to allure the hearts of men, as the treachery of the enemy of God which stands immovably sure, The Lord knows them that are his, who shall be preserved when the faith of some is overthrown, 2 Tim. 2. 18. 19. They shall seduce, if it were possible, the very elect; but it is not possible to seduce them; the election shall obtain, whoever are blinded, Rom. 11. 7. But, in consideration hereof, let the disciples be cautious whom they give up, (v. 22.) But take heed. Christ knew that they were of the elect, who could not possibly be seduced, and yet he said to them, Take heed. An assurance
of persevering, and cautions against apostacy, will very well consort with each other. Though Christ said to them, Take heed, it doth not therefore follow, that their perseverance was doubtful, for they were kept by the power of God; and though their perseverance was secured, ye doth not therefore follow, that this caution was needless, because they must be kept in the use of proper means. God will keep them, but they must keep themselves; ye have foretold you all things; have foretold you of this day, that, before forewarned, you may be forearmed; I have foretold all things which you have to need have foretold to you, and therefore take heed of hearkening to such as pretend to be prophets, and to foretell more than I have foretold. The sufficiency of the scripture is a good argument against listening to such as pretend to inspiration.

24. But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light: 25. And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. 26. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. 27. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven.

These verses seem to point at Christ's second coming, to judge the world; the disciples, in their question, had confounded the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. (Matth. 24. 3) which was built upon a mistake, as if the temple must needs stand as long as the world stands; this mistake Christ rectifies, and shows that the end of the world in those days, those other days you inquire about, the day of Christ's coming, and the day of judgment, shall be after that tribulation, and not coincident with it. Let those who live to see the Jewish nation destroyed, take heed of thinking that, because Christ has not come suddenly, as visibly come in the clouds then, he will never so come: no, he will come after that. Here he foretells,

1. The final dissolution of the present frame and fabric of the world; even of that part of it which seems least liable to change the upper part, the purer and more refined part; The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall no more give her light; for they shall be quite outshone by the glory of the Son of man, Isa. 24. 23. The stars of heaven, that from the beginning had kept their place and regular motion, shall fall as leaves in autumn; and the powers that are in heaven, the heavenly bodies, the fixed stars, shall be shaken.

2. The visible appearance of the Lord Jesus, to whom the judgment of that day shall be committed; (v. 28.) Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds. Probably he will come over that very place where he sat when he said this; for the clouds are in the east, when the sun is rising, he will come with great power and glory, such as will be suited to the errand on which he comes. Every eye shall then see him.

3. The gathering together of all the elect to him; (v. 27.) He shall send his angels, and gather together his elect to him, to meet him in the air, 1 Thess. 4. 17. They shall be fetched from one end of the world to the other, shall be fetched from the general assembly; they shall be fetched from the uttermost part of the earth, most remote from the place where Christ's tribunal shall be set, and shall be brought to the uttermost part of heaven; so sure, so swift, so easy, shall their conveyance be, that there shall none of them miscarry, though they were to be brought from the uttermost part of the earth one way, to the uttermost part of the heaven another way. A faithful Israelite shall be carried safely, though it were from the utmost border of the land of bondage to the utmost border of the land of promise.

28. Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When her branch is yet tender, and puttheth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near; 29. So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors. 30. Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done. 31. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. 32. But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. 34. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. 35. Watch ye therefore: (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning;) 36. Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 37. And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch. We have here the application of this prophetic sermon; now learn to look forward in a right manner.

"As to the destruction of Jerusalem, expect it to come very shortly; as when the branch of the fig tree becomes soft, and the leaves shrount forth, ye expect that summer will come shortly, v. 28. When second causes begin to work, ye expect their effects in their proper order and time. So when ye see these things come to pass, when ye see the Jewish nation embroiled in wars, distracted by false Christs and prophets, and drawing upon them the displeasure of the Romans, especially when ye see them persecuting you for your Master's sake, and thereby standing for what they did when they put him to death, and repeating it, and so filling up the measure of their iniquity, then say that their ruin is nigh, even at the door, and provide for yourselves accordingly. The disciples themselves were indeed all of them, except John, taken away from the evil to come, but the next generation, whom they were to train up, would live to see it; and by these instructions which Christ left behind him would be kept from sharing in it; "This generation, that is now rising up, shall not all be worn off before all these things come to pass, which I have told you of, relating to Jerusalem, and they shall begin to take effect now shortly. And as this destruction is near, and within ken, so it is sure. The decree is gone forth, it is a consumption determined, Dan. 9. 27. Christ doth not speak these things merely to frighten them; no, they are the declarations of God's fixed purpose; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, at the end of time; but my words shall not pass away, (v. 31.) not one of these predictions shall fail of a punctual accomplishment."
when it will come, for it is not a question fit to be asked, for at that day, and that hour, knoweth no man; it is a thing at a great distance, the exact time is fixed in the counsel of God, but is not revealed by any work of God, either to men on earth, or to angels in heaven; the angels shall have timely notice to prepare to attend in that day, and it shall be published, when it comes to the children of men, with sound of trumpet; but, by that token, it was kept in the dark concerning the precise time of it, that they may both attend to their proper services in the present day." But it follows, neither the Son; but is there any thing which the Son is ignorant of? We read indeed of a book which was sealed, till the Lamb opened the seals; but did not he know what was in it, before the seals were opened? Was he not privy to it in writing of it? There were those, in the primitive times, who taught from this text, that there were some things that Christ, as man, was ignorant of; and from thence were called Agnostes; they said, "It was no more absurd to say so, than to say that his human soul suffered grief and fear;" and many of the orthodox fathers approved of this. Some would evade it, by saying that Christ spake this in a way of prudential economy, and by a figure of speech. But it is not without reason that we refer this one of the ancient answers, It is not fit to speak too nicely in this matter—λέγοντες δὲ κατάφθασιν, so Leontius in Dr. Hammond, "It is certain (sixth Archbishop Tillotson) that Christ, as God, could not be ignorant of any thing; but the divine wisdom which dwelt in our Saviour did communicate itself to his human soul according to the divine pleasure, so that his human nature might sometimes not know some things. therefore Christ is said to grow in wisdom, (Luke 2. 52.) which he could not be said to do, if the human nature of Christ did necessarily know all things by virtue of its union with the divinity." Dr. Lightfoot explains it thus; Christ calls himself the Son, as Messiah. Now the Messiah, as such, was the Father's servant, (Isa. 42. 1.) sent and deputed by him, and, as such a one, he refers himself often to his Father's will and command, and owns he did nothing of himself; (John 5. 19.) in like manner he might be said to know nothing of himself. The revelation of Jesus Christ was what God gave unto him, Rev. 1. 1. He thinks, therefore, that we are to distinguish between those excellencies and perfections of his, which resulted from the personal union between the divine and human nature; and those which flowed from the appointment of the Spirit; from the former flowed the infinite dignity of his person, and his perfect freedom from all sin; but from the latter flowed his power of working miracles, and his foreknowledge of things to come. What therefore (saith he) was to be revealed by him to his church, he was pleased to take, not from the union of the human nature with the divine, but from the revelation of the Spirit; by which he yet knew not this, but the Father only knew it; that is, God only, the Deity; for (as Archbishop Tillotson explains it) it is not used here personally, in distinction from the Son and the Holy Ghost, but as the Father is, Pons et Principium Deiatti—the Fountain of Deity.

III. "As to both, your duty is to watch and pray. Therefore the time is kept a secret, that you might not be unadvisedly idle. (v. 33.) Take ye heed of every thing that would indispose you for your Master's coming, and would render your accounts perplexed, and your spirits so too; watch for his coming, that it may not at any time be a surprise to you, and pray for that grace which is necessarily to qualify you for it, for ye know not when the time is; and you are concerned to be ready for that every day, which may come any day." This he illustrates, in the close, by a parable.

1. Our Master is gone away, and left us something in trust, in charge, which we must give account of, v. 34. He is as a man taking a far journey; for he is gone to be away a great while, he has left his house on earth, and left his servants in their offices, given authority to some, who are to be overseers, and work to others, who are to be labourers. They that have authority given them, in that had work assigned them, are those that have the greatest trust reposed in them. If our Master, when he gave work, he gave some sort of authority, to do that work. And when he took his last leave, he appointed the porter to watch, to be sure to be ready to open to him at his return; and in the mean time to take care to whom he opened his gates, not to thieves and robbers, but only to his Master's friends and servants. Thus our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, left something for all his servants to do, expecting they should all do his service in his absence, and be ready to receive him at his return. All are appointed to work, and some authorized to rule.

2. We ought to be always upon our watch, in expectation of his return, v. 35—37. (1.) Our Lord will come, and will come as the Master of the house, to take account of his servants, of their work, and of the improvements they have made. (2.) We know not when he will come; and he has very wisely kept us at uncertainty, that we might be always ready. We know not when he will come, just at what precise time; the Master of the house, perhaps, will come at even, at nine at night; or it may be at midnight, or at cock-crowing, at three in the morning, or, perhaps, not till six. This is applicable to his coming to us, in particular, at our death, as well as to the general judgement. Our present life is a night, a dark night, compared with the other life; we know not in which watch of the night our Master will come, whether in the days of youth, or middle age, or old age; but, as soon as we are born, we begin to die, and therefore, as soon as we are capable of expecting any thing, we must expect death. (3.) Our great care must be, that, whenever our Lord comes, he do not find us sleeping, secure in ourselves, off our guard, indulging ourselves in ease and sloth, mindless of our work and duty, and thoughtless of our Lord's coming; ready to say, He will not come, and unready to meet him. (4.) His coming will indeed be coming suddenly; it will be a great surprise and terror to those that are careless and aslepe, it will come upon them as a thief at night. (5.) It is therefore the more necessary for us, that all the day long we should be in watch, to he awake, and keep awake; (6.) "What I say unto you four, (v. 3.) I say unto all the twelve, or rather to you twelve, I say unto all my disciples and followers; what I say to you of this generation, I say to all that shall believe in me, through your word, in every age, Watch, watch, expect your second coming, prepare for it, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless."

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter begins the account which this evangelist gives of the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus, which we are all concerned to be acquainted with, not only with the history of, but with the mystery of. Here is, I. The plot of the chief priests and scribes against Christ, v. 1, 2. II. The anointing of Christ's head at a supper in Bethany, two days before his death, v. 3. 9. III. The contract made with the Jewish princes, to betray him, v. 13, 14. IV. Christ's eating of the passover with his disciples, his instituting of the Lord's supper, and his discourse with his disciples, at and after supper, v. 12. 31. V. Christ's agony in the garden, v. 38. 42. VI. The account of the apprehending of him by the chief priests' agents, v. 43 . 52. VII. His arraignment before the high priest, his conviction, and the indignities done him at that bar, v. 55. 65. VIII. Peter's denying of him, v. 66. 72. Most of which passages we had before, Matt. 26.
1. **After** two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the Scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. 2. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. 3. And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster-box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. 4. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? 5. For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. 6. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. 7. For ye have the poor with you always, and whenever ye will, ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. 8. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. 9. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. 10. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. 11. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

We have here instances, 1. Of the kindness of Christ's friends, and the provision made of respect and honour for him. Some friends he had, even in and about Jerusalem, that loved him, and never thought they could do enough for him, among whom, though Israel be not gathered, he is, and will be, glorious. 1. Here was one friend, that was so kind as to invite him to sup with him; and he was so kind as to accept the invitation, v. 3. Though he had a prospect of his death approaching, yet he did not abandon himself to a melancholy retirement from all company, but conversed as freely with his friends as usual. 2. Here was another friend, that was so kind as to anoint his head with very precious ointment, as he sat at meat. This was an extraordinary piece of respect paid him by a good woman that thought nothing too good to bestow upon Christ, and to do him honour. Now the scripture was fulfilled, When the king sits at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof, Cant. 1. 12. Let us anoint Christ as our Beloved, kiss him with a kiss of affection; and anoint him as our Sovereign, kiss him with a kiss of allegiance. Did he pour out his soul unto death for us, and shall we think any box of ointment too precious to pour out upon him? It is observable that she took care to pour it all out upon Christ's head; She brake the box; (so we read it;) but, because it was an alabaster box, not easily broken, nor was it necessary that it should be broken, to get out the ointment, some read it, she shook the box, or knocked it to the ground, to loosen what was in it, that it might be got out the better; or, She rubbed and scoured out all that stuck to the sides of it. Christ must be honoured with all we have, and we must be willing to keep back nothing at all cost for him. Do we give him the precious ointment of our best affections? Let him have them all; love him with all the heart.

Now, (1.) There were those that put a worse construction upon this than it deserved. They called it a waste of the ointment, v. 4. because they could not have found in their hearts to put themselves to such an expense for the honouring of Christ, they thought that she was prodigal, who did. Note. As the idle persons were called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful; so the liberal and bountiful ought not to be called wasteful. They pretended it might have been sold, and given to the poor, v. 5. But as a common piety to the corban will not excuse from a particular charity to a poor parent, (ch. 7. 11.) so a common charity to the poor will not excuse from a particular act of piety to the Lord Jesus. What thy hand finds to do, that is good, do with all thy might. (2.) Our Lord Jesus put a better construction upon it than, for aught that appears, was designed. Probably, she intended no more than to shew the great honour she had for him, before all the company, and to complete his entertainment. But Christ makes it to be an act of great faith, as well as great love; (v. 8.) "She is come aforehand, to anoint my body to the burying, as if she foresaw that my resurrection should prevent her doing it afterward." This funeral rite was a kind of pressage of, or prelude to, his death approaching. See how Christ's heart was filled with the thoughts of his death, how every thing was strung together with a reference to that, and how familiarly he spake of it upon all occasions. It is usual for those who are condemned to die, to have their collars prepared, and other provision made for their funeral, while they are yet alive; and so Christ attended this. Christ's death and burial were the lowest steps of his humiliation, and therefore, though he cheerfully submitted to them, yet he would have some marks of honour to attend them, which might help to take off the offence of the cross, and be an intimation how precious in the sight of the Lord the death of his saint is. Christ never rode in triumph into Jerusalem, but when he came thither to suffer; nor had ever his head anointed, but for his burial. (3.) He here supplies the place of that piece of heroic piety to the applause of the church in all ages; Whenever this gospel shall be preached, it shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her, v. 9. Note. The honour which attends well-doing, even in this world, is sufficient to balance the reproach and contempt that are cast upon it. The memory of the just is blessed and they that had trial of cruel mockings, yet obtained a good report, Heb. 11. 36. 39. This was the woman's box of ointment, Vide aleum perfidit nec operam—She lost neither her oint nor her labour. She got by it that good name which is better than precious ointment. Those that honour Christ he will honour.

II. Of the malice of Christ's enemies, and the preparation made by them to do him mischief. 1. The chief priests, his open enemies, consulted how they might justly him to death; which he foreknew, v. 2. The feast of unleavened bread was now at hand, and at that feast he must be crucified. (1.) That his death and sufferings might be the more public, and that all Israel, even those of the dispersion, who came from all parts to the feast, might be witnesses of it, and of the wonders that attended it. (2.) That the Anti-type might answer to the type. Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, and brought us out of the house of bondage, at the same time that the paschal lamb
was sacrificed, and Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was accomplished.

Now sec, [1.] How sithful Christ's enemies were; they did not think it enough to banish or imprison him, for they aimed not only to silence him, and stop his progress for the future, but to be revenged on him for all the good he had done. [2.] How subtle they were; Not on the feast day, when the people are together; they do not say, Lest they should raise a clamour against him, and diverted from their devotions, and beset him, Lest they should rise, and rescue him, and fall foul upon those that attempt any thing against him. They who desired nothing more than the praise of men, dreaded nothing more than the rage and displeasure of men.

2. Judas, his disguised enemy, contracted with them for the betraying of him, v. 10, 11. He is said to be one of the twelve that were Christ's properly intimate with him, trained up for the service of his kingdom; and he went to the chief priests, to tender his service in this affair.

(1.) That which he proposed to them, was, to betray Christ to them, and to give them notice when and where they might find him, and seize him, without making an uproar among the people, which they were afraid of. The promise he had given him when he appeared in jubilee, in the midst of his admirers. Did he know then what help it was they wanted, and where they were run aground in their counsels? It is probable that he did not, for the debate was held in their close cabal. Did they know that he had a mind to serve them, and make court to them? No, they could not imagine that any of his intimates should be so base; but Satan, who was entered into Judas, knew what occasion they had for him, and could guide him to be guide to them, who were contriving to take Jesus. Note, The spirit that works in all the children of disobedience, knows how to bring them in to the assistance one of another in a wicked project, and then to harden them in it, with the fancy that Providence favours them.

(2.) That which he proposed to himself, was, to get money by the bargain; he had what gain he could, when they promised to give him money. Covetousness was Judas's master-lust, his own iniquity, and that betrayed him to the sin of betraying his Master; the devil suited his temptation to that, and so conquered him. It is not said, They promised him preference, (he was not ambitions of that,) but, They promised him money. See what need we have to double our guard against the sin that most easily besets us. Perhaps it was Judas's covetousness that brought him at first to follow Christ, having a promise that he should be cash-keeper, or purser, to the society, and he loved in his heart to be fingering money; and now, that there was money to be got on the other side, he was as ready to betray him as ever he had been to follow him. Note, Where the principle of men's professions of religion is carnal and worldly, and the interest of a secular interest, the very same principle, which was in the course of divine turns, will be the bitter root of a vile and scandalous apostasy.

(3.) Having secured the money, he set himself to make good his bargain; He sought how he might conveniently betray him, how he might seasonably deliver him up, so as to answer the intention of those who had hired him. See what need we have to be careful that we do not ensnare ourselves in sinful engagements. If at any time we are heard in the words of our mouths, we are concerned to deliver ourselves by a speedy retreat, Prov. 6. 1-5. It is a rule in our law, as well as in our religion, that an obligation to do an evil thing is null and void; it binds to repentance, not to performance. See how the way of sin is downhill—when men are in, they must on; and what wicked contrivances many have in their sinful pursuits, to compass their designs conveniently! But such conveniences will prove mischiefs in the end.

12. And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? 13. And he senteth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. 14. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 15. And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. 16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 17. And in the evening he came with the twelve, 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me. 19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? 20. And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippereth with me in the dish. 21. The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he had never been born. 22. And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. 23. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. 24. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. 25. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God. 26. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. 27. And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. 28. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. 29. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will I not. 30. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. 31. But he spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.
In these verses we have,

I. Christ's eating of the passover with his disciples, the night before he died, with the joys and comforts of which ordinance he prepared himself for his approaching sorrows, the full prospect of which did not indispose him for that solemnity. Note, No apprehension of trouble, come or coming, should put us by, or put us out of frame for, our attendance on holy ordinances, as we have opportunity for them.

1. Christ ate the passover at the usual time, when the other Jews did, as Dr. Whitby has fully made out, and not, as Dr. Hammond would have it, the night before. It was on the first day of that feast, which (taking in all the eight days of the feast) was called, The feast of unleavened bread, even that day when they killed the passover, v. 12.

2. He directed his disciples how to find the place where he should eat the passover, and gave them precise directions how to do it, and hereby gave such another proof of his infallible knowledge of things distant and future, (which to us seem altogether contingent,) as he had given when he sent them for the ass on which he rode in triumph; (ch. 11. 6.) "Go into the city, (for the passover must be eaten in Jerusalem,) and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; (a servant sent for water to clean the rooms in his master's house;) follow him, go whither he goeth, and thou shalt find the good man of the house, (v. 14.) and desire him to shew you a room." No doubt, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had rooms fitted up to be let out, for this occasion, to those that came out of the country to keep the passover, and one of those Christ made use of; not any friend's house, nor any house he had formerly frequented, for then he would have said, "Go to such a friend," or, "You know where we used to be, go thither and prepare." Probably, he who was not known, that he might be undisturbed with his disciples. Perhaps he notified it by a sign, to conceal it from Jews, that he might not know till he came to the place; and by such a sign, to intimate that he will dwell in the clean heart, that is, as washed with pure water. Where he designs to come, a pitcher of water must go before him; see Isa. 1. 16-18.

3. He ate the passover in an upper room, furnished and raiment with carpets; so Dr. Hammond; it would seem to have been a very handsome dining room. Christ was far from affecting any thing that looked stately in eating his common meals; on the contrary, he chose that which was homely, sat down on the grass; but when he was to keep a sacred feast in honour of that, he would be at the expense of as good a room as he could get. God looks not at outward pomp, but he looks at the tokens and expressions of inward reverence for a divine institution, which, it is to be feared, those want, who, to save charges, deny themselves decencies in the worship of God.

4. He ate it with the twelve, who were his family, to teach those who have the charge of families, not only families of children, but families of servants, or scholars, or pupils, to keep up religion among them, and worship God with them. If Christ came with the twelve, then Judas was not going to betray his Master; and it is plain by what follows, (v. 20.) that he was there: he did not absent himself, lest he should have been suspected; had his seat been empty at this feast, they would have said, as Saul of David, He is not clean, surely he is not clean, 1 Sam. 20. 26. Hypocrites, though they know it is at their peril, yet crowd into special ordinances, to keep up their repute, and palliate their secret wickedness. Christ did not exclude him from the feast, though he knew his wickedness, for it was not, as yet, become public and scandalous. Christ, designing to put the keys of the kingdom of heaven into the hands of men, who can judge according to outward appearance, would hereby both direct and encourage them, in their admissions to his table, to be satisfied with a justifiable profession, because they cannot discern the root of bitterness till it springs up.

II. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were eating the passover. It is probable that they had discourse, according to the custom of the feast, of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of the first-born, and were as pleasant as they used to be together on this occasion, till Christ told them that which would mix trembling with their joy.

1. They were pleasing themselves with the society of their Master; but he tells them that they must now lead him; The Son of man is betrayed; and they knew, for he had often told them, what followed—If he be betrayed, the next news you will hear of him, is, that he is crucified and slain; God hath determined it concerning him, and he agrees to it; The Son of man goes, as it is written of him, v. 21.

It was written in the consciences of God, and written in the prophecies of the Old Testament, not one jot or title of either of which can fail. They were pleasing themselves with the society one of another, but Christ cast a damp upon the joy of that, by telling them, One of you that eateth with me shall betray me, v. 18. Christ said this, if it might be, to startle the conscience of Judas, and to awaken him to repent of his wickedness, and to draw back (for it was not too late) from the brink of the pit. But, for aught that appears, he, who was most concerned in the coming, was least concerned at it. All the rest were affected with it.

(1.) They began to be sorrowful. As the remembrance of our former falls into sin, so the fear of the like again, doth often much imbitter the comfort of our spiritual feasts, and damp our joy. Here were the bitter herbs, with which this passover feast was taken. (2.) They began to be suspicious of themselves; they said one by one, Is it I? And another said, Is it I? They are not thereby condemned for their charity, that were more jealous of themselves than of one another. It is the law of charity, to hope the best, (1 Cor. 13. 5, 7,) because we assuredly know, therefore we may justly suspect, more evil by ourselves than by our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said; they trusted more to his words than to their own hearts; and therefore do not say, If I were it is not I, but, Lord, is it I? see if there be such a way of wickedness in us, such a root of bitterness, and discover it to us, that we may pull up that root, and stop up that evisw.

Now, in answer to their inquiry, Christ saith that,

[1.] Which would make them easy; "It is not you, nor you; it is this that now dieth with me in the dish; the adversary and enemy is this wicked Judas." [2.] Which, one would think, should make Jesus very uneasy. If he go on in his enterprise, it is upon the sword's point, for war to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; he is undone, for ever undone; his sin will soon find him out; and it were better for him that he had never been born, had never had a being, than such a miserable one as he must have. It is very probable that Judas encouraged himself in it with this thought, that his Master had often said he must be betrayed; and if it must be done, surely God will not find fault with him that doth it, for who has resisted his will?" As that objection argues, Rom. 9. 19. But Christ tells him that this will be no shelter or excuse to him; The Son of man indeed goes, as it is written of him, as a lamb to the slaughter; but were to that man by
whom he is betrayed. God's decrees to permit the sins of men, and bring glory to himself out of them, do not nullify their sin, nor determine them, nor will they be any excuse of the sin, or mitigation of the punishment. Christ was delivered indeed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; but, notwithstanding that, it is with wicked hands that he is crucified and slain, Acts 2. 23.

III. The institution of the Lord's Supper.

1. It was instituted in the close of a supper, when the apostles were sufficiently fed with the Passover lamb, to shew that in the Lord's supper there is no bodily retaunt to perfect it with such a thing, to revive Moses again. But it is food for the soul only, and therefore a very little of that which is for the body, as much as will serve for a sign, is enough. It was at the close of the passover supper, which by this was evangelized, and then superseded and set aside. Much of the doctrine and duty of the eucharist is illustrated to us by the law of the passover; (Exod. 12,) for the Old Testaments institutions, though they do not bind us, yet instruct us, by the help of a gospel-key to them. And these two ordinances lying here so near together, it may be good to compare them, and observe how much shorter and plainer the institution of the Lord's supper is, than that of the passover. Christ's yoke is not, so complicated with that of the ceremonial law, and his ordinances are more spiritual.

2. It was instituted by the example of Christ himself; not with the ceremony and solemnity of a law, as the ordinance of baptism was, after Christ's resurrection, (Matth. 28. 19,) with, Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid, by a power given to Christ in heaven and on earth; (v. 18,) but by the practice of our Master himself, because ordained for them, who are already his disciples, and taken into covenant with him; but it has the obligation of a law, and was intended to remain in full force, power, and virtue, till his second coming.

3. It was instituted with blessing and giving of thanks; the gifts of common providence are to be so received, (1 Tim. 4. 4, 5,) much more the gifts of special grace. He blessed, (v. 22,) and gave thanks, v. 23. At his other meals also, he blessed and gave thanks; (ch. 6. 41—8. 7,) so remarkably, that he was known by it, Luke 24. 30, 31. And he did the same at this meal.

4. It was instituted to be a memorial of his death; and therefore he brake the bread, to show how it pleased the Lord to bruise him; and he called the wine, which is the blood of the grape, the blood of the New Testament. The death Christ died was a bloody death, and frequent mention is made of the blood, the precious blood, as the price of our redemption; for the blood is the life, and made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11, 14. The pouring out of the blood was the most sensible indication of the pouring out of his soul, Isa. 53. 12. Blood has a voice; (Gen. 4. 10,) and therefore the blood is so often used in sacrifice; and we are all washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; (Rev. 7. 9, 14,) and still it is a fountain opened. How comfortable is this to poor repenting sinners, that the blood of Christ is shed for many! And if for many, why not for me? If for sinners, sinners of the Gentiles, the chief of sinners, then why not for me?

5. It was instituted to be a ratification of the covenant made with us in him, and a sign of the conveyance of those benefits to us, which were purposed, and long before foreordained, in his dead body, and therefore were buried with the bread to them, (v. 22,) and said, Take, eat of it; he gave the cup to them, and ordered them to drink of it, v. 23. Apply the doctrine of Christ crucified to yourselves, and let it be meat and drink to your souls, strengthening, nourishing, and refreshing, to you, and the support and comfort of your spiritual life.

6. It was instituted with an eye to the happiness of heaven, and to be an earnest and foretaste of that, and thereby to put our mouths out of taste for all the pleasures and delights of sense; (v. 23,) I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, as it is a bodily refreshment. I have done with it, No one, having tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires sensitive ones, for he saith, The spiritual is better; (Luke 5. 39,) but every one that hath tasted spiritual delights, straightway desires eternal ones, for he saith, Those are better still; and therefore let me drink no more of the fruit of the vine, it is dead and flat to those that have been made to drink of the river of God's pleasures; but, Lord, hasten the day, when I shall drink it new and fresh in the kingdom of God, where it shall be forever new, and in perfection.

It was closed with a hymn, v. 26. Though Christ said, I will not, for fear of them, omit this sweet duty of singing psalms. Paul and Silas sang, when the prisoners heard them. This was an evangelical song, and gospel-times are often spoken of in the Old Testament, as times of rejoicing, and praise is expressed by singing. This was Christ's swan-like song, which he sang just before he entered upon his agony; probably, that which was usually sung, Ps. 114, to 119.

IV. Christ's discourse with his disciples, as they were returning to Bethany by moon-light. When they had sung the hymn, presently they went out. It was now near bed-time, but our Lord Jesus had his heart so much upon his suffering, that he would not come into the tabernacle of his house, nor go into his bed, nor give sleep to his eyes, when that work was to be done, Ps. 132. 3, 4. The Israelites were forced to quit part of their houses that night that they eat the passover, for fear of the sword of the destroying angel, Exod. 12. 22, 23. But because Christ, the great Shepherd, was to be smitten, he went out purposely to expose himself to the sword, as a Champion; they evaded the destroyer, but Christ conquered him, and brought destructions to a perpetual end.

1. Christ here foretells that in his sufferings he should be despized by all his disciples; "You will all be offended because of me, this night. I know you will, (v. 27,) and what I tell you now, is no other than what the scripture has told you before; I will smite the shepherd, and then the sheep will be scattered." Christ knew this before, and yet welcomed them at his table; he foresees the falls and miscarriages of all his children, and not one escape. No small comfort should we be discouraged from coming to the Lord's supper, by the fear of relapsing into sin afterward; but, the greater our danger is, the more need we have to fortify ourselves by the diligent, conscientious use of holy ordinances. Christ tells them that they would be offended in him, would begin to question whether he were the Messiah or no, when they saw him overthrowed by his enemies. He had continued with them in his temptations; though they had sometimes offended him, yet they had not been offended in him, nor turned their back upon him; but now the storm would be so great, that they would all slip their anchors, and be in danger of shipwreck. Some trials are more particular; (as Rev. 2. 10. The devil shall cast some of you into prison;) but others are more general, an
hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, Rev. 3. 10. The smiting of the shepherd is often the scattering of the sheep; magistrates, ministers, masters of families, if these are, as they should be, shepherds to those under their charge, when any thing comes amiss to them, the whole flock suffers for it, and is endangered by it. But Christ warns them with a promise that they shall rally again, shall return both to their duty and to their comfort; (v. 28.) "After I am risen, I will gather you in from all the places whither you are scattered, Ezek. 34. 12. I will go before you into Galilee, will see our friends, and enjoy one another, there." 2. He foretells that he should be denied particularly by Peter. When they went into the midst of the world, and those that they despised Judas, (he stole away from them,) whereupon the rest began to think highly of themselves, that they stuck to their Master, when Judas quitted him. But Christ tells them, that though they should be kept by his grace from Judas's apostasy, yet they would have no reason to boast of their constancy. Note, Though God keeps us from being as bad as the worst, yet we may well be ashamed to think that we are not better than we are.

(1.) Peter is confident that he should not do so ill as the rest of the disciples; (v. 29.) Though all should be offended, all his brethren here present, yet will not I. He supposes himself not only stronger than others, but so much stronger, as to be able to receive the shock of a temptation, and bear up against it, all alone; to stand, though no body stood by him. It is bred in the bone with us. to think well of ourselves, and trust to our own hearts.

(2.) Christ tells him that he will do worse than any of them. They will all desert him, but he will deny him; not once, but thrice; and that presently. This day, even this night, before the cock crew thrice, thou wilt deny that ever thou hadst any knowledge of me, or acquaintance with me, as one ashamed and afraid to own me."

(3.) He stands to his promise: "If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee; I will adhere to thee, though it cost me my life;" and, no doubt, he thought as he said. Judas said nothing like this, when Christ told him he would betray him. He sinned by contrivance, Peter by surprise; he devised the wickedness; (Mic. 2. 1.) Peter was over-taken in this fault, Gal. 6. 1. It was ill done of Peter, to contradict his Master. If he had said, with fear and trembling, "Lord, give me grace to keep me from denying thee, lead me not into this temptation, deliver me from this evil," it might have been prevented: but they were all thus confident; they who said, Lord, is it I? now said, It shall never be I. Being acquitted from their fear of betraying Christ, they were now secure. But he that thinks he stands, must learn to take heed lest he fall; and he that girdeth on the harness, not boast as though he had put it off.

32. And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I shall pray. 33. And he taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, 34. And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death; tarry ye here, and watch. 35. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed, that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. 36. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. 37. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? 38. Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. 39. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. 40. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy,) neither wist they what to an- swer him. 41. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betray- ed into the hands of sinners. 42. Arise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

Christ is here entering upon his sufferings, and begins with those which were the sorest of all his sufferings, those in his soul. Here we have him in his agony; this melancholy story we had in Matthew; this agony in soul was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and misery; and thereby it appeared that no sorrow was forced upon him, but that it was what he freely admitted. I. He retired for prayer; Sit ye here, (saith he to his disciples,) while I go a little further, and pray. He had lately prayed with them; (John 17.) and now he appoints them to withdraw while he goes to his Father upon an errand peculiar to himself. Note, Our praying with our families will not excuse our neglect of secret worship. When Jacob entered into his agony, he first went over all that he had, and was left alone, and then there wrestled a man with him, (Gen. 32. 22, 23.) though he had been at Father before, (v. 9.) it is likely, with his family.

II. Even into that retirement he took with him Peter and James and John, (v. 33.) three competent witnesses of this part of his humiliation; and though great spirits care not how few know any thing of their agonies, he was not ashamed that they should see. These three had boasted most of their ability and willingness to suffer with him; yet, at first, did not appear, (see this chapter,) and James and John; (ch. 6.) and therefore Christ takes them to stand by, and see what a struggle he had with the bloody baptism and the bitter cup, to convince them that they knew not what they said. It is fit that they who are most confident, should be first tried, that they may be made sensible of their folly and weakness.

III. There he was in a tremendous agitation; (v. 33.) He began to be sore-amazed — to be very much distressed, to be filled with some fear or horror of great dark- ness which fell upon Abraham, (Gen. 15. 12.) or rather, something much worse, and more frightful: The terrors of God set themselves in array against him, and he allowed himself the actual and intense contemplation of them. Never was sorrow like unto his at that time; never any had such experience as he had had from eternity of divine favours, and therefore never any had a sense as he had of divine deserts. Yet there was not the least disorder or irregularity in this commu- nication of his spirits; his affections rose not tumultu- ously, but under direction, and as they were called up, for he had no corrupt nature to mix with them, as we have. If water have a sediment at the bot
om, though it may be clear while it stands still, yet, when shaken, it grows muddier; so it is with our affections; but pure water in a clean glass, though ever so much stirred, continues clear; and so it was with Christ. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it very probable that the devil did now appear to our Saviour in a visible shape, in his own shape, to terrify him, and to drive him from his holy God, (which he aimed at in persecuting Job, a type of Christ, to make him curse God, and die,) and to deter him from the further prosecution of his undertaking; whatever hindered him from that, he looked upon as coming from Satan, Matt. 16. 23. When the devil had tempted him in the wilderness, it is said, He departed from him for a season, (Luke 4. 11.) and in another view, with him, and in another way; finding that he could not by his flateries allure him into sin, he would try his terrify him into it, and so make void his design.

IV. He made a sad complaint of this agitation. He said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful. 1. He was made sin for us, and therefore was thus sorrowful; he fully knew the malignity of the sins he was to bear, but always keeping the highest degrees of love to God, who was offended by them, and of love to man, who was damaged and endangered by them, now that those were set in order before him, no marvel that his soul was exceeding sorrowful. Now he was made to serve with our sins, and was thus wearied with our infirmities. 2. He was made a curse for us; the curses of the law were transferred to him as our Saviour and Redeemer, to take upon him, entirely and without, but as due to the action. And when his soul was thus exceeding sorrowful, he did, as it were, yield to them, and lie down under the load, until by his death he had satisfied for sin, and so for ever abolished the curse. He now tasted death, (as he is said to do, Heb. 2. 9.) which is not an extenuating expression, as if he did but taste it; no, he drank up even the dregs of the cup; but it is rather aggravating; it did not go down by wholesale, but he tasted all the bitterness of it. This was that fear which the apostle speaks of, (Heb. 5. 7.) a natural fear of pain and death, which it is natural to human nature to startle at.

Now the consideration of Christ’s sufferings in his soul, and his sorrows for us, should be of use to us. (1.) To inſhake our sins. Can we ever entertain, in the least, a thought of our sins, which as a sober man would think, when we see what impression sin (though but imputed) made upon the Lord Jesus? Shall that sit light upon our souls, which sat so heavy upon his? Was Christ in such an agony for our sins, and shall we never be in an agony about them? How should we look upon him whom we have pierced, whom we have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness? It becomes us to be exceeding sorrowful for sin, because Christ was so, and never to make a mock at it. If Christ thus suffered for sin, let us arm ourselves with the same mind.

(2.) To sweeten our sorrows; if our souls be at any time exceeding sorrowful, through the afflictions of this present time, let us remember that our Master was so before us, and the disciple is not greater than his Master, and though we suffer sorrow when Christ for our sakes courted it, and submitted to it, and thereby not only took out the sting of it, and made it tolerable, but put virtue into it, and made it profitable, (for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better,) may, and put sweetness into it, and made it comfortable. Blessed Paul was sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing. If we be exceeding sorrowful, it is no sign of our unbelief, but a sign of our faith, that he takes sorrows, if Christ be ours; when the eyes are closed, all tears are wiped away from them.

V. He ordered his disciples to keep with him, not because he needed their help, but because he would have them to look upon him, and receive instruction; he said to them, Tarry ye here, and watch. He had said to the other disciples nothing but, Sit ye here; (v. 32.) but these three he bids to tarry and watch, as expecting more from them than from the rest.
willing; I know it is, it is ready, it is forward; you would willingly keep awake, but you cannot." This may be taken as a reason for that exhortation, "Watch and pray; because, though the spirit is willing, I grant it is, (you have sincerely resolved never to be offended in me,) yet the flesh is weak, and if it do not come, you must stand again the third time. This teaches us, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, Luke 18. 1. Though the answers to our prayers do not come quickly, yet we must renew our requests, and continue instant in prayer, for the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and not lie, Hab. 2. 3. Paul when he was buffeted by a messenger of Satan, besought the Lord three times, as Christ did here, before he obtained an answer from the Father. See Acts 12. 8. A little before this, when Christ, in the trouble of his soul, prayed, Father, glorify thy name, he had an immediate answer by a voice from heaven, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again; but now he must come a second and a third time, for the visits of God's grace in answer to prayer, come sooner or later, according to the pleasure of his will, that we may be kept depending.

IX. He repeated his visits to his disciples. Thus he gave a specimen of his continued care for his church on earth, even when it is half asleep, and not duly concerned for itself, while he ever lives making intercession with his Father in heaven. See how, as became a Mediator, he passes and repasses between both. He came the second time to his disciples, and found them asleep, again, v. 40. See how the infirmities of Christ's disciples return upon them, notwithstanding their resolutions, and overpower them notwithstanding their resistance; and what elgs those bodies of ours are to our souls, which should make us long for that blessed state in which they shall be no more our encumbrance. This second time he spake to them as before, but they will not what to answer him: they were ashamed of their drowsiness, and had nothing to say in excuse for it. "O Master," said he, "why are you so greatly overpowered with it, that, like men between sleeping and waking, they knew not where they were or what they said. But, the third time, they were bid to sleep if they would; (v. 41.) 'Sleep on now, and take your rest. I have now no more occasion for your watching, you may sleep, if you will, for me.' It is enough; we had not that word in Matthew. 'You have had warning enough to keep awake, and would not take it, except for some particular little reason you have to be secure.' " Amen, I discharge you from further attendance; so some understand it; "Now the hour is come, in which I knew you would all forsake me, even take your course;" as he said to Judas, What thou doest, do quickly. The Son of man is now betrayed into the hands of sinners, the chief priests and elders; those worst of sinners, because they made a profession of sanctity. "Come, rise up and let us go forth," said the Lord, "Let us go and meet the enemy, for lo, he that betrays me is near, and I must not now think of making an escape." When we see trouble at the door, we are concerned to stir up ourselves to get ready for it.

43. And immediately, while he yet spake, comet Judas, one of the twelve, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders. 44. And he that betrayed him, had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. 45. And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46. And they laid their hands on him, and took him. 47. And one of them that stood by, drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. 48. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves, to take me? 49. I was daily with you in the temple, teaching, and ye took me not; but the scriptures must be fulfilled. 50. And they all forsook him, and fled. 51. And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: 52. And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

We have here the seizing of our Lord Jesus by the officers of the chief priests. This was what his enemies had long aimed at, they had often sent to take him; but he had escaped out of their hands, because his hour was not come, nor could they now have taken him, had he not freely surrendered himself. He began first to suffer in his soul, but afterward in his body, that he might satisfy for sin, which begins in the heart, but afterward makes the members of the body instruments of unrighteousness. I. Here is a band of rude miscreants employed to take our Lord Jesus, and make him a prisoner; a great multitude with swords and staves. There is no wickedness so black, no villainy so horrid, but there may be found among the children of men fit tools to be made use of, that will not scruple to be employed; a miserably depraved and vitiated mind. At the head of this rabble is Judas, one of the twelve, one of those that had been so intimately conversant with our Lord Jesus, had professed in his name, and in his name cast out Devils, and yet betrayed him. It is no new thing for a very fair and plausible profession to end in a shameful and fatal apostacy. How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! II. Men of no less figure than the chief priests and the Scribes, and the elders, sent them, and set them on work, who pretended to exalt the Messiah, and to be ready to welcome him; and yet, when he is come, and has given undeniable proofs that it is he that should come, because he doth not make court to them, nor countenance and support their pomp and grandeur, because he appears not as a temporal Prince, but sets up a spiritual kingdom, and preaches repentance, reformation, and a holy life, and directs men's thoughts, and affections, and aims, to another world, they get themselves against him, and, without giving the credentials he produces an impartial examination, resolve to run him down. III. Judas betrayed him with a kiss; abusing the freedom Christ used to allow his disciples, of kissing his check at their return, when they had been any time absent. He called him Master, Master, and kissed him; he said, Rabbi, Rabbi, as if he would be now more respectful to him than ever. It is enough to put one for ever out of conceit with being called of men Rabbi, Rabbi, (Matth. 23. 7.) since it was with this compliment that Christ was betrayed. He
bid them take him, and lead him away safely. Some think that he spake this ironically, knowing that
this fat was beyond his power, and he pleased himself to think that this Samson could break their bonds asunder as threads of tow, and make his escape, and then he
should get the money, and Christ the honour, and
no harm done; and I think so too, but that
Satan was entered into him, so that the worst and
most malicious intention of this action is not too black
to be supposed. Nay, he had often heard his Master
say, "But he that believeth in me shall not perish, but be
crucified;" and had no reason to think otherwise.

IV. They arrested him, and made him his pri-
soner; (v. 46.) They laid their hands on him, rude
and violent hands, and took him into custody; tri-
umphing, it is likely, that they had done that which
had been often before attempted in vain.

V. Peter laid about him, in defence of his Master,
and wounded one of them, and would have staked himself
for the pre-
sent mindful of his promise, to venture his life with
his Master. He was one of them that stood by, of
them that were with him, (so the word signifies,) of
those three disciples that were with him in the
garden; he drew a sword, and aimed, it is likely, to cut
off the head but missed his blow, and only cut off
the ear, of a servant of the high priest, v. 47. It
is easy to fancy that this was the first time that Christ's
good soldiers overcame, not by taking away others' life,
sbut by laying down their own,

VI. Christ argues with them that had seized him,
and shews them the absurdity of their proceedings
against him. 1. That they came out against him,
as against a thief, whereas he was innocent of any
crime: he taught daily in the temple, and, if he had
any wicked design, there it would some time or
other have been discovered; nay, these officers of
the chief priests, being retainers to the temple, may
be supposed to have heard his sermons there; (I was
with you in the temple;) and had he not taught them
excellent doctrine, even his enemies themselves be-
ing judges? Were not all the words of his mouth
in righteousness? Was there any thing forward or
vexatious in them? Prov. 8. 8. By his fruits he was
known to be a good tree; why then did they come
out against him as a thief? 2. That they came to
take him thus privately, whereas he was neither
ashamed nor afraid to appear publicly in the temple.
He was none of those evil-doers that hate the light,
neither come to the light, John 3. 20. If their
masters had anything to say to him, they might meet him
in the temple, where he was ready to answer all challenges, all charges; and there they
might do as they pleased with him, for the priests
had the custody of the temple, and the command of
the guards about it; but to come upon him thus at
midnight, and in the place of his retirement, was
base and cowardly. This was to do as David's ene-
my, that sat in the lurking places of the villages, to
seek David's life, Ps. 38. 25. The same sort of
affairs.

3. They came with swords and staves, as if he had
been in arms against the government, and must have
the posse comitatus raised to reduce him. There
was no occasion for those weapons; but they made
this ado, (1.) To secure themselves from the rage of
some; they came armed, because they feared the
gentiles; but thus were they in great fear, whereas
no fear was upon them when they came against
the rage of others. By coming with swords and staves to take
him, they represented him to the people (who are
apt to take impressions this way) as a dangerous tur-
bulent man, and so endeavoured to incense them
against him, and make them cry out, Crucify him,
crucify him, having no other way to gain their point.

VII. He reconciled himself to all this injurious,
immonious treatment, by referring himself to the
Old-Testament predictions of the Messiah. I am
hardly used, but I submit, for the scriptures must be
fulfilled, v. 49. I see here what a regard Christ
paid to the prophecies of the Old Testament, rather
than that the least jot or tittle of the word of
God should fall to the ground; and as he had an eye
to them in his sufferings, so he has in his glory; for
what is Christ doing in the government of the world,
but fulfilling the scriptures? 2. See what use we are
to make of the Old Testament; we must search for
Christ, the true Treasure hid in that field; as the
historians of antiquity are committed to find the
prophets of the Old Testament illustrate the history of the New.

VIII. All Christ's disciples, hereupon, deserted
him; (v. 50.) They all forsook him, and fled. They
were very confident that they should adhere to him;
but even good men know not what they will do, till
they are tried. If it was such a comfort to him, as
his sufferings and crucifixion, to show that he was
more in the world than their Master, nor can expect to be better
used either by their enemies or by their friends.
When St Paul was in peril, none stood by him, but
all men forsook him, 2 Tim. 4. 16.

IX. The noise disturbed the neighbourhood, and
some of the neighbours were brought into danger,
by the riot, v. 51, 52. This passage of story we have
not in any other of the evangelists. Here is an
account of a certain young man, who, as it should
seem, was no disciple of Christ, nor, as some have
imagined, a servant of the house wherein Christ had
cleaned the passover, who followed him to see what
would become of him, (as the sons of the prophets,
when they understood that Elijah was to be taken
up, went to view a farther off, 2 Kings 2. 7,) but some
young man that lived near the garden, perhaps in
the house to which the garden belonged. Now ob-
serve concerning him,

1. How he was frightened out of his bed, to be a
spectator of Christ's sufferings. Such a multitude,
assembled, and coming with so much fury, and in the
death of the night, and in a quiet village, could not
but produce a great stir; this alarmed our young
man, who perhaps thought they were so numerous
by came in and thought, the uproar among the people,
and had the curiosity to go, and see what the matter
was, and was in such haste to inform himself, that
he could not stay to dress himself, but threw a sheet
about him, as if he would appear like a walking-
ghost, in grave clothes, to frighten those who had
frightened him, and ran among the thickest of them
with this question, What is to do here? Being told,
he was frightened, and fled. He has heard much of the fame of this Jesus; and therefore,
when all his disciples had quitted him, he continued
to follow him, desirous to hear what he would say,
and see what he would do. Some think, that his
having no other garment than this linen cloth upon
his naked body, intimates that he was one of those
Jews who made a greater profession of piety than
their outward lives shewed; they were quite in a
state of extreme want and privation, and had no
instances of austerity and mortification of the body,
they used no clothes but one linen garment, which,
though contrived to be modest enough, was thin and
cold. But I rather think that this was not his con-
stant wear.

2. See how he was frightened into his bed again,
when he was in danger of being made a sharer in
Christ's sufferings. His own disciples had run away
from him; but this young man, having no concern
for him, thought he might securely attend him, especially being so far from being armed, that he was not so much as clothed; but the young men, the Roman soldiers, who were called to assist, laid hold of him, for all was fish that came to their net. Perhaps they were now vexed at themselves, that they had suffered the disciples to run away, and, they being out of their reach, they resolved to seize the first they could lay their hands on; though this young man was perhaps one of the strictest sect of the Jewish church, yet the Roman soldiers made no conscience of abusing him, upon this occasion. Finding himself in danger, he left the linen coat by which they had caught hold of him, and fled away naked. This passage is recorded to shew what a barbarous crew this was, that was sent to seize Christ, and what a narrow escape the disciples had of falling into their hands, out of which nothing could have kept them, but their Master's care of them: If I seek me, let these go their way, John 18. 8. It also intimates that there is no hold of those who are led by curiosity only, and not by faith and conscience, to follow Christ.

53. And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes. 54. And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire. 55. And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together. 57. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58. We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and build another made without hands. 59. But neither so did their witness agree together. 60. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? 61. But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? 62. And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 63. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? 64. Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death. 65. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.

We have here Christ's arraignment, trial, conviction, and condemnation, in the ecclesiastical court, before the great Sanhedrin, of which the high priest was president, or judge of the court; the same Caiaphas that had lately adjudged it expedient he should be put to death, guilty or not guilty, (John 11. 50.) and who therefore might justly be excepted against as partial.

I. Christ is hurried away to his house, his palace it is called, such state did he live in. And there, though in the dead of the night, all the chief priests and elders, and scribes, that were in the secret, were assembled, ready to receive the prey; so sure were they of it.

II. Peter followed at a distance, such a degree of cowardice was his late courage dwindled into, v. 54. But when he came to the high priest's palace, he sneakingly went, and sat with the servants, that he might not be suspected to belong to Christ. The high priest's fire-side was no proper place, nor his servants proper company, for Peter, but it was his entrance into a temptation.

III. Great diligence was used to procure, for love of money, false witnesses against Christ. They had seized him as a malefactor, and, now they had him, they had no indictment to prefer against him, no crime to lay to his charge, but they sought for witnesses against him; pumped some with insinuating questions, offered bribes to others, if they would accuse him, and endeavoured to frighten others, if they would not, v. 55, 56. The chief priests and elders were by the law intrusted with the prosecuting and punishing of offenders; (Deut. 19. 16.) yet these were now ringleaders in a crime that tends to the overthrow of all justice. It is time to cry, Hely, Lord, when the physicians of a land are its troubles, and those that should be the conservators of peace and equity, are the corruptors of both.

IV. He was at length charged with words spoken some years ago, which, as they were represented, seemed to threaten the temple, which they had made better than an idol of; (v. 57, 58.) but the witnesses to this matter did not agree, (v. 59.) for one swore that he said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days; (so it is in Matthew) the other swore that he said, I will destroy this temple, that is made with hands, and within three days I will build it, not it, but another made without hands; now these two differ much from each other; and in his express their testimony was not sufficient, equal to the charge of a capital crime. It made Hammond; they did not accuse him of that upon which a sentence of death might be founded, no, not by the utmost stretch of their law.

V. He was urged to be his own Accuser; (v. 60.) The high priest stood up in a heat, and said, Answerest thou nothing? This he said under pretence of justice and fair dealing, but really with a design to insnare him, that they might accuse him, Luke 55. 44, 45. We may well imagine with what an air of haughtiness and disdain this proud high priest brought our Lord Jesus to this question; "Come you, the prisoner at the bar, you hear what is sworn against you: what have you now to say for yourself?" Pleased to think that he seemed silent, who had so often silenced those that picked quarrels with him. Still Christ answered nothing, that he might set us an example, 1. Of patience under calumnies and false accusations; when we are reviled, let us not revile again, 1 Pet. 2. 22. And, 2. Of prudence, when a man shall be made an offender for a word, (Isa. 29. 21.) and our defence made our offence; it is an evil time indeed when the prudent shall keep silence, (lest they make bad worse,) and commit their cause to him that judgeth righteously. But,

VI. When he was asked whether he was the Christ, he confessed, and denied not, that he was, v. 61, 62. He asked, Art thou the Son of the Blessed? that is, the Son of God? for, as Dr. Hammond observes, the Jews, when they named God, generally added, blessed for ever; and thence the Blessed is the title
of God, a peculiar title, and applied to Christ, Rom. 9. 5. And for the proof of his being the Son of God, he binds them over to his second coming: ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and Son of man that now appears so mean and despisable, whom you see and trample upon, (Isa. 53. 2, 3.) you shall shortly see and tremble before. Now, one would think that such a word as this, which our Lord Jesus seems to have spoken with a grandeur and majesty not agreeable to his present appearance, (for through the thickest cloud of his humanity some rays of glory were still shewn,) should have startled the court, and at least, in the opinion of some of them, should have amounted to a demurrer, or arrest of judgment, and that they should have stayed process till they had considered further of it; when Paul at the bar reasoned of the judgment to come, the judge trembled, and adjourned the trial, Acts 24. 25. But these chief priests were so miserably blinded with malice and rage, that, like the horse rushing into the battle, they mocked at fear, and were not affrighted, neither believed they that it was the sound of the trumpet, Job 39. 22, 23. And see Job 15. 26, 26.

VII. The high priest, upon this confession of his, convicted him as a Blasphemer; (v. 63.) He rent his clothes, and said, What think ye? But it was really prejudged, for the high priest had said, Ye have heard the blasphemy; he gave judgment first, who, as president of the court, ought to have voted last. So they all condemned him to be guilty of death; what friends he had in the great Sanhedrin did not appear, it is probable that he had none.

IX. They set themselves to abuse him, and, as the Philistines with Samson, to make sport with him, v. 65. It should seem that some of the priests themselves that had condemned him, so far forgot the dignity, as well as duty, of their place, and the gravity which became them, that they helped their servants in playing the fool with a condemned prisoner. This they made their diversion, while they went for the morning to complete their eucharist. That night of observations (as the passover night was called) they made a merry night of. If they did not think it below them to abuse Christ, shall we think any thing below us, by which we may do him honour?

66. And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there came out of the maid of the high priest: 67. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. 68. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. 69. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. 70. And he denied it again. And a little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. 71. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. 72. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.

We have here the story of Peter's denying Christ.

1. It began in keeving at a distance from him. Peter had followed afar off, (v. 54.) and now was beneath in the palace, at the lower end of the hall. Those that are shy of Christ are in a fair way to deny him, that are shy of attending on holy ordinances, shy of the communion of the faithful, and loath to be seen on the side of despised godliness.

2. It was confirmed by his denying Christ, when Christ was the high priest's servants, and sitting among them. They that think it dangerous to be in company with Christ's disciples, because thence they may be drawn in to suffer for him, will find it much more dangerous to be in company with his enemies, because there they may be drawn in to sin against him.

3. The temptation was, his being charged as a disciple of Christ; Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, v. 66. This is one of them, (v. 69.) for thou art a Galilean, one may know that by thy speaking broad, v. 70. It doth not appear that he was challenged upon it, or in danger of being prosecuted as a criminal for it, but only bantered upon it, and in danger of being ridiculed as a fool for it.

While the chief priests were abusing the Master, the servants were abusing the disciples. Sometimes Christ seems to fall so low on the losing side, that every body has a stone to throw at it, and even the objects gather themselves together against it. When Job was on the dung-hill, he was had in derision of those that were the children of base men, Job 30. 8. Yet, all things considered, the temptation could not be called formidable; it was only a maid that casually cast her eye upon him, and, for that it appears, without any great trouble, said, Thou art one of them, to which he needed not to have made any reply, or might have said, "And if I be, I hope that is no treason."

4. The sin was very great; he denied Christ before men, at a time when he ought to have confessed and owned him; and to have appeared in court a true ambassador for him. For Christ had often given notice to his disciples of his own sufferings; yet, when they came, they were to Peter as great a surprise and terror as if he had never heard of them before. He had often told them that they must suffer for him, must take up their cross, and follow him; and yet Peter is so terribly afraid of suffering, upon the very first alarm of it, that he will lie, and swear, and deny Christ, to avoid it. When Peter was admired and flocked after, he could readily own him; but now, that he is deserted, and despised, and run down, he is ashamed of him, and will own no relation to him.

5. His repentance was very speedy. He repeated his denial thrice, and the third was worst of all, for then he cursed and swore, to confirm his denial; and that third blow, which, one would think, should
have stoned him, and knocked him down, startled him, and roused him up. Then the cock crew the second time, which put him in mind of his Master's words, the warning he had given him, with that particular circumstance of the cock crowing twice; by recollecting that, he was made sensible of his sin, and the aggravations of it; and when he thought thereon, observe this evangelist, who wrote, as some have thought, by St. Peter's direction, speaks as fully of Peter's sin as of any of them, but more briefly of his sorrow, which Peter, in modesty, would not have to be magnified, and because he thought he could never sorrow enough for so great a sin. His repentance here is thus expressed virginis iussum, where something must be supplied. He added to weep, so somewhat making it a Hebraism: he wept, and the more he thought of it, the more he wept; he continued weeping: he flung out, and wept; burst out into tears; threw himself down, and wept; he covered his face, and wept, so some; cast his garment about his head, that he might not be seen to weep; he cast his eyes upon his Master, who turned, and looked upon him; so Dr. Hammond supplies it, and it is probable correctness. Or doth it signify, fixing his mind upon it, he wept. It is not a transient thought of that which is humiliating, that will suffice, but we must dwell upon it. Or, what if this word should mean his laying load upon himself, throwing confusion into his own face; he did as the publican that smote his breast, in sorrow for sin; and this amounts to his weeping bitterly.

CHAP. XV.

What we read of the sufferings of Christ, in the foregoing chapter, he wept. Some of the introduction: hie we have, as it were, completing of them. We left him condemned by the chief priests; but they could only show their teeth, they could not bite. Here we have him, I. Arraigned and accused before Pilate the Roman governor, v. 1. 5. II. Cried out against by the common people, at the instance of the priests, v. 6. 14. III. Condemned to be crucified immediately, v. 15. IV. Bantered and abused, as a Mock king, by the Roman soldiers, v. 16. 18. V. Led out to the place of execution with all possible ignominy and disgrace, v. 20. 24. VI. Nailed to the cross between two thieves, v. 25. 28. VII. Reviled and abused by all that passed by, v. 29. 32. VIII. Forsaken for him by his Father, v. 33. IX. Or, in the Father, v. 34. X. Dying, and rending the veil of the temple, v. 37. 38. XI. Attested and witnessed to by the centurion and others, v. 39. 41. XI. Buried in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathæa, v. 42. 47.

1. AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and Scribes, and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. 2. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the king of the Jews? And he, answering, said unto him, Thou sayest. 3. And the chief priests accused him of many things; but he answered nothing. 4. And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold, how many things they witness against thee. 5. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. 6. Now at that feast he released them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired. 7. And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8. And the multitude, crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9. But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the king of the Jews? 10. For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him from envy. 11. But the chief priests moved the people that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12. And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the king of the Jews? 13. And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14. Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him.

Here we have,

I. A consultation held by the great sanhedrim for the effectual prosecution of our Lord Jesus. They met early in the morning about it, and went into a grand committee, to find out ways and means to get him put to death; they lost no time, but followed their blow in good earnest, lest there should be an uproar among the people. The unwearied industry of wicked people is to get that which they desire. It is good for us often to remember the bonds of the Lord Jesus, as bound with him who was bound for us. They led him through the streets of Jerusalem, to expose him to contempt, who, while he taught in the temple, but a day or two before, was had in veneration; and we may well imagine how miserably he looked after such a night's usage as he had had; so buffeted, spit upon, and abused. Their delivering of him to the Roman procurator, was of the same kind, as if he thereby should merit, and brought upon themselves; it signified that the promise, the covenant, and the oracles, of God, and the visible church-state, which were the glory of Israel, and had been so long in their possession, should now be delivered up to the Gentiles. By delivering up the king, they do, in effect, deliver up the kingdom of God, which is therefore, as it were, by their own consent, taken from them, and given to another nation. If they had delivered up Christ, to gratify the desires of the Romans, or to satisfy any jealousies of their's concerning him, it had been another matter; but they voluntarily betrayed him that was Israel's Crown, to them that were Israel's yoke.

III. The examining of him by Pilate upon interrogatories; (v. 2.) "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Dest thou pretend to be so, to be that Messiah whom thy Jews declare not to be a temporal prince?" Or, with Christ, "It is as thou sayest, I am that Messiah, but not such a one as they expect." He is the King that rules and protects his Israel according to the Spirit, who are Jews inwardly by the circumci- sion of the Spirit, and the King that will restrain and punish the carnal Jews, who continue in unbelief.

IV. The articles of impeachment exhibited against him, and his silence under the charge and accusation. The chief priests forgot the dignity of their place, when they turned informers, and did in person accuse Christ of many things, (v. 3.) and witness against him, v. 4. Many of the Old-Testament prophets charge the priests of their times with great
wickedness, in which we did they prosperity of their priests; see Ezek. 22. 26. Hos. 5. 1.—6. Mic. 3. 11. Zeph. 3. 4. Mal. 1. 6.—2. 8. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is said to be for the iniquity of the priests that shed the blood of the just, Lam. 4. 13. Nicked priests are generally the worse men. The better part of things, then, the worse it is when it is corrupted. Lay-persecutors have been generally more compassionate than ecclesiastics. These priests were very eager and noisy in their accusation: but Christ answered nothing, v. 3. When Pilate urged him to clear himself, and was desirous he should, (v. 4.) yet still he held mute, (v. 5.) he answered nothing, which Pilate thought very inhuman and unjust. He did not propose to himself (v. 2.) but could not answer the prosecutors and witnesses, because the things they alleged were notoriously false, and he knew Pilate himself was convinced they were so. Note, As Christ spake to admission, so he kept silence to admiration.

V. The proposal Pilate made to the people, to have Jesus released to them, since it was the custom of the least to grace the solemnity with the release of one prisoner. The people expected and demanded that he should do as he had ever done to them, (v. 8.) it was an ill usage, but they would have it kept up. Now Pilate perceived that the chief priests delivered Jesus up for envy, because he had got such a reputation among the people as eclipsed their's, v. 10. It was easy to see, comparing the earnestness of the persecutors with the coldness of the people, that the proofs, that it was not his guilt, but his goodness, not any thing malicious or scandalous, but something meritorious and glorious, that they were provoked at. And therefore, hearing how much he was the Darling of the crowd, he thought that he might safely appeal from the priests to the people, and that they would be proud of rescuing him out of the priests' hands and they proposed the expedition for their doing it without danger of an affair; let them demand him to be released, and Pilate will readily do it, and stop the mouths of the priests with it— that the people insisted upon his release. There was indeed another prisoner, one Barabbas, that had an interest, and could have some votes; but he questioned not but Jesus would out-polit him.

VI. The unanimous outrageous clamours of the people—all for that Man—that they should have him crucified. It was a great surprise to Pilate, when he found the people so much under the influence of the priests, that all agreed to desire that Barabbas might be released, v. 11. Pilate opposed it all he could; "What will ye that I shall do to him whom ye call the King of the Jews? Would not ye then have him released too?" v. 12. No, say they, Crucify him. The priests having put that in their mouths, they insist upon it; and Pilate objected, Why, what evil has he done? (a very material question in such a case,) they do not pretend to answer it, but cried out the more exceedingly, as they were more and more instigated and irritated by the priests, Crucify him, crucify him. Now the priests, who were very busy dispersing themselves and their creature among the mob, to keep up the cry, promised themselves that it would influence Pilate two ways to condemn him. 1. It might incline him to believe Christ guilty, when there was so general an outcry against him. "Surely," might Pilate think, "he must needs be a bad man, whom all the world is weary of." He would now conclude that he had been misapplied, when he was told what an interest he had in the people, and that the mightiest of men might be carried in the case of his prosecution with so much expedition, that we may suppose that they who were Christ's friends, and would have opposed this cry, were at the other end of the town, and knew nothing of the matter. Note, It has been the common artifice of Satan, to put Christ and his religion into an ill name, and so to run them down. When once this sect, as they called it, comes to be everywhere spoken against, though without cause, then that is looked upon as cause enough to the enemy. But let us judge of persons and things by their merits, and the standard of God's word, and not prej udice by common fame and the cry of the country. 2. It might induce him to condemn Christ, to please the people, and indeed for fear of displeasing them. Though he was not so weak as to be governed by their opinion, to believe him guilty, yet he was so wicked as to be swayed by their outrage, to condemn him though he believed him innocent. It is the wisdom of this world. Our Lord Jesus dying as a Sacrifice for the sins of many, he fell a sacrifice to the rage of many.

15. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified. 16. And the soldiers led him away into the hall called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band, 17. And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head; 18. And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews! 19. And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and, bowing their knees, worshiped him. 20. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him. 21. And they compel one Simon a Cyrenian, who passed by, coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to bear his cross.

Here,

I. Pilate, to gratify the Jews' malice, delivers Christ to be crucified, v. 15. Willing to content the people, to do enough for them, (so the word is,) and make their request, he might keep them quiet, by released Barabbas unto them, who was the scandal and plague of their nation, and delivered Jesus to be crucified, who was the Glory and Blessing of their nation. Though he had scourged him before, hoping that would content them, and then not designing to crucify him, yet he went on to that; for no wonder that he who could persuade himself to chastise one that was innocent, (Luke 23. 16.) could by degrees persuade himself to crucify him. Christ was crucified, for that was, 1. A bloody death, and without blood no remission, Heb. 9. 22. The blood is the life; (Gen. 9. 4.) it is the vehicle of the animal spirits, which connect the soul and body, so that the exhausting of the blood is the exhausting of the life. Christ was to lay down his life for us, and therefore shed his blood. Blood made atonement for the soul, (Lev. 17. 11.) and therefore in every sacrifice of propitiation special order was given for the pouring out of the blood, and the shrinking of that before the Lord. Now, that Christ might answer all these types, he shed his blood. 2. It was a painful death; the pains were exquisite and acute, for death made its assaults upon the vitals by the exterior parts, which are quickest to suffer. Christ died, so as that he might feel himself the, because he was to be both the Priest and the Sacrifice; so that he might be active in dying, because he was to make his soul an offering for sin. Truly calls crucifixion, Tertiumum sufflicium—A most tremen-
dous punishment: Christ would meet death in its
greatest terror, and so conquer it. 3. It was a shame-
ful death, the death of slaves, and the vilest male-
factors; so it was accounted among the Romans.
The cross and the shame are put together. God
hated sin, and yet spared sinners, (Deut. 21.) That he
is hanged is in accordance with the sense of
God, is under a particular mark of God's displea-
sure. It was the death that Saul's sons were put to,
when the guilt of their father's bloody house was to be
expiated, 2 Sam. 21. 6. Haman and his sons were
hanged, Esth. 7. 10.—9. 13. We do not read of any
of the prophets of the Old Testament that were
hanged; but now that Christ has submitted to be
hanged upon a tree, the reproach and curse of that
kind of death are quite rolled away, so that it ought
not to be any hinderance to the comfort of those who
die either innocently or penitently, nor any diminu-
tion from, but rather an addition to, the glory of
those who die martyrs for Christ, to be, as he was,
hanged upon a tree.

II. Pilate, to gratify the gay humour of his Roman
soldiers, delivered him to them, to be abused and
spately that they were preparing for the execu-
tion. They called together the whole regiment
that was then in waiting, and they went into an inner
hall, where they ignominiously abused our Lord
Jesus, as a King, just as in the High Priest's hall his
servants had ignominiously abused him as a Prophet
and Saviour. 1. Do kings wear robes of purple or
scarlet? They clothed him with purple. This abuse
done to Christ in his apparel should be an intimida-
tion to christians, not to make the partaking of apparel
their adorning, 1 Pet. 3. 4. Shall a purple robe be
matter of pride to a christian, which was
matter of reproach and shame to Christ? 2. Do
kings wear crowns? They platted a crown of thorns,
and put it on his head. A crown of straw, or rushes,
would have been banter enough; but this was pain
also. He wore the crown of thorns which we had
deserved, that we might wear the crown of glory
which we have merited, upon his cross. And as
Gideon taught the men of Succoth, to hate sin,
and be uneasy under it, and to be in love with Jesus
Christ, who is here a Lily among thorns. If we be
at any time afflicted with a thorn in the flesh, let it
be our comfort, that our great High Priest is touched
with the feeling of our infirmities, having himself
known what thorns in the flesh meant. 3. Are kings
attended with the acclamations of their subjects, O
King! So also is it with Jesus Christ, who is
saluted with, "Hail, King of the Jews; such a
Prince, and such a people, even good enough for
one another." 4. Kings have sceptres put into their
hand, marks of dominion, as the crown is of dignity;
to resemble that, they put a reed in his right hand.
Those who despise the authority of the Lord Jesus,
as not to be observed and obeyed, who regard not
either the precepts of his word, or the threatenings
of his cross, increase their ruin, and their more
contempt, and, as these here, smite him on the head
with it, such is the indignity they do him. 5. Subjects,
when they swear allegiance, were wont to kiss their sov-
reign; and this they offered to do, but, instead of
that, spit upon him. 6. Kings used to be addressed
upon the knee; and this also they brought into the
jest, they bowed the knee, and worshipped him; this
they did in scorn, to make themselves and one
another laugh. We were by sin become liable to
overlasting shame and contempt, to deliver us from which,
our Lord Jesus submitted to this shame and contempt
for us. He was thus mocked, not in his own clothes,
but in another's, to signify that he suffered not for
his own sin; the crime was ours, the shame his.
Those who pretend subjection to Christ, but at
the same time give themselves up to the service of
the world and the flesh, do, in effect, the same that
they did, who bowed the knee to him in mockery,
and abused him with, Hail, King of the Jews, when
they said, We have no king but Caesar. Those that
bow the knee to Christ, but do not bow the soul,
that drew nigh to him with their mouths, and ho-
nor him with their lips, but their hearts are far
from him, put the same affront upon him that these
here did.

III. The soldiers at the hour appointed, led him
away from Pilate's judgment-hall to the place of
execution, (v. 20.) as a Sheep to the slaughter: he
was led forth with the workers of iniquity, though he
did no sin. But lest his death under the load of his
cross, which he was to carry, should prevent the
further cruelties they intended, they compelled one
Simon of Cyrene to carry his cross for him. He
passed by, coming out of the country or out of the
fields, not thinking of any such matter. Note, We
must not think it strange, if crosses come upon us
suddenly, and we be surprised by them. The cross
was a very troublesome, unwieldy load; but he that
carried it a few minutes, had the honour to have
his name upon record in the book of God, though
otherwise an obscure person: so that, wherever this
gospel is preached, there should be a memorial of him:
in like manner, though no affliction, no cross, for the present, be joyous, but grievous,
yet afterward it yields a crown of glory to them that
are exercised thereby.

22. And they bring him unto the place
Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The
place of a scull. 23. And they gave him
to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but he
received it not. 24. And when they had
crucified him, they parted his garments,
casting lots upon them, what every man
should take. 25. And it was the third
hour; and they crucified him. 26. And
the superscription of his accusation was
written over, THE KING OF THE
JEWS. 27. And with him they crucified
two thieves; the one on his right hand, and
the other on his left. 28. And the scripture
was fulfilled, which saith, And he was num-
bered with the transgressors. 29. And
they that passed by railed on him, wagging
their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that de-
stroyest the temple, and buildest it in three
days. 30. Save thyself, and come down
from the cross. 31. Likewise also the chief
priests, mocking, said among themselves
with the scribes, He saved others; himself
he cannot save. Let Christ the king of
Israel descend now from the cross, that we
may see and believe. And they that were
crucified with him reviled him.

We have here the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus.
1. The place where he was crucified; it was called
Golgatha—the place of a scull; some think, because
of the heads of malefactors that were there cut off; it
was the common place of execution, as Tyburn, fer
he was in all respects numbered with the transgressors. I know not how to give any credit to it, but divers of the ancients mention it as a current tradition, that in this place our first father Adam was buried, and they think it highly congruous that there should have been a second crucifixion for us; and that the Christ shall be made alive. Tertullian, Origæ, Chrysostom, and Epiphanius, (great names,) take notice of it; nay, Cyprian adds, Creditur a his—Many good people believe that the blood of Christ crucified did trickle down upon the scull of Adam, who was buried in the same place. Something more credible is the tradition, that this mount Calvary was that mountain in the land of Moriah, (as in the land of Moriah it certainly was, for so the country about Jerusalem was called,) on which Isaac was to be offered; and the ram was offered instead of him; and then Abraham had an eye to this day of Christ, when he called the place Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide, expecting that so it would be seen in the mount of the Lord.

II. The time when he was crucified; it was the third hour, v. 25. He was brought before Pilate about the sixth hour, (John 19. 14,) according to the Roman way of reckoning, which John uses, with which ours at this day agrees, that is, at six o'clock in the morning; and then, at the third hour, according to the Jews’ way of reckoning, that is, about nine of the clock in the morning, or soon after, they nailed him to the cross. Lightfoot makes the third hour is here mentioned, to intimate an agreement of the wickedness of the priests, that they were here prosecuting Christ to the death, though it was after the third hour, when they ought to have been attending the service of the temple, and offering the peace-offerings; it being the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, when there was to be a holy convocation in the temple. When they should have been, according to the duty of their place-presidency, in the public devotions, were they here venting their malice against the Lord Jesus; yet these were the men that seemed so zealous for the temple, and condemned Christ for speaking against it. Note, There are many who pretend to be for the church, who yet care not how seldom they go to church.

III. The circumstances that were done him, when he was nailed to the cross, as if they had not been ignominious enough, they added several things to the ignominy of it.
1. It being the custom to give wine to persons that were to be put to death, they mingled his with myrrh, which was bitter, and made it nauseous: he tasted it, but would not drink it; was willing to admit the bitterness of it, but not the benefit of it.
2. The garments of those that were crucified, being, as with us, the executioner’s fee, the soldiers cast lots upon his garments, (v. 24.) threw dice (as our soldiers do upon a drum-head) for them: so making themselves merry with his misery, and sitting at their sport while he was hanging in pain.
3. They set a superscription over his head, by which they intended to reproach him, but really did him but justice. In The king of the Jews, v. 26. Here was no crime alleged, but his sovereignty owned. Perhaps Pilate meant to cast disgrace upon Christ as a baffled King, or upon the Jews, who by their importunity had forced him, against his conscience, to condemn Christ, as a people that deserved no better a King than he seemed to be; however, God intended it to be the proclaiming of God’s work upon the cross, the King of Israel; though Pilate knew not what he wrote, any more than Cainaphas what he said, John 11. 51. Christ crucified is King of his church, his spiritual Israel; and even then when he hung on the cross, he was like a king, conquering his and his people’s enemies, and triumphing over them, Col. 2. 15. Now he was writing his laws in his own blood, and preparing his favours for his subjects. Whenever we look unto Christ crucified, we must remember the inscription over his head, that he is a King, and we must give up ourselves to be his subjects, as Israelites, do.

4. They crucified two thieves with him, one on his right hand, the other on his left, and him in the midst as the worst of the three; (v. 27.) so great a degree of dishonour did they hereby intend him. And, no doubt, it gave him disturbance too. Some that have been imprisoned in the common goals, for the testimony of Jesus, have complained of the company of cursing, swearing prisoners, more than of the liberties of the spirit. No, in the midst of such our Lord Jesus was crucified; while he lived he had, as there was occasion, associated with sinners to do them good; and now when he died, he was for the same purpose joined with them, for he came into the world, and went out of it, to save sinners, even the chief. But this evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the scriptures in it, v. 28. In that famous prediction of Christ’s sufferings, (Isa. 53. 12.) it was foretold the he should be numbered with the transgressors, because he was made Sin for us.

5. The spectators, that is, the generality of them, instead of condoning with him in his misery, added to it by insulting over him. Surely never was such an instance of barbarous inhumanity toward the innocent as this; they forced him to receive the utmost rage against him, and thus he submitted to the greatest dishonours that could be done him.

(1.) Even they that passed by, that were no way concerned, railed on him, v. 29. If their hearts were so hardened, that their compassion were not moved with such a spectacle, yet they should have thought it enough to have their curiosity gratified; while that would not move; here, they did not only divest of all humanity, but were devils in human shape, they taunted him, and expressed themselves with the utmost detestation of him, and indignation at him, and shot thick at him their arrows, even bitter words. The chief priests, no doubt, put these sarcasms into their mouths, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, now, if thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. They thought it was so, while they had got him to the cross, there were no danger of his destroying the temple; whereas the temple of which he spake he was now destroying, and did within three days build it up; and the temple of which they spake, he did by men, that were his sword and his hand, destroy not many years after. When secure sinners think the danger is over, it is then most ready to seize them: the day of the Lord comes as a thief upon those that deny his coming, and say, Where is the promise of it? much more upon those that defy his coming, and say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work.

(2.) Even the chief priests, who, being taken from among men, and ordained for men, should have compassion even on those that are out of the way, should be tender of those that are suffering and dying, (Heb. 6. 7, 8.) yet they poured vinegar, instead of oil, into his wounds, they talked to the grief of him whom God had smitten, (Ps. 69. 26.) they mocked him, they said, He saved others, healed and helped them, but now it appears that it was not by his own power, for himself he cannot save. They challenge him to come down from the cross, if he would, v. 36. Let them but see that, and they would believe; otherwise they would not believe, when he gave them a more convincing sign than that, when he came up from the grave. These chief priests, one would think, might now have found themselves other work to do; if they would not go to their duties
in the temple, yet they might have been employed in an office not foreign to their profession; though they would not offer any counsel or comfort to the Lord Jesus, yet they might have given some help to the thieves in their dying moments; (the monks and priests in Popish countries are very officious about criminals broken upon the wheel, a death much like that of the cross;) but they did not think them worth the notice of their attention.

(3.) Even they that were crucified with him reviled him; (v. 32.) one of them did, so wretchedly was his heart hardened even in the depth of misery, and at the door of eternity.

33. And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land, until the ninth hour. 34. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? 35. And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, Behold, he calleth Elias. 36. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down. 37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. 39. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he said, It is finished, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 40. There were also women looking afar off; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less, and of Josaeus, and Salome; 41. (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem.

Here we have an account of Christ's dying, how his enemies abused him, and God honoured him, at his death.

I. There was a thick darkness over the whole land, (some think over the whole earth,) for three hours, from noon till three of the clock. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Amos 8. 9.) I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and will darken the earth in the clear day; and Jer. 15. 9. Her sun is gone down while it was yet day. The Jews had often demand ed of Christ a sign from heaven; and now they had one, but such a one as signified the blinding of their eyes. It was a sign of darkness that was come, and coming, upon the Jewish church and nation. They were doing their utmost to extinguish the Sun of Righteousness, which was now setting, and the rising again of which they would never own; and what then might be expected among them but a worse than Egyptian darkness? This intimated to them, that the things which belonged to their peace were now hid from their eyes, and that the day of the Lord was come, which should be to them a day of darkness and gloominess, Joel 2. 1, 2. It was the power of darkness that they were now under, the works of darkness that they were now doing; and such as this should their doom justly be, who loved darkness rather than light.

II. Toward the close of this darkness, our Lord Jesus, in the agony of his soul, cried out, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? v. 34. The darkness signified the present cloud which the human soul of Christ was under, when he was making it an offering for sin. Mr. Fox, in his Acts and Monuments, (vol. 3. p. 160.) tells of one Dr. Hunter, a martyr in queen Mary's time, who, being condemned to death, said before his execution, his prayer, Son of God, shine upon me; and immediately the sun in the firmament shone out of a dark cloud, so full in his face, that he was forced to look another way, which was very comfortable to him. But our Lord Jesus, on the contrary, was denied the light of the sun, when he was in his sufferings, to signify the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance. And this he complained of more than anything; he did not complain of his disciples forsaking him, but of his Father's, 1. Because this wound ed his spirit; and that is a thing hard to bear; (Prov. 18. 14.) this brought the waters into his soul. Ps. 69. 1—3. 2. Because in this especially he was made Sin for us; our iniquities had deserved indignation and wrath upon the soul, (Rom. 2. 7.) and therefore Christ, being made a Sacrifice, underwent as much of it as he was capable of; and it could not but near him. 3. Because it was a sign that he had laid upon him the sins of his priestly order, which was the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was always his delight. These symptoms of divine wrath, which Christ was under in his sufferings, were like that fire from heaven which had been sent sometimes, in extraordinary cases, to consume the sacrifices; (as Lev. 9. 24. 2 Chron. 7. 1.) and it was always a token of God's acceptance. The fire that should have fallen upon the altar, if it had not been consumed, fell in on the victim of the sacrifice, as a token that he was so; therefore it now fell upon Christ, and extorted from him this loud and bitter cry. When Paul was to be offered, as a sacrifice for the service of saints, he could joy and rejoice, (Phil. 2. 17.) but it is another thing to be offered, as a sacrifice for the sin of sinners. Now, at the sixth hour, and so to the ninth, the sun was darkened by an extraordinary eclipse; and if it be true, as some fasten upon, that it is the day on which Christ died there was an eclipse of the moon, that was natural and expected, in which seven digits of the moon were darkened, and it continued from five o'clock till seven, it is remarkable, and yet further significant of the darkness of the time that then was. When the sun shall be dark ened, the moon also shall not give her light.

III. Christ's prayer was bantered by them that stood by; (v. 35, 36.) because he cried, Eli, Eli, or, (as Mark has it, according to the Syrie dialect,) Eloi, Eloi, they said, He calls for Elias, though they knew very well what he said, and what it signified, My God, my God. Thus did they represent him as praying to saints, either because he had abandoned God, or God had abandoned him; and thereby they would make him more and more odious to the people. One of them filled a sponge with vinegar, and reached it up to him upon a reed, "Let him cool his mouth with that, it is drink good enough for him?" v. 36. This was intended for a further affront and abuse to him; and whatever it was that checked him who did it, did but add to the reproach: *Let him alone; he has called for Elia s, let us see whether Elias will come to take him down; and if not, we may conclude that he also hath aban doned him.

IV. Christ did again cry with a loud voice, and so gave up the ghost, v. 37. He was now commending his soul into his Father's hands; and though God is not moved with any bodily exercise, yet this loud voice signified the great strength and arduity of affection wherewith he did it; to teach us, in
every thing wherein we have to do with God, to put forth our utmost vigour, and to perform all the duties of religion, particularly that of self-resolution, with our whole heart and our whole soul; and then, though speech fails, that we cannot cry with a loud voice, as Christ did, yet if God be the strength of the heart, that will not fail. Christ was really and truly dead, for he gave up the ghost; his human soul departed to the world of spirits, and left his body without any blemish or corruption, the death of a natural and holy man.

V. Just at that instant that Christ died upon mount Calvary, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, v. 38. This spake a great deal, 1. Of terror to the unbelieving Jews; for it was a presage of the utter destruction of their church and nation, which followed not long after; it was like the cutting asunder of the staff of beauty, (for this veil was exceeding splendid and glorious, Exod. 26. 31.) and that was done at the same time when they gave for his price thirty pieces of silver, (Zech. 11. 10, 12.) to break the covenant which he had made with that people. Now it was time to cry, Ichabod, The glory is departed from Israel. Some think that that story which Josephus relates, of the temple-door opening of its own accord, with that voice, "the Lord be in the midst thereof," before the destruction of Jerusalem, is the same with this; but that is not probable: however this had the same signification, according to that, (Hos. 5. 14.) I will tear, and go away. 2. It speaks of a calm in all believing Christians, for it signifies the conserving and laying open to us of a new and living way into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

V. The centurion who commanded that detachment which met the sight of the execution, was convinced, and confessed that this Jesus was the Son of God, v. 39. One thing that satisfied him, was, that he so cried out and gave up the ghost: that one who was ready to give up the ghost, should be able to cry out so, was very surprising. Of all the sad spectacles of this kind he never observed the like; and that one who had strength to cry so loud, should yet immediately give up the ghost, this also made him wonder; and he said, to the honour of Christ, and the shame of those that abused him, Truly this man was the Son of God. But what reason had he to say so? I answer, 1. He had reason to say that he suffered unjustly, and had a great deal of wrong done him. Note, He suffered for saying that he was the Son of God; and it was true, he did say so, that he suffered unjustly, as it was plain he had a divine mission; it was therefore the more a matter for him to say, that he was unjustly slain, and that he was indeed the Son of God. 2. He had reason to say that he was a Favourite of heaven, and one for whom the Almighty Power was particularly engaged, seeing how Heaven did him honour at his death, and frowned upon his persecutors. "Surely," thinks he, "this must be some Divine Person, highly beloved, that God should make such a display of his eternal generation as God, and his special designation to the office of Mediator, though he meant not so." Our Lord Jesus, even in the depth of his sufferings and humiliation, was the Son of God, and was declared to be so with power.

VII. There were some of his friends, the good women especially, that attended him; (v. 40. 41.) The women also, which were with him out of Galilee, followed, that durst not be seen at all, the mob was so very outrageous; Currente cedeitur—Give way to the raging torrent, they thought, was good counsel now. The women durst not come near, but stood at a distance, overwhelmed with grief. Some of these women are here named. Mary Magdalene was one; she had been his patient, and owed all her comfort to his power and goodness, which rescued her out of the possession of seven devils, in gratitude for which she thought she could never do enough for him. Mary also was there, the mother of James the little, Jacobus parvus, so the word is; probably he was so called, because he was, like Zacheus, little of stature. This Mary was the wife of Cleophas or Alpheus, sister to the virgin Mary. These women had followed Christ from Galilee, though they were not required to attend the feast, as the males were; but it is probable that they came, in expectation that Christ's temporal judgments would now shortly be set up, and big with hopes of preterment for themselves, and their relations under him. It is plain that the mother of Zebedee's children was so; (Matt. 20. 21.) and now to see him upon a cross, whom they thought to have seen upon a throne, could not but be a great disappointment to them.

Note, Those that follow Christ, in expectation of great things in this world by him, and by the profession of his religion, may probably live to see themselves sadly disappointed.

42. And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, 43. Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. 44. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. 45. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. 46. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. 47. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.

We are here attending the funeral of our Lord Jesus, a solemn, mournful funeral. O that we may by grace be planted in the likeness of it! Observe, 1. How the body of Christ was beggred. It was, as the dead bodies of malefactors are, at the disposal of the government. The centurion ordered it to be craved, and his gravedigger should make it his great care to bury the wicked: but God designed he should make it with the rich, (Isa. 53. 9.) and so he did. We are here told, 1. When the body of Christ was beggred, in order to its being buried, and why such haste was made with the funeral; The even was come, and it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, v. 42. 2. What was done concerning the burial of the sabbath than of any other feast; and therefore though this day was itself a feast-day, yet they observed it more religiously as the eve of the sabbath; when they prepared their houses and tables for the splendid and joyous solemnizing of the sabbath day. Note, The day before the sabbath should be a day of preparation for the sabbath, not only for our outward offices, but for the spiritual ones, as much as possible, should be freed from the cares and business of the world, and fixed, and put in frame for the service and enjoyment of God. Such work is to be done, and such advantages are to be gained on the sabbath-day, that it is requisite we should get ready for it a day before: now, the whole week should be divided between the improvement of the foregoing sabbath and the preparation for the following sabbath.
2. Who it was that begged the body, and took care for the decent interment of it; it was Joseph of Arimathea, who is here called an honourable counsellor, (v. 43.) a person of character and distinction, and in an office of public trust; some think in the state, and that he was one of Pilate's privy council; his post rather seems to have been at the head of a company of the great Sadducees of the Jews, or one of the high priest's council. He was 

a counsellor that conducted himself in his place as did become him. Those are truly honourable, and those only, in places of power and trust, who make conscience of their duty, and whose deportment is agreeable to their pretension. But here is a more shining character put with him; he was one that received 

the Messiah: one who was, to use the words of God, King of the Jews, on earth, and of glory in heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah. Note, Those who wait for the kingdom of God, and hope for an interest in the privileges of it, must shew it by their forwardness to own Christ's cause and interest, even then when it seems to be crushed and run down. Observe, Even among the honourable counsellors there were some, there was one at least, that waited for the kingdom of God, whose faith will condemn the unbelief of all the rest. This man God raised up for this necessary service, when none of Christ's disciples could, or durst, undertake it, having neither purse, nor interest, nor courage, for it. 

Joseph went in boldly to Pilate; though he knew how much it would affright the chief priests, who had loaded him with so much reproach, to see any honour done him, yet he put on courage, preferring his business above a little afraid, 

but were, taking heart on it, he determined to shew this respect to the remains of the Lord Jesus, let the worst come to the worst.

3. What a surprise it was to Pilate to hear that he was dead, (Pilate, perhaps, expecting that he would have saved himself, and come down from the cross,) especially that he was already dead, that one, who seems to have been in no ordinary vigour, should so soon yield to death. Every circumstance of Christ's dying was marvellous; for from first to last his name was called Wonderful. Pilate doubted (so some understand it) whether he were yet dead or no, fearing lest he should be imposed upon, and the body should be taken down alive, and recovered, whereas the sentence was, as with us, to hang till the body be dead. He therefore called the centurion, his own officer, and asked him whether he had been any while dead, (v. 44.) whether it was so long since they perceived any sign of life in him, any breath or motion, that they might conclude he was dead past recall. The centurion could assure him of this, for he had particularly observed how he gave up the ghost, v. 39. There was a special providence in it, that Pilate should be so strict in examining this, that there might be no pretence to say that he was buried alive, and some of the chief priests thereby have been thought sufficient. In paying respects to Christ it becomes us to be generous, and to serve him with the best that can be got, not with that which can be got at the best hand.

2. He took down the body, mangled and macerated as it was, and 

wrought it in the linen as a treasure of great worth. Our Lord Jesus hath commanded himself to be delivered to us sacramentally in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, which we should receive in such a manner as may best express our love to him, who loved us and died for us.

3. He laid it in a sepulchre of his own, in a private place. We sometimes find it spoken of, in the story of the kings of Judah, as a shroud upon the memory of the wicked kings, that they were not buried in the sepulchres of the kings; our Lord Jesus, though he did not die evilly, and was treated as a thief, King of the Jews, by the priests and elders, yet was buried in the graves of the common people, for it was not in this world, but in the other, that his rest was glorious. This sepulchre belonged to Joseph; Abrah, when he had no other possession in the land of Canaan, yet had a burying-place, but Christ had not so much as that. This sepulchre was hewn out of a rock, for Christ died to make the grave a refuge and shelter to the saints, and be having him to a rock, it is a strong refuge. Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave! Christ himself is a hiding-place to his people, that is, as the shadow of a great rock.

4. He rolled a stone to the door of the sepulchre, for so the manner of the Jews was to bury. When Daniel was put into the lions' den, a stone was laid to the mouth of it to keep him in, as here to the door of Christ's sepulchre, but neither of them could keep off the wonder that was to the passover, v. 23. Some of the good women attended the funeral, and beheld where he was laid, that they might come after the sabbath to anoint the dead body, because they had not time to do it now. When Moses, the mediator and lawgiver of the Jewish church, was buried, care was taken that no man should know of his sepulchre, (Deut. 34. 6.) because the respects of the people were to be directed to Christ, but when our great Mediator and Lawgiver was buried, special notice was taken of his sepulchre, because he was to rise again; and the care taken of his body speaks the care which he himself will take concerning his body the church: even then when it seems to be a dead body, and as a valley full of dry bones, it shall be preserved in order to a resurrection; as shall also the dead bodies of the saints, with whom the dead Christ will rise for the life of the world shall not be forgotten. Our meditations on Christ's burial should lead us to think of our own, and should help to make the grave familiar to us, and so to make that bed easy which we must shortly make in the darkness. Frequent thoughts of it would not only take off the dread and terror of it, but quicken us, since the graces are always ready for us, to get ready for the graves, Job 17. 1.

CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter, we have a short account of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus; and the joys and triumphs which it furnishes all believers with, will be very acceptable to those who sympathized and suffered with Christ in the foregoing chapters. Here is, I. Christ's resurrection notified by an angel to the women that came to the sepulchre to anoint him, v. 1. 8. II. His appearance to Mary Magdalene, and the account she gave of it to the disciples, v. 11, 12. His appearance to two of his disciples going to Emmaus, and the report they made of it to their brethren, v. 12. 13. 14. His appearance to the eleven, with the commission he gave them to set up his kingdom in the world, and assume authority and credentials in order thereto, v. 14. 18. V. His ascension into heaven, the apostles' close application to their work, and God's owning of them in it, v. 19, 20.

I. AND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the
mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. 2. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. 3. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? 4. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. 5. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were afraid. 6. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. 7. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Never was there such a sabbath since the sabbath was first instituted as this was, which the first words of this chapter tell us was now past; during all this sabbath our Lord Jesus lay in the grave. It was to him a sabbath of rest, but a silent sabbath; it was to his disciples a melancholy sabbath, spent in tears and fears. Never were the sabbath-services in the temple such an abomination to God, though they had been often so, as they were now, when the chief priests, who presided in them, had their hands full of blood, the blood of Christ. Well, this sabbath is over, and the first day of the week is the first day of a new world. We have here,

I. The affectionate visit which the good women that had attended Christ, now made to his sepulchre—not a superstitious one, but a pious one. They set out from their lodgings very early in the morning, at break of day, or even sooner, but did not enter there till long after, as they were afraid to go in at first, lest they should be affrighted, and as they went into the sepulchre, clothed with a long white garment, a garment down to the feet, such as great men were arrayed with. The sight of him might justly have encouraged them, but they were affrighted. Thus many times that which should be matter of comfort to us, through our own mistakes and misapprehensions proves a terror to us.

3. He silences their fears by assuring them that here was cause enough for triumph, but none for trembling: (v. 5.) He saith to them, Be not affrighted. Note, As angels rejoice in the conversion of sinners, so they do also in the consolation of saints. Be not affrighted, for, (1.) Ye are faithful lovers of Jesus Christ, and therefore, instead of being confounded, ought to be comforted. Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, of whom they had long heard, now they had the particulars of believing souls after Christ have a particular regard to him as crucified, (1 Cor. 2. 2.) that they may know him, and the fellowship of his sufferings. His being lifted up from the earth, is that which draws all men unto him. Christ's cross is the ensign to which the Gentiles seek. Observe, He speaks of Jesus as one that was crucified; because that is the thing he speaks of, and makes it the ground on which he argues that he was crucified, and in the midst of the praise of the heavens he adds, (v. 5.) He is crucified. And therefore after his entrance upon his glory, he never drew any veil over his sufferings, nor was shy of having his cross spoken of. The angel here that proclaims his resurrection calls him Jesus that was crucified. He himself owns, (Rev. 18. 1.) I am he that liveth, and was dead; and he appears in the midst of the praises of the heavens, and says, (Rev. 1. 18.) He is crucified. It will therefore be good news to you, to hear that, instead of anointing him dead, you may rejoice in him living.
He is risen, he is not here, not dead, but alive again; we cannot as yet show you him, hereafter you will see him, but you may see the place where they laid him, and you see him gone hence, not stolen either by his enemies or by his friends, but risen.

4. He orders them to give speedy notice of this to his own disciples, and the rest of the apostles, which was a recompense of their affection and fidelity to him, in attending him on the cross, to the grave, and in the grave. They first came, and were first served; no other of the disciples durst come near his sepulchre, or inquire after him; so little danger was there of their coming by night to steal him away, that none came near him but a few women, who were not able so much as to read the narrative.

(1.) They must tell the disciples, that he is risen. It is a dismal time with them, their dear Master is dead, and all their hopes and joys are buried in his grave; they look upon their cause as sunk, and themselves ready to fall an easy prey into the hands of their enemies, so that there remains no more spirit in them, they are perfectly at their wits' end, every one is contriving how to shift for himself. "(O, go quickly to them," saith the angel, "tell them that their Master is risen; this will put some life and spirit into them, and keep them from sinking into despair." Note, [1.] Christ is not ashamed to own his poor disciples, no, not now that he is in his exalted state; his preferment doth not make him shy of them, for he took early care to have it notified to them. [2.] Christ is not extreme to mark what they do amiss, whose hearts are upright with him. The disciples had very unkindly deserted him, and yet he testified this concern for them. [3.] Seasonable comforts shall be sent to those that are lamenting after the Lord Jesus, and he will find a time to manifest himself to them.

(2.) They must be sure to tell Peter. This is particularly taken notice of by this evangelist, who is supposed to have written by Peter's direction. If we were told the disciples, it would be told Peter, for as a token of his repentance for disowning his Master, he still associated with his disciples; yet he is particularly named, Tell Peter, for, [1.] It will be good news to him, more welcome to him than to any of them; for he is in sorrow for sin, and no tidings can be more welcome to true penitents than to hear of the resurrection of Christ, because he rose again for their justification. [2.] He will be afraid, lest that he should be told, and hence conceived, that it was the angel said only, Go tell his disciples, poor Peter would have been ready to sigh, and say, "But I doubt I cannot look upon myself as one of them, for I disowned him, and deserve to be disowned by him;" to obviate that, Go to Peter by name, and tell him, he shall be as welcome as any of the rest to see him in Galilee. Note, A sight of Christ will be very welcome to a true penitent, and a true penitent shall be very welcome to a sight of Christ, for there is joy in heaven concerning him.

(3.) They must appoint them all, and Peter, by name, to give him the meeting in Galilee, as he said unto you, Matth. 26. 32. In their journey down into Galilee they would have time to recollect themselves, and call to mind what he has often said to them there, that he should suffer and die, and the third day be raised again; whereas while they were at Jerusalem they might not so well consider that they could not recover themselves from the fright they had been in, nor compose themselves to the due entertainment of better tidings. Note, [1.] All the meetings between Christ and his disciples are of his own appointment. [2.] Christ never forgets his appointment, but will be sure to meet his people with the promised blessing in every place where he records his name. [3.] In all meetings between Christ and his disciples, he is the most forward. He goes before you.

IV. The account which the women did bring of this to the disciples; (v. 8.) They went out quickly, and ran from the sepulchre, to make all the haste they could to the disciples, trembling and amazed. See how much we are enemies to ourselves, and our own comfort, in not considering and mixing faith with what Christ hath said to us; Christ had often told them, that the third day he would rise again, had they given that its due notice and credit, they would have come to the sepulchre, expecting to have found him risen, and would have received the news of it with a joyful assurance, and not with all this terror and amazement. But, being ordered to tell the disciples, because they told it to none else, in the world, they would not tell it to any one else, they shewed not any thing of it to any man that they met by the way, for they were afraid, afraid it was too good news to be true. Note, Our disquieting fears often hinder us from doing that service to Christ, and to the souls of men, which, if faith and the joy of faith were strong, we might do.

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils; 10. And she went, and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. 11. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. 12. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. 13. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.

We have here a very short account of two of Christ's appearances, and the little credit which the report of them gained with the disciples.

1. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to her first in the garden, which we have a particular narrative of, John 20. 14. It was she out of whom he had cast seven devils; much was forgiven her, and much was given her, and, done for her and the loved ones; but this he for Christ did her, that she was the first that saw him after his resurrection. The closer we cleave to Christ, the sooner we may expect to see him, and the more to see of him.

Now, 1. She brings notice of what she had seen, to the disciples; not only to the eleven, but to the rest that followed him, as they mourned and wept, v. 10. Now was the time of which Christ had told them, that they should mourn and keep their fasts; John 16. 23. And it was an evidence of their great love to Christ, and the deep sense they had of their loss of him. But when their weeping had endured a night or two, comfort returned, as Christ had promised them; I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice. Better news cannot be brought to disciples in tears, than to tell them of Christ's resurrection. And we should study to be comforts to disciples that are mourning, by communicating to them our experiences, and what we have seen of Christ.

2. They could not give credit to the report she brought them. They heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her. The story was plausible enough, and yet they believed not. They would not say that she made the story herself, or designed to deceive them; but they fear that she is imposed upon, and that it was but a fancy that she saw him. Had they believed the frequent predictions of it from
as his own mouth, they would not have been now so incredulous of the report of it.

II. He appeared to two of his disciples, as they went into the country, v. 12. This refers, no doubt, to that which is largely related, (Luke 24. 13.) of what passed between Christ and the two disciples going to Emmaus. He is here said to have appeared to them in another form, in another dress than what he usually wore in the room of a traveller, as in the garden, in such a dress, that Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener; but that he had really his own countenance, appears by this, that his eyes were holden, that they should not know him; and when that restraint on their eyes was taken off, immediately they knew him, Luke 24. 16, 31. Now, 

These two witnesses gave in their testimony to this proof of Christ’s resurrection: They returned told it to the residue, v. 13. Being satisfied themselves, they were desirous to give their brethren the satisfaction they had, that they might be comforted as they were.

2. This did not gain credit with all; Neither believed they them. They suspected that their eyes also deceived them. Now there was a wise provision made, that if the testimony of these were given in thus gradually, and admitted thus cautiously, that so the assurance with which the apostles preached this doctrine afterward, when they ventured their all upon it, might be the more satisfying. We have the more reason to believe those who did themselves believe so slowly: had they swallowed it presently, they might have been thought credulous, and their testimony the less to be regarded; but their disputing at first, shews that they did not believe it afterward but upon a full conviction.

14. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Here is,

1. The conviction which Christ gave his apostles of the truth of his resurrection; (v. 14.) He appeared to them himself when they were all together, as they sat at meat, which gave him an opportunity to eat and drink with them, for their full satisfaction; see Acts 10. 41. And still, when he appeared to them, he upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, for even at the general meeting in Galilee some doubted, as we find, Matth. 28. 17. Note. The evidences of the truth of the gospel are so full, that those who receive it not may justly be upbraided with their unbelief; and it is owing not to any weakness or deficiency in the proofs, but to the hardness of their own hearts, its senselessness and stupidity.

Though they had not so far fallen into unbelief as to blame themselves, they are justly blamed, because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen; and perhaps it was owing in part to the pride of their hearts, that they did not; for they thought, “If indeed he were risen, to whom should he delight to do the honour of showing himself but to us?” And if he pass them by, and show himself to others first, they cannot believe it is he. Thus many disbelieve the doctrine of Christ, because they think it below them to give credit to such as he has chosen to be the witnesses and publishers of it. Observe, it will not suffice for the glory of Christ to manifest himself to common persons; if he do not choose to give them as much light as other men have

“We did not see him after he was risen,” for we ought to have believed the testimony of those who did see him.

II. The commission which he gave them to set up his kingdom among men by the preaching of his gospel, the glad tidings of reconciliation to God through Christ.

1. To whom they were to preach the gospel. Hitherto they had been sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and were forbidden to go into the way of the Gentiles, or into any city of the Samaritans; but now their commission is enlarged, and they are authorized to go into all the world, into all parts of the world, the habitable world, and to preach the gospel of Christ to every creature, to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, and to them that are both capable of receiving it. “Inform them concerning Christ, the history of his life, and death, and resurrection; instruct them in the meaning and intention of these, and of the advantages which the children of men have, or may have, hereby; and invite them, without exception, to come and share in them. This is gospel, let this be preached in all places, to all persons. And these eleven men could not themselves preach it to the world, much less to every creature in it; but they and the other disciples, seventy in number, with those who should afterwards be added to them, must disperse themselves several ways, and wherever they went, carry the gospel along with them. They must send others to those places whither they could not go themselves, and, in short, make it the business of their lives to send those glad tidings up and down the world with all possible fidelity and care, not as an amusement or entertainment, but as a solemn message from God to men, and an appointed means of making men happy. “Tell as many as you can, and bid them tell others, it is a message of universal concern, and therefore ought to have a universal welcome, because it gives a universal home.”

2. What is the summary of the gospel they are to preach; (v. 16.) “Set before the world life and death, good and evil. Tell the children of men that they are all in a state of misery and danger, condemned by their Prince, and conquered and enslaved by their enemies.” This is supposed in their being saved, which they would not need to be if they were not lost. “Now go and tell them.” (i.) “That if they believe the gospel, and give themselves to be Christ’s disciples; if they renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be devoted to Christ as their Prophet, Priest, and King, and to God in Christ as their God in covenant, and evidence by their constant adherence to this covenant their sincerity therein, they shall be saved from the guilt and power of sin, it shall be as sure a rule to them as an apple tree. He that is a true Christian, shall be saved through Christ.”

Baptism was appointed to be the inaugurating rite, by which those that embrace Christ, own him; but it is here put rather for the thing signified than for the sign, for Simon Magnus believed, and was baptized, yet was not saved, Acts 8. 13. Believing with the heart, and confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, (Rom. 10. 9.) to save us in our infirmity in the day of grace, 1: to save us of our infirmity in the day of grace. Or thus, We must assent to gospel-truths, and consent to gospel-terms. (2.) “If they believe not, if they receive not the record God gives concerning his Son, they cannot ex-
pect any other way of salvation, but must inevitably perish; they shall be damned, by the sentence of a despaired gospel, added to that of a broken law." And even this is gospel, it is good news, that nothing else but unbelief shall damn men, which is a sin against the remedy. Dr. Whitby here observes, that they who hence infer, "That the infant seed of believers are not capable of baptism, because they cannot believe, must hence also infer that they cannot be saved; faith being here more expressly required to salvation than to baptism. And that in the latter clause baptism is omitted, because it is not simply the want of baptism, but the contemptuous neglect of it, which makes men guilty of damnation, otherwise infants might be damned for the mistakes or profaneness of their parents."

3. What power they should be endowed with, for the confirmation of the doctrine they were to preach; (v. 17.) These signs shall follow them that believe. Not that all who believe, shall be able to produce these signs, but some, even as many as were employed in propagating the faith, and bringing others to it; for signs are intended for them that believe not; see 1 Cor. 14. 22. It added much to the glory and evidence of the gospel, that the preachers not only wrought miracles themselves, but conferred upon others a power to work miracles, which power followed some of them that believed, wherever they went to preach. They shall do wonders in Christ's name; the same name into which they were baptized, in the virtue of power derived from him, and fetched in by prayer. Some particular signs are mentioned; (1.) They shall cast out devils; this power was more common among Christians than any other, and lasted longer, as appears by the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Origen, Irenæus, Tertullian, Minutius Felix, and others, cited by Grotius on this place. (2.) They shall speak with new tongues, which they had never learned, or been acquainted with; and this was both a miracle, (a miracle upon the mind,) for the confirming of the truth of the gospel, and a means of spreading the gospel among those nations that had not heard it. It saved the preachers a vast labour in learning the languages; and, no doubt, they who by miracle were made masters of languages, were complete masters of them and of all their nativeabilities, which were proper both to instruct and affect, which would very much recommend them and their preaching. (3.) They shall take up serpents. This was fulfilled in Paul, who was not hurt by the viper that fastened on his hand, which was acknowledged a great miracle by the barbarous people, Acts 28. 5, 6. They shall be kept unhurt by that generation of vipers among whom they live, and by the malice of the old serpent. (4.) If they be compelled by their persecutors to drink any deadly poisonous thing, it shall not hurt them; of which very thing some instances are found in ecclesiastical history. (5.) They shall not only be preserved from hurt themselves, but they shall be enabled to do good to others; They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover, as multitudes had done by their Master's healing touch. Many of the elders of the church had this power, as appears by Jam. 5. 14. where, as an instituted sign of this miraculous healing, they are said to anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord. With what assurance of success they might go about the executing of their commission, when they had such credentials as these to produce!

19. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. 20. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.

Here is, 1. Christ welcomed into the upper world; (v. 19.) After the Lord had spoken what he had to say to his disciples, he went up into heaven, in a cloud; which we have a particular account of, (Acts 1. 9.) and he had not only an admission, but an abundant entrance, into his kingdom there; he was received up, received in state, with loud acclamations of the heavenly hosts; and he sat on the right hand of God: sitting is a posture of rest, for now he had finished his work, and a posture of rule, for now he took possession of his kingdom; he sat at the right hand of God, which denotes the sovereign dignity he is advanced to, and the universal agency he is intrusted with. Whatever God does concerning us, gives to us, or accepts from us, it is by his Son. Now he is glorified with the glory he had before the world.

2. Christ welcomed in this lower world; his being believed on in the world, and received up into glory, are put together, 1 Tim. 3. 16. (1.) We have here the apostles working diligently for him; they went forth, and preached every where, far and near. Though the doctrine they preached was spiritual and heavenly, and directly contrary to the spirit and genius of the world, though it met with abundance of opposition, and was utterly destitute of all secular supports and advantages, yet the preachers of it were neither afraid nor ashamed; they were so industrious in spreading the gospel, that within a few years the sound of it went forth into the ends of the earth, Rom. 10. 15. (2.) We have here God working effectually with them, to make their labours successful, by confirming the word with signs following, partly by the miracles that were wrought upon the bodies of people, which were divine seals to the Christian doctrine, and partly by the influence it had upon the minds of people, through the operation of the Spirit of God, see Heb. 2. 4. These were proper signs following the word—the reformation of the world, the destruction of idolatry, the conversion of sinners, the comfort of saints; and these signs still follow it, and that they may do so more and more, for the honour of Christ and the good of mankind, the evangelist prays, and teaches us to say, Amen. Father in heaven, thus let thy name be hallowed, and let thy kingdom come.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. LUKE.

We are now entering into the labours of another evangelist; his name Luke, which some take to be a contraction of Lucilius; born at Antioch, so St. Jerom. Some think that he was the only one of all the penmen of the scripture, that was not of the seed of Israel. He was a Jewish proselyte, and, as some conjecture, converted to Christianity by the ministry of St. Paul at Antioch; and after his coming into Macedonia, (Acts 16. 10.) he was his constant companion. He had employed himself in the study and practice of physic; hence Paul calls him Luke the beloved Physician, Col. 4. 14. Some of the pretended ancients tell you that he was a painter, and drew a picture of the Virgin Mary. But Dr. Whitby thinks that there is nothing certain to the contrary; and that therefore it is probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and a follower of Christ when he was here upon earth; and if so, he was a native Israelite. I see not what can be objected against this, except some uncertain traditions of the ancients, which we can build nothing upon, and against which may be opposed the testimonies of Origen and Epiphanius, who both say that he was one of the seventy disciples. He is supposed to have written this gospel when he was associated with St. Paul in his travels, and by direction from him; and some think that this is the brother whom Paul speaks of, (2 Cor. 8. 18.) whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches of Christ; as if the meaning of it were, that he was celebrated in all the churches for writing this gospel; and that St. Paul means this when he speaks sometimes of his gospel, as Rom. 2. 16. But there is no ground at all for that. Dr. Cave observes that his way and manner of writing are accurate and exact, his style polite and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet perspicuous; and that he expresses himself in a vein of purer Greek than is to be found in the other writers of the holy story. Thus he relates divers things more copiously than the other evangelists; and thus he especially treats of those things which relate to the priestly office of Christ. It is uncertain when, or about what time, this gospel was written. Some think that it was written in Achaia, during his travels with Paul, seventy years (twenty-two years, say others) after Christ's ascension; others, that it was written at Rome, a little before he wrote his history of the Acts of the Apostles, (which is a continuation of this,) when he was there with Paul, while he was a prisoner, and preaching in his own hired house, with which the history of the Acts concludes; and then Paul saith that only Luke was with him, 2 Tim. 4. 11. When he was under that voluntary confinement with Paul, he had leisure to compile these two histories; and many excellent writings the church has been indebted to a prison for; if so, it was written about twenty-seven years after Christ's ascension, and about the fourth year of Nero. Jerom saith, He died when he was eighty-four years of age, and was never married. Some write, that he suffered martyrdom; but if he did, where and when is uncertain. Nor indeed is there much more credit to be given to the Christian traditions concerning the writers of the New Testament, than to the Jewish traditions concerning those of the Old Testament.

ST. LUKE, I.

CHAP. I.

The narrative which this evangelist gives us (or rather God by him) of the life of Christ, begins earlier than either Matthew or Mark; we have reason to thank God for them all, as we have for all the gifts and graces of Christ's ministers, which in one make up what is wanting in the other, while all put together make a harmony. In this chapter, we have, I. Luke's preface to his gospel, or his epistle dedicated to his friend, Theophilus, v. 1. 4. II. The prophecy and history of the conception of John Baptist, who was Christ's forerunner, v. 5. 25. III. The announcement of the Virgin Mary, or the notice given to her that she should be the mother of the Messiah, v. 26. 35. IV. The interview between Mary the mother of Jesus and Elisabeth the mother of John, when they were both with child of those pregnant births, and the prophecies they both uttered upon that occasion, v. 39. 40. V. The birth and circumcision of John Baptist, six months before the birth of Christ, v. 56. 66. VI. Zacharias's song of praise, in thankfulness for the birth of John, and in prospect of the birth of Jesus, v. 67. 80. VII. A short account of John Baptist's infancy, v. 89. And these do more than give us an entertaining narrative; they will lead us into the understanding of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.
1. FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word: 3. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

Complimental prefaces and dedications, the language of flattery, and the food and fuel of pride, are justly condemned by the wise and good; but it doth not therefore follow, that such as are useful and instructive are to be put down; such is this, in which St. Luke dedicates his gospel to his friend Theophilus, not as to his patron, though he was a man of honour, to protect it, but as to his pupil, to learn it, and hold it fast. It is not certain who this Theophilus was; the name signifies a friend of God; some think that it denotes some man of some person, but others one that is a lover of God; Dr. Hammond quotes some of the ancients understanding it so; and then it teaches us, that those who are truly lovers of God, will heartily welcome the gospel of Christ, the design and tendency of which are, to bring us to God. But it is rather to be understood of some particular person, probably a magistrate; because Luke gives him here the same title of respect which St. Paul gave to Festus the governor, apostatae, (Acts 26. 25.) which we have translated most noble Festus, and here most excellent Theophilus. Note, Religion does not destroy civility and good manners, but teaches us, according to the usages of our country, to give honour to them whom honour is due.

Now observe here,
1. Why St. Luke wrote this gospel; it is certain, the very first thing that was moved by the Holy Ghost, not only to the writing, but in the writing of it; but in both he was moved as a reasonable creature, and not as a mere machine: and he was made to consider,
1. That the things he wrote of, were things that were most surely believed among all Christians, and therefore things which they ought to be instructed in, that they may know what they believe; and things which ought to be transmitted to posterity, (who are as much concerned in them as we are,) and, in order to that, to be committed to writing, which is the surest way of conveyance to the ages to come. He will not write about things of doubtful disputations, things about which Christians may safely differ from one another, and hesitate within themselves; but the things which are, and ought to be, most surely believed, æquitas æternæ sapientiæ— the things which were performed; (so some,) which Christ and his apostles did, and did with such circumstances as gave a full assurance that they were really done, so that they have gained an established, lasting credit.

Note, Though it is not the foundation of our faith, yet it is a support to it, that the articles of our creed are things that have been long most surely believed. The doctrine of Christ is what thousands of the wisest and best of men have ventured their souls upon with the greatest assurance and satisfaction.

2. That it was requisite there should be a declaration made in order of those things: that the history of the life of Christ should be methodized, and committed to writing, for the greater certainty of the conveyance. When things are put in order, we know the better where to find them for our own use, and how to keep them for the benefit of others.

3. That there were many who had undertaken to publish narratives of the life of Christ; many well-meaning people, who designed well, and did well, and what they published had done good, though not done by divine inspiration, nor so well done as might have been done by more skilful persons, and under the direction of God. 4. That thine understanding, and the labour of others in the gospel of Christ, if faithful and honest, we ought to commend and encourage, and not to devise, though chargeable with many deficiencies. (2.) Others’ services to Christ must not be reckoned to supersede our’s, but rather to quicken them.

4. That the truth of the things he had to write, was confirmed by the succeeding testimony of those who were competent and unquestionable witnesses of them; what had been published in writing already, and what he was new about to publish, agreed with that which had been delivered by word of mouth, over and over, by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word, v. 2. Note, (1.) The apostles were ministers of the word of Christ, who is the Word, (so some understand it,) or of the doctrine of Christ; they, having received it, proclaimed it. (2.) They had not a gospel to make as masters, but a gospel to preach as ministers. (3.) The ministers of the word were eye-witnesses of the things which they preached, and, which is also included, ear-witnesses. They did themselves hear the doctrine of Christ, and see his miracles, and had them not by report, at second hand; and therefore they could not but speak, with the greatest assurance, of the things they had seen and heard, Acts 4. 20. They had not a gospel from the beginning of Christ’s ministry, v. 2. He had his disciples with him, when he wrought his first miracle, John 2. 11. They companied with him all the time that he went in and out among them, (Acts 1. 21.) so that they not only heard and saw all that which was sufficient to confirm their faith, but, if there had been any thing to shock it, they had opportunity to discover it. (4.) The written gospel, which it is our business to study, was agreed on by the gospel which was preached in the first days of the church. (5.) That he himself had a perfect understanding of the things he wrote of, from the first, v. 3. Some think that here is a tacit reflection upon those who had written before him, that they had not a perfect understanding of what they wrote, and therefore, Here am I, send me; (nec indignatio verum—my wrath shall follow me) if rather without reflecting on them, he assigns his own ability for this undertaking; "It seemed good to me, having attained to the exact knowledge of all things, αποφασις—from above." So I think it should be rendered; for if he meant the same from the beginning, (v. 2.) as our translation intimates, he would have used the same word. [1.] He had diligently searched into these things, had followed after them; (so the word is,) as the Old Testament prophets are said to have improved and searched diligently, 1 Pet. 1. 10. He had not taken things so easily and superficially as others who had written before him, but made it his business to inform himself concerning particulars. [2.] He had received his intelligence, not only by tradition, as others had done, but by revelation, confirming that tradition, and securing him from any error or mistake in the recording of it. He sought it from above—the word is intimations, not the word itself. [3.] This consideration, thus, like Elisha, he fetched his knowledge from afar. He wrote his history as Moses wrote his, of things reported by tradition, but ratified by inspiration. [3.] He could therefore say, that he had a perfect understanding of these things. He knew them.
ST. LUKE, I.

5. THERE was, in the days of Herod the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. 6. And they were both righteously before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. 8. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9. According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18. And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is well stricken in years. 19. And the angel answering, said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. 20. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless. 23. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25. Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

The two preceding evangelists had agreed to begin the gospel with the baptism of John, and his ministry, which commenced about six months before our Saviour's public ministry; (and now, things being near a crisis, six months was a deal of time, which before was but a little;) and therefore, this evangelist, designing to give a more particular account than had been given of our Saviour's conception and birth, determines to do so of John Baptist, who in both was his harbinger and forerunner, the morning-star to the Sun of righteousness. The evangelist determines thus, not only because it is commonly reckoned a satisfaction and entertainment to know something of the original extraction and early days of those who afterward prove great men, but because in the beginning of these there were many things miraculous, and presages of what they afterward proved; in these verses our inspired historian begins as early as the conception of John Baptist. Now observe here.

1. The account given of his parents; (v. 5.) They lived in the days of Herod the king, who was a foreigner, and a deputy for the Romans, who had lately made Judea a province of the empire. This is taken notice of, to show that the sceptre was quite departed from Judah, and therefore that now was the time for Shiloh to come, according to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. 49. 10. The family of David was now sunk, when it was to rise, and flourish again, in the Messiah. Note, None ought to despair of the reviving and flourishing of religion, even then when civil liberties are lost. Israel is enslaved, yet then comes the Glory of Israel.

Now the father of John Baptist was a priest, a son
of Aaron; his name Zacharias. No families in the world were ever so honoured of God as those of Aaron and David; with one was made the covenant of priesthood, and with the other that of royalty; they had both forfeited their honour, yet the glory of God puts honour upon both in their latter days, on that of Aaron in John Baptist, on that of David in Christ, and then they were both extinguished and lost. Christ was of David’s house, his forerunner of Aaron’s; for his priestly agency and influence opened the way to his kingly authority and dignity. This Zacharias was of the course of Abia; when in Da-

David’s house, the name was multiplied, he divided them into twenty-four courses, the regular performance of their office, that it might never be either neglected for want of hands, or engrossed by a few. The eighth of those was that of Abia, (1 Chron. 24. 10.) who was descended from Eleazar, Aaron’s eldest son; but Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that many of the families of the priests were lost in the captivity, so that after their return they took in those of other families retaining the names of the heads of the respective houses. The wife of this Zacharias was of the daughters of Aaron too, and her name was Elisabeth, the very same name with Elisheba the wife of Aaron, Exod. 6. 23. The priests (Josephus saith) were very careful to marry within their own family, that they might maintain the dignity of the priesthood, and keep it without mixture. 

Now that which is observed concerning Zacharias and Elisabeth is, 1. That they were a very religious couple; (v. 6.) They were both righteous before God; they were so in his sight, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth; they were sincerely and really so. They are righteous indeed, that are so before God, as Noah in his generation, Gen. 7. 1. They appointed his will, because he was graciously pleased to accept them. It is a happy kind of those that are jointed to each other in marriage, are both joined to the Lord; and it is especially requisite that the priests, the Lord’s ministers, should with their yoke-fellows be righteous before God, that they may be examples to the flock, and rejoice their hearts. They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (1.) Their being righteous of Aaron’s race, is evident by the course and tenor of their conversation, and must be regarded. (2.) They were universal in their obedience; not that they never did in any thing come short of their duty, but it was their constant care and endeavour to come up to it. (4.) Herein, though they were not sinless, yet they were blameless; nobody could charge them with any open, scandalous sin; they lived honestly and inoffensively, as ministers among a holy people; and their families are in a special manner concerned to do, that the ministry be not blamed in their blame. 2. That they had been long childless. v. 7. Children are a heritage of the Lord. But there are many of his heirs in a married state, that yet are denied this heritage; they are valuable, desirable blessings; yet many there are, who are righteous before God, and, if they had children, would bring them up in his fear, who yet are not thus blessed, while the men of this world are a full of children, (Ps. 17. 14.) and send forth their little ones like a flock, John 21. 11. Elisabeth was barren, and they began to despair of ever having children, for they were both now well stricken in years, when the women that have been most fruitful, leave off bearing. Many eminent persons were born of mothers that had been long childless, as whence, Jacob, David, Samson, Samuel, and so here John Baptist—to make their birth the more remarkable, and the blessing of it the more valuable to their parents; and to show that when God keeps his people long waiting for mercy, he sometimes is pleased to recompense them for their patience, by doubling the worth of it when it comes.

11. The appearing of an angel to his father Zacharias, as he was ministering in the temple, v. 8. Zacharias the prophet was the last of the Old Testament that was conversant with angels; and Zacharias the priest the first in the New Testament. Observe, 1. How Zacharias was employed in the service of God; (v. 8.) He executed the priest’s office, before God, in the order of his course; it was his week of waiting, and he was upon duty. Though his family was not built up, or made to grow, yet he made conscience of doing the work of his own place and day. Though we have not desired mercies, yet we must keep close to enjoined services; and in our diligent and constant attendance on them, we may hope that mercy and comfort will come at last. Now it fell to Zacharias’s lot to burn incense morning and evening for that week of his waiting, as other priests did to other services of the sanctuary. The services were directed by lot, that some might not decline them, and others engage them; and that, the disposal of the lot being from the Lord, they might have the satisfaction of a divine call to the work. This was not the High Priest’s burning incense on the day of atonement, as some have fondly imagined, who have thought by that to find out the time of our Saviour’s birth; but it is plain that it was the high priest’s daily incense at the altar of incense, (v. 11.) which was in the temple, (v. 9.) not in the most holy place, into which the High Priest entered. The Jews say that one and the same priest burned not incense twice in all his days, (there were such a multitude of them,) at least not more than once. It is very probable that this was upon the sabbath-day, because there was a multitude of people attending, (v. 10.) and the high priest burned incense God usually puts honour upon his own day. And then if Dr. Lightfoot reckon, with the help of the Jewish calendars, that this course of Abia fell on the seventeenth day of the third month, the month Sivan, answering to part of May and part of June, it is worth observing, that the portions of the law and the prophets, which were read this day in the synagogues, were very agreeable to that which was doing in the temple; namely, the law of the Nazarites, (Num. 6.) and the conception of Samson, Judg. 13.

While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, the whole multitude of the people were praying without, v. 10. Dr. Lightfoot says that there were constantly in the temple, at the hour of prayer, the priests of that course that then served, and if it were the sabbath-day, those of that course also that had in weeks been reserved for prayer, and the Levites that served under the priests, and the men of the station, as the Rabbins call them, who were the representatives of the people, in putting their hands upon the head of the sacrifices, and many besides, who, moved by devotion, left their employments, for that time, to be present at the service of God; and those would make up a great multitude, especially on sabbaths and feast-days: now these all addressed themselves to their devotions, (in mental prayer, for their voice was not heard,) when by the tinkling of a bell they had notice that the priest was
gone in to burn incense. Now observe here, (1.) That the true Israel of God always were a praying people; and prayer is the great and principal piece of all worship. So, 2 Ch. 6. 33., where he bade him, of all his heart, might come to God, not in favours from him, and keep up our communion with him. (2.) That then, when ritual and ceremonial appointments were in full force, as this of burning incense, yet moral and spiritual duties were required to go along with them, and were principally looked at. David knew that when he was at a distance from the altar, his prayer might be heard without his coming there, for God speaks not with a voice as incense, Ps. 141. 2. But when he was compassing the altar, the incense could not be accepted without prayer, any more than the shell without the kernel. (3.) That it is not enough for us to be where God is worshipped, if our hearts do not join in the worship, and go along with the minister, in all the parts of it. If he burn the incense ever so well in the most pertinent junctures, lively prayer, if we be not at the same time praying in concurrence with him, what will it avail us? (4.) All the prayers we offer up to God here in his courts, are acceptable and successful only in virtue of the incense of Christ's intercession in the temple of God above. To this usage in the temple-service there seems to be an allusion, (Rev. 8. 1, 3, 4.) where we find that there was silence in heaven, to the degree that, for six hours, when the people were silently lifting up their hearts to God in prayer; and that there was an angel, the angel of the covenant, who offered up much incense with the prayers of all saints before the throne. We cannot expect an interest in Christ's intercession, if we do not pray, and pray with our spirits, and continue instant in prayer. Nor can we expect that the best of our prayer should gain acceptance from Christ, but by the medium and influence of Christ, who ever lives, making intercession.

2. How, when he was thus employed, he was honoured with a messenger, a special messenger sent from heaven to him; (v. 11.) There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord. Some observe, that we never read of an angel appearing in the temple, with a message from God, but only this one to Zacharias, because there God had other ways of making known his mind, as the Urim and Thummim, and by a still small voice from between the cherubims; but the ark and the oracle were wanting in the second temple, and therefore when an express is to be sent to a priest in the temple, an angel was to be employed in it, and thereby the gospel was to be introduced, for that, as the law, was given at first very much by the ministry of angels, the appearance of which we often read of in the Gospels and the Acts; though design both of the law and of the gospel, when brought to perfection, was to settle another way of correspondence, more spiritual, between God and man. This angel stood on the right side of the altar of incense, the north side of it, saith Dr. Lightfoot, on Zacharias's right hand, and that he was there in this, when he hears, stands at the right hand of Joshua the priest, to resist him; but Zacharias had a good angel standing at his right hand, to encourage him. Some think that this angel appeared coming out of the most holy place, which led him to stand at the right side of the altar.

3. What impression this made upon Zacharias; (v. 12.) When Zacharias saw him, it was a surprise upon him even to a degree, for he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. v. 12. Though he was righteous before God, and blameless in his conversation, yet he could not be without some apprehensions at the sight of one whose visage and surrounding lustre bespoke him more than human. Ever since man sinned, his mind has been unable to bear the glory of such revelations, and his conscience afraid of evil tidings brought by them; even Daniel himself could not bear it, Dan. 10. 8. And for this reason God chooses to speak to us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid. No, saith the angel, "fear not; I have no ill tidings to bring thee from heaven. Fear not, but compose thyself, that thou mayst with a sedate and even spirit receive the message I have to deliver to thee." Let us see what that is.

1. The prayers he has often made, shall now receive an answer of peace; Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard. (1.) If he means his particular prayer, for a son to build up his family, it must be the prayers he had formerly made for that mercy, when he was likely to have children; but we may suppose, now that he and his wife were both well-striken in years, as they had done expecting it, so they had done praying for it; like Moses, it sufficed them, and they spoke no more to God of that matter, Deut. 31. 12. He that is an old man, and has long looked back to the prayers that he had made long since for and with his wife, as Isaac for and with his, Gen. 25. 21. Note, Prayers of faith are filed in heaven, and are not forgotten, though the thing prayed for is not presently given. Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world, may be answered when we are old and going out of the world. But, (2.) If he means the prayers he is now making, then by our answer, since he incense, we may suppose, the prayers that were according to the duty of his place, for the Israel of God and their welfare, and the performance of the promises made to them concerning the Messiah and the coming of his kingdom; "This prayer of thine is now heard; for thy wife shall now shortly conceive him that is to be the Messiah's forerunner." Some of the Jewish writers themselves say that the great prophet, when he burnt incense, prayed for the salvation of the whole world; and now that prayer shall be heard. Or, (3.) In general, "The prayers thou now makest, and all thy prayers, are accepted of God, and come up for a memorial before him;" (as the angel said to Corinthus, when he visited him at prayer, Acts 10. 30, 31.) "and this shall be the sign that thou art accepted of God, Elisabeth shall bear thee a son." Note, It is very comfortable to praying people, to know that their prayers are heard; and those mercies are doubly sweet, that are given in answer to prayer.

2. He shall have a son in his old age, by Elisabeth his wife, who had been long barren, that by his birth, which was next to miraculous, people were to be prepared for the coming of a virgin's longing fruit of a son, which was perfectly miraculous. He is directed what name to give his son; Call him John; in Hebrew Johanan, a name we often meet with in the Old Testament; it signifies, gracious. The priests must beseech God that he will be gracious (Mal. 1. 9.) and must so bless the people, Numb. 6. 23. Zacharias was now praying thus, and the angel tells him that his prayer is heard, and he shall have the answer he asked of his prayer, he shall call, Gracious, or, The Lord will be gracious, Isa. 50. 18, 19.

3. This son shall be the joy of his family and of all his relations; (v. 14.) He shall be another Isaac, thy son; and somewhere think is partly intended in his name, John; He shall be a welcome child. Thou for thy part shall have joy and gladness...
Note. Mercies that have been long waited for, when the hour of last, are the more acceptable. "He shall be such a son as thou shalt have reason to rejoice in; many parents, if they could foresee what their children will prove, instead of rejoicing at their birth, would wish they had never been; but I will tell thee what thy son will be; and then wilt thou not need to rejoice with trembling at his birth, as the best must do, but mayst rejoice with triumph at it. Nay, and many shall rejoice at his birth; all the relations of the family will rejoice in the prospect of such successors, because it is for the honour and comfort of the family." v. 38. All good people will rejoice that such a religious couple as Zachary and Elisabeth have a son, because they will give him a good education, such as, it may be hoped, will make him a public blessing to his generation. Yet, and perhaps many shall rejoice by an unaccountable instinct, as a presage of the joyous day the gospel will introduce us.

This son shall be a distinguished favourite of Heaven, and a distinguished blessing to the earth. The honour of having a son is nothing to the honour of having such a son.

(1.) He shall be great in the sight of the Lord; those are great indeed, that are so in God's sight, not those that are so in the eye of a vain and carnal world. God will set him before his face continually, will employ him in his service; and, when he goes, as in a short time, he shall make him truly great and honourable. He shall be a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and upon that account as great as any that ever were born of women, Matth. 11. 11. He shall live very much retired from the world, out of men's sight, and when he makes a public appearance, it will be very mean; but he shall be much, he shall be great, in the sight of the Lord.

(2.) He shall be a son of honor; he shall not be apart from God from every thought; the one that is polluting; in token of that, according to the law of Nazaritship, he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, or rather, neither old wine nor new; for most think that the word here translated strong drink, signifies some sort of wine; perhaps those that we call made wines, or any thing that is intoxicating. He shall be, as Samson was by the divine precept, (Judg. 13. 7.) and Samuel by his mother's vow, (1 Sam. 1. 11.) a Nazarite; that is, he shall set himself apart from the corruptions of the world, and shall be of God's favour to his people, that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, (Amos 2. 11.) as if those that were designed for prophets, were trained up under the discipline of the Nazarites; Samuel and John Baptist were; which intimates that those that were to be eminent servants of God, and employed in eminent services, must learn to live a life of self denial and mortification, and keep their minds from every thing that is darkening and disturbing to them.

(3.) He shall be abundantly fitted and qualified for those great and eminent services to which in due time he shall be called; He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, and as soon as it is possible he shall appear to have been so. Observe, [1.] Those that were to be filled with the Holy Ghost must be sober and temperate, and very moderate in the use of wine and strong drink; for that is it that fits him for this. Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit, with which that is not consistent, Eph. 5. 18. [2.] It is possible that infants may be wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, even from their mother's womb; for John Baptist even then was filled with the Holy Ghost, who took possession of him at a very early age, and an Augustine was given of it, when he leaped in his mother's womb for joy, at the approach of the Saviour; and afterwards it appeared very early that he was sanctified. God has promised to pour out his Spirit upon the seed of believers, (Isa. 44. 3.) and their first springing up in a dedication of themselves becomes to God is the fruit of it, v. 4, 5. Who then can forbid water, that they should not be baptized, who for aught we know (and we can say no more of the adult, witness Simon Magus) have received the Holy Ghost as well as we, and have the seeds of grace sown in their hearts? Acts 10. 47.

(4.) He shall be instrumental for the conversion of many souls to God, and the preparing of them to receive and entertain the gospel of Christ, v. 16, 17.

[1.] He shall be sent to the children of Israel, to the nation of the Jews, to whom the Messiah also was first sent, and not to the Gentiles; to the whole nation, and not to the family of the priests only, with which, though he was himself of that family, we do not find he had any particular intimacy or influence.

[2.] He shall go before the Lord their God, that is, before the Messiah, whom they must expect to be, not their King, in the sense wherein they commonly take it, a temporal prince to their nation, but their Lord and their God, and to rule and defend, and serve them in a spiritual way by his influence on their hearts. Thomas knew this, when he said to Christ, my Lord and my God, better than Nathan did, having known him, (2 Kings 23. 24.) and being informed, John shall go before him, a little before him, to give notice of his approach, and to prepare people to receive him.

[3.] He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias. That is, First, He shall be such a man as Elias was; and do such works as Elias did; shall, like him, wear a hairy garment and a leathern girdle, and live retired from the world; shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance, and the necessity of a great and serious reformation; shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproving sin, and witnessing against it even in the greatest; and he hated and persecuted for it by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elijah was by an Ahab and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work, as Elijah was, by a divine spirit and power, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went before the writing prophets of the Old Testament dispensation, so John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel-dispensation by preaching the substance of the gospel-doctrine and duty, Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi under the name of Elijah, (Mal. 4. 5.) who should be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Behold! I send you a prophet, even Elias; not Elias the Tishbite, (as the LXX have corruptly read it, to favour the Jews' traditions,) but a prophet in the spirit and power of Elias, as the angel here expounds it.

[4.] He shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, shall incline their hearts to receive the Messiah, and bid him welcome, by awakening them to a sense of sin and a desire of righteousness. Whatever he has a tendency to turn us from iniquity, as John's preaching and baptism had, will turn us to Christ as our Lord and our God; for those who through grace are wrought upon to shake off the yoke of sin, that is, the dominion of the world and the flesh, will soon be persuaded to take upon them the yoke of the Lord Jesus.

[5.] Hereby he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, that is, of the Jews to the Gentiles; shall help to conquer the rooted prejudices which the Jews have against the Gentiles, which was done by the gospel, as far as it prevailed, and was begun to be done by John Baptist, who came for a witness,
that all through him might believe, who baptized and taught Roman soldiers as well as Jewish Pharisees, and who cured the pride and confidence of those Jews who gloried in their having Abraham to their father, and told them that God would set out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, (Matt. 3. 5,) which would tend to cure their enmity to the Gentiles. Dr. Lightfoot observes, It is the constant usage of the prophets to speak of the church of the Gentiles as children, and this world as the father, in the other; 50, 4, 9.—62, 5.—66. 12. When the Jews that embraced the faith of Christ, were brought to join in communion with the Gentiles that did so too, then the heart of the fathers was turned to the children. And he shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that is, he shall introduce the gospel, by which the Gentiles, who are now disobedient, shall be turned, not so much to their fathers the Jews, but to the faith of Christ, here called the wisdom of the just, in communion with the believing Jews; or thus, He shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, that is, the hearts of old and young; shall be instrumental to bring some of every age to be religious, to work a great reformation in the Jewish nation, to bring them off from a ritual traditional religion, by introducing the gospel, which causes us to think of universal seriousness godliness; and the effect of this will be, that enmities will be slain, and discord made to cease; and they that are at variance, being united in his baptism, will be better reconciled one to another. This agrees with the account Joseph gives of John Baptist, Antiq. lib. 18. cap. 7. "That he was a good man, and taught the Jews the exercise of virtue, in piety toward God, and righteousness towards one another, and that they convene and knit together in baptism." And he saith, "The people flocked after him, and were exceedingly delighted in his doctrine." Thus he turned the hearts of fathers and children to God and one another, by turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Observe, First, True religion is the wisdom of just men, in distinction from the wisdom of this world. It is both our wisdom and our duty to be religious, there is both equity and prudence in it. Secondly, It is not impossible but that those who have been unbelieving and disobedient, may be turned to the wisdom of the just; divine grace can conquer the greatest ignorance and prejudice. Thirdly, The great design of the gospel is to bring people home to God, and to bring them nearer to one another; and on this errand John Baptist sent his two disciples, that he might make of his turning people, there seems to be an allusion to the name of the Tishbite, which is given to Elijah, which, some think, does not denote the country or city he was of, but has an appellative signification, and therefore they render it Eliah the convertor; one that was much employed, and very successful, in conversion-work. The Elias of the New Testament is therefore said to go to turn the hearts of fathers to children, to set the Captive free, to bring them nearer to one another. 63. Hereby he shall make ready a people prepared for the Lord; shall dispose the minds of people to receive the doctrine of Christ, that hereby they may be prepared for the comforts of his coming. Note, First, All that are to be devoted to the Lord and made happy in him, must first be prepared and made ready for him. We must be prepared by grace; by右手, by the hand of God; by his power to the deliverance of his children; by his terrors of the law for the comforts of the gospel; by the spirit of bondage for the Spirit of adoption. Secondly, Nothing has a more direct tendency to prepare people for Christ than the doctrine of repentance received and submitted to. When sin is thereby made grievous, Christ will become very precious.

IV. Zacharias's unbelief of the angel's prediction, and the rebuke he was laid under for that unbelief. He heard all that the angel had to say, and should have bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, Be it unto thy servant according to the word which thou hast spoken; but it was not so. We are here told,

1. What his unbelief spake, v. 18. He said to the angel, Whereby shall I know this? This was not a humble petition for the confirming of his faith, but a pervish objection against what was said to him as impossible; He saith, I am old, and my wife hath not only been all these days barren, but is now well stricken in years, and not likely ever to have children; wherefore he must have a sign given him, or he will not believe. Though the appearance of an angel, which had been long discussed in the church, was sign enough; though he had this notice given him in the temple, the place of God's oracles, where he had reason to think no evil angel would be permitted to come; though it was given him when he was praying, and burning incense; and though a firm belief of that great principle of religion, that God has an almighty power, and with him nothing is impossible, which we ought not only to know, but to teach others, was enough to silence all objections; yet, considering his own body and his wife's to be extremely unlike a son of Abraham, he staggered at the promise, Rom. 4. 19, 20.

2. How his unbelief was silenced, and he silenced for it. (1.) The angel stops his mouth by asserting his authority. Doth he ask, Whereby shall I know this? Let him know it by this, I am Gabriel, v. 19. He puts his name to his prophecy, doth as it were sign it with his own hand, teste meatus—take my word for it. Angels have sometimes refused to tell their names, as to Manoah and his wife, but this angel readily saith, I am Gabriel, which signifies the power of God, or, the mighty one of God, intimating that the God who bid him say this, was able to make it good. He also makes himself known by this name, to put him in mind of the notices of the Messiah's coming, sent to Daniel by the man Gabriel, v. 13, 14. and 2. 8. and then, and am sent now in pursuance of the same intention. He is Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, an immediate attendant upon the throne of God. The prime ministers of state in the Persian court are described by this, that they saw the king's face, Esth. 1. 14. "Though I am now talking with thee here, yet I stand in the presence of God. I know thy face is upon me, and I dare not say any more than I have warrant to say. But I declare I am sent to speak to thee, sent on purpose to show thee these glad tidings, which, being so well worthy of all acceptance, thou oughtest to have received cheerfully." (2.) The angel stops his mouth indeed, by exerting his power; That thou mayest object no more, behold, thou shalt be dumb, v. 20. If thou wilt have a sign for thine understanding of what is before thee, thou shalt also be the punishment of thine unbelief; thou shalt not be able to speak till the day that these things shall be performed, v. 20. Thou shalt be both dumb and deaf; the same word signifies both; and it is plain that he lost his hearing as well as his speech, for his friends made signs to him, (v. 62.) as well as he to them, v. 22. Now, in striking him dumb, [1.] God dealt justly with him, because he had objected against God's word. Hence we may take occasion to admire the patience of God and his
fearlessness towards us, that we, who have so often spoken to his dishonour, have not been struck dumb, as Zacharias was, and as we had been, if God had dealt kindly with him, and very tenderly and graciously. For, First, Thus he prevented his speaking any more such distrustful, unbelieving words. If he have thought evil, and will not himself lay his hands upon his mouth, nor keep it as with a bridle, it is better not to speak at all than to speak wickedly. Secondly, Thus he confirmed his faith; and by his being disabled to speak, he is enabled to think the better. If by the rebukes we are under for our sin we be brought to give more credit to the word of God, we have no reason to complain of them. Thirdly, Thus he was kept from divulging the vision, and boasting of it, which otherwise he would have been apt to do, whereas it was designed for the present to be lodged as a secret, private knowledge. It was a great mercy that God's words should be fulfilled in their season, notwithstanding his sinful distrust. The unbelief of man shall not make the promises of God of no effect, they shall be fulfilled in their season, and he shall not be for ever dumb, but only till the day that these things shall be performed, and then they lift shall be opened, that thy mouth may show forth God's praise. Thus, though God chastens the impiety of his people with his word, yet his loving kindness he will not take away. V. The return of Zacharias to the people, and at length to his family, and the conception of this child of promise, the son of his old age. 1. The people said, expecting Zacharias to come out of the temple, because he was to pronounce the blessing upon them in the name of the Lord; and though he stayed beyond the usual time, yet they did not imagine it was too common in Christian congregations, hurry away without the blessing, but waited for him, marvelling that he tarried so long in the temple, and dared lest something was amiss, v. 21. 2. When he came out, he was speechless, v. 22. He was now to have dismissed the congregation with a blessing, but is dumb, and not able to do it; that the people may be minded to expect the Messiah, who can command and bless as they desire, and come from all the nations of the earth are blessed. Aaron's priesthood is now shortly to be silenced and set aside, to make way for the bringing in of a better hope. 3. He made a shift to give them to understand that he had seen a vision, by some awful signs he made, for he beckoned to them, and remained speechless, v. 22. This represents to us the weakness and deficiency of the Old Testament priesthood, in comparison with Christ's priesthood, and the dispensation of the Gospel. The Old Testament speaks by signs, gives us some intimations of divine and heavenly things, but imperfect and uncertain; it beckons to us, but remains speechless; it is the gospel that speaks to us articulately, and gives us a clear view of that which in the Old Testament was seen through a glass darkly. 4. He stayed out the days of his ministration; for his lot being to burn incense, he could do that, though he was dumb and deaf. When we cannot perform the service of God so well as we would, yet, if we perform it so well as we can, God will accept of us in it. 5. He then returned to his family, and his wife conceived, v. 23, 24. She conceived by virtue of the promise, and being sensible of it, she hid herself. Though she was very tender and delicate, and did not go abroad so much as she used to do, (1.) lest she should do herself any prejudice, so as might occasion her miscarrying, or any hurt to the conception. (2.) lest she should contract any ceremonial pollution which might interpose upon the Nazarite's of her child, remembering the command given to Samuel's mother in a like case, and applying it to herself; she must not touch any unclean thing while she is with child of a Nazarene, Judg. 13, 14. And though five months are mentioned, because of what follows in the next month, yet we may suppose that she did in like manner take care of herself during the whole time of her being with child. (3.) Some think it was in an excess of modesty that she hid herself, ashamed it should be said that one of her age should be with child. Shall she have pleasure, being old, her lord being old also? Gen. 18. 12. Or, it was in token of her humility, that she might not seem to boast of the honour God had put upon her. (4.) She hid herself for devotion, that she might spend her time in prayer and praise. The saith are God's hidden ones; she gave it up for her retirement, "For thus hath the Lord dealt with me; not only thus graciously in giving me a child, but thus honourably in giving me such a child as is to be a Nazarene," (for so her husband might by writing signify to her;) "he hath taken away my reproach among men." Fruitfulness was looked upon to be so great a blessing among the Jews, because of the prophecies of the Messiah, and the visitation of the Messiah among them, that it was considered as a great reproach to be barren; and those who were so, though ever so blameless, were concluded to be guilty of some great sin unknown, for which they were so punished. Now Elisabeth triumphs, that not only this reproach is taken away, but great glory is put upon her instead of it; Thus hath the Lord dealt with me, beyond any thought or expectation of mine in the days wherein he looked on me. Note, In God's gracious dealings with us we ought to observe his gracious regards to us. He has looked on us with compassion and favour, and therefore has thus dealt with us. 26. And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27. To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. 29. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God. 31. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. 32. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. 33. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36. And, behold, thy cousin Eli.
sabeh, she hath also conceived a Son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her which was called barren. 37. For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

We have here notice given us of all it was that we should know concerning the incarnation and conception of our blessed Saviour, six months after the conception of John. The same angel Gabriel, that was employed in making known to Zacharias God's purpose concerning his son, is employed in this also. For in this, the same Mary, Nazareth in redemption, which was begun in that, is carried on. As bad angels are none of the redeemed, so good angels are none of the redeemers; yet they are employed by the Redeemer as his messengers, and they go cheerfully on his errands, because they are his Father's humble servants, and his children's hearty friends and well-wishers.

1. No woman for an account given of the mother of our Lord, of whom he was to be born, whom, though we are not to pray to, yet we ought to praise God for.

1. Her name was Mary, the same name with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron; the name signifies exalted, and a great elevation it was to her indeed, to be thus favoured above all the daughters of Jerusalem.

2. She was a daughter of the royal family, lineally descended from David, and she herself and all her friends knew it, for she went under the title and character of the house of David, though she was poor and low in the world; and she was enabled by God's providence, and the care of the Jews to preserve their genealogies, to make it out, and as long as the promise of the Messiah was to be fulfilled, it was worth keeping; but for those now, who are brought low in the world, to have descended from persons of honour, is not worth mentioning.

3. She was a virgin, a pure, unsotted one, but espoused to one of the same royal stock, like her however, of low estate; so that upon both accounts there was (as it was fit there should be) an equality between them; his name was Joseph: He also was of the house of David, Matth. 1. 20. Christ's mother was a virgin, because he was not to be born by ordinary generation, but miraculously; it was necessary that he should be so, that, though he must partake of the nature of man, yet not of the corruption of that nature; but he was born of a virgin espoused, made up to be married, and contracted, to put honour upon the married state, that might not be brought into contempt (which was an ordinance in innocency) by the Redeemer's being born of a virgin.

4. She lived in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, a remote corner of the country, and in no reputation for religion or learning, but which bordered upon the heathen, and therefore was called Galilee of the Gentiles. Christ's having his relations resident there, inclined them to favour him, that he might not be brought into contempt (which was an ordinance in innocency) by the Redeemer's being born of a virgin.

5. She was not told what she was doing, or how employed, when the angel came unto her; but he surprised her with this salutation, Hail, thou that art highly favoured. This was intended to raise in her, 1. A value for herself; and though it is very rare that any need to have any sparks struck into their breast with such design, yet in some who, like Mary, pore only on their low estate, there is occasion for it. 2. An expectation of great news, not from abroad, but from above. Heavens designs, or dispensations from which an angel makes court to with such respect. Hail thou, &c. — rejoice thou; it was the usual form of salutation; it expresses an esteem of her, and good-will to her and her prosperity.

(1.) She is dignified; Thou art highly favoured. God, in his choice of thee to be the mother of the Messiah, has put an honour upon thee peculiar to thyself, above that of Eve, the last of the women. His royal government, he built for the sake of free grace, and she is pitched upon; even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

(2.) She has the presence of God with her; The Lord is with thee, though poor and mean, and perhaps now forecasting how to get a livelihood, and maintain a family in the married state. The angel with this word raised the faith of Gideon; (Judg. 6. 12.) The Lord is with thee. Nothing is to be despised of, not the performance of any service, not the obtaining of any favour, though ever so great, if we have God with us. This word might put her in mind of the Immanuel, God with us, which a virgin shall conceive and bring forth; (Isa. 7. 14.) and why not she?

(3.) She has the blessing of God upon her; Blessed art thou among women; not only thou shalt be accounted so by men, but thou shalt be so. Then that art so highly favoured in this instance, mayst expect in other things to be blessed. She explains this herself, (v. 48.) All generations shall call me blessed. Compare it with that which Deborah saith of Jael, another that was the glory of her sex; (Judg. 4. 18.) The Lord is with thee. Nothing shall be above the women in the tent.

III. The consternation she was in, upon this address, (v. 29.) When she saw him, and the glories with which he was surrounded, she was troubled at the sight of him, and much more at his saying. Had she been a proud, ambitious young woman, that aimed high, and flattered herself with the expectation of great things in the world, she would have been pleased at his saying; it would have been puffed up with it, and (as we have reason to think she was a young woman of very good sense) would have had an answer ready, signifying so much: but, instead of that, she is confounded at it, as not conscious to herself of any thing that either merited or promised such great things; and she cast in her mind what manner of salvation this should be. Was it from me as a woman? Was it to endear her, was it to banter her, or was there something substantial and weighty in it? But of all the thoughts she had as to what manner of salvation it should be, I believe she had not the least idea of its being ever intended or used for a prayer, as it is, and has been, for many ages, by the corrupt, degenerate, and anti-Christian ages of the church, and to beg of God that a blessing might be expected from it: it is in the church of Rome. But her thoughtfulness upon this occasion gives a very useful intimation to young people of her sex, when addresses are made
to them, to consider and cast in their minds what manner of salutations they are, whence they come, and what their tendency is, that they may receive them accordingly, and may always stand on their guard.

IV. The message itself which the angel had to deliver to her. Some time the angel gives her to pause; but, once being thus made to pause, but increase her perplexity, he went on with his errand, v. 30. To what he had said she made no reply; he therefore confirms it. "Fear not, Mary, I have no other design than to assure thee that thou hast found favour with God more than thou thinkest of, as there are many who think they are more favoured of God than really they are." Note, Those that have found favour with God, should not give way to disquieting, disturbing thoughts of their own unworthiness; and yet, yet this assurance shall be an alay to that honour, that her desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her, Gen. 3. 16. But Mary has the honour without the alay.

2. Though she lives in poverty and obscurity, yet she shall have the honour to be the mother of the Messiah; her Son shall be named Jesus—a Saviour, such a one as the world needs, rather than such a one as the Jews expect. (1.) He will be very nearly allied to the upper world. He shall be great, truly great, incomestantly great, for he shall be called the Son of the Highest, the son of God, who is the Highest; of the same nature, as the son is of the same nature with the father; and very dear to him, as the son is to the father. He shall be called, and not miscalled, the Son of the Highest, for he is himself God over all, blessed and exalted; it is an elevation in his nature; none knows the way of the spirit, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child, Exod. 11. 5. We were made in secret, Ps. 139. 15, 16. Much more was the formation of the child Jesus a mystery; without controversy, great was the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16. It is a new thing created in the earth, Jer. 31. 22, concerning which we must not covet to be wise above what is written. (2.) The child she shall conceive, is a holy thing, and therefore must not be conceived by ordinary generation, because he must not share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature; he is spoken of emphatically, That Holy Thing, such as never was; and he shall be called the Son of God, as the Son of the Father by eternal generation, as an indication of which, he shall now be named God, and also called the Son of God. He must therefore be otherconceived. His human nature must be so produced, as it was fit that it should be, which was to be taken into union with the divine nature.

3. It was a further encouragement to her faith, to be told that her cousin Elizabeth, though striken in years, was with child, v. 36. Here is an age of wonders beginning, and therefore he not surprised; here is one among thy own relations truly great, though not among the kings of the earth, for it is usual with God to advance in working wonders. Greater works than these shall he do. Though Elisabeth was, on the father's side, of the daughter of Aaron, (v. 5.) yet on the mother's side she might be of the house of David, for these two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty and the priesthood in the Messiah. This is the sixth month with her that was called barren. This intermarriage, as set forth in this instance, is at all the instances in the Old Testament, of those having children that had been long barren, which was above nature, were designed to prepare the world for the belief of a virgin's bearing a son, which was against nature. And therefore, even in the birth of Isaac, Abraham saw Christ's day, foresew such a miracle in the birth of Christ. The angel assures Mary of

Prov. 27. 24. The gospel is the last dispensation, we are to look for no other.

V. The further information given her, upon her inquiry concerning the birth of this Prince. 1. It is a just inquiry which she makes; "How shall this be?" v. 34. "How can I now presently conceive a child?" (for so the angel meant,) "when I knew not in the beginning that I was otherconceived than by ordinary generation?" If so, let me know how?" She knew that the Messiah must be born of a virgin; and if she must be his mother, she desires to know how. This was not the language of her distrust, or any doubt of what the angel said, but of a desire to be further instructed.

2. It is a satisfactory answer that is given to it, v. 35. (1.) She shall conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, who is powerful to do all things, and so made the Holy Ghost is called the power of the Highest. Doth she ask how this shall be? This is enough to help her over all the difficulty there appears in it; a divine power will undertake it, not the power of an angel employed in it, as in other works of wonder, but the power of the Holy Ghost himself be your mother, v. 34. (2.) She must ask no questions concerning the way and manner how it shall be wrought; for the Holy Ghost, as the power of the Highest, shall overshadow her, as the cloud covered the tabernacle when the glory of God took possession of it, to conceal it from those that would too curiously observe the motions of it, and pry into the mystery of it. The formation of every babe in the womb, and the essence of the spirit of life in it, is a mystery in nature; none knows the way of the spirit, nor how the bones are formed in the womb of her that is with child, Exod. 11. 5. We were made in secret, Ps. 139. 15, 16. Much more was the formation of the child Jesus a mystery; without controversy, great was the mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. 3. 16. It is a new thing created in the earth, Jer. 31. 22, concerning which we must not covet to be wise above what is written. (3.) The child she shall conceive, is a holy thing, and therefore must not be conceived by ordinary generation, because he must not share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature; he is spoken of emphatically, That Holy Thing, such as never was; and he shall be called the Son of God, as the Son of the Father by eternal generation, as an indication of which, he shall now be named God, and also called the Son of God. He must therefore be otherconceived. His human nature must be so produced, as it was fit that it should be, which was to be taken into union with the divine nature.

3. It was a further encouragement to her faith, to be told that her cousin Elisabeth, though striken in years, was with child, v. 36. Here is an age of wonders beginning, and therefore be not surprised; here is one among thy own relations truly great, though not among the kings of the earth, for it is usual with God to advance in working wonders. Greater works than these shall he do. Though Elisabeth was, on the father's side, of the daughter of Aaron, (v. 5.) yet on the mother's side she might be of the house of David, for these two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty and the priesthood in the Messiah. This is the sixth month with her that was called barren. This intermarriage, as set forth in this instance, is at all the instances in the Old Testament, of those having children that had been long barren, which was above nature, were designed to prepare the world for the belief of a virgin's bearing a son, which was against nature. And therefore, even in the birth of Isaac, Abraham saw Christ's day, foresaw such a miracle in the birth of Christ. The angel assures Mary of
this, to encourage her faith, and concludes with that great truth, of undoubted certainty and universal use, For with God nothing shall be impossible; (v. 37.) and if nothing, then not this. Abraham therefore staggered not at the belief of the divine promise, because he was strong in his belief of the divine power, Rom. 4. 20, 21. No word of God must be incredible to us, as long as no work of God is impossible to him.

VI. Her acquiescence in the will of God concerning her, v. 38. She owns herself, 1. A believing subject to the divine authority; "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, I am thy servant, at thy disposal, to do what thou commandest me." She objects not the danger of spoiling her marriage, and blemishing her reputation, but leaves the issue with God, and submits entirely to his will. 2. A believing expec tant of the divine favour. She is not only content that it should be so, but humbly desires that it may be so; Be it unto me according to thy word. Such a favour as this, it was not for her to slight, or be indifferent to; and for what God has promised he will be sought unto; by prayer we must put our amen, or so be it, to the promise. Remember, and perform thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. We must, as Mary here, guide our desires by the word of God, and ground our hopes upon it. Be it unto me according to thy word; just so, and no otherwise. The angel departed from her; having completed the errand he was sent upon, he returned, to give account of it, and receive new instructions. Converse with angels was always a transient thing, and soon over; it will be constant and permanent in the future state. It is generally supposed that just at this instant the virgin conceived, by the overshadowing power of the Holy Ghost; but the scripture being decently silent concerning that, it did not become us to be inquisitive, much less positive.

39. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill-country with haste, into a city of Judah. 40. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 32. And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women; and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44. For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. 46. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. 50. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. 51. He hath show-
quant any of her neighbours in Nazareth with the message she had received from heaven, yet longed to talk about a thing she had a thousand times thought over, and knew no person in the world with whom she could freely converse concerning it but her cousin Elisabeth, and therefore she hastened to her. Note, It is very beneficial and comfortable for those that are near one another in heart, and Christ in the forming there, to consult those who are in the same case, that they may communicate experiences one to another; and they will find that, as in water, face answers to face, so doth the heart of man to man, of christian to christian.

II. The meeting between Mary and Elisabeth. Mary entered into the house of Zacharias; but he, being dumb and deaf, kept it to himself, and saw it a mystery; and therefore she saluted Elisabeth, (v. 40.) told her that she was come to make her a visit, to know her state, and rejoice with her in her joy.

Now, at their first coming together, for the confirmation of the faith of both of them, there was something very extraordinary. Mary knew that Elisabeth was with child, but it doth not appear that Elisabeth had told Mary of it. But as Mary's being designed for the mother of the Messiah; and therefore what knowledge she appears to have had of it, must have come by a revelation, which would be a great encouragement to Mary.

1. The babe leaped in her womb. It is very probable that she had been several weeks quick, (for she was six months gone,) and that she had often felt the child stir; but this new and more than previous motion of the child, and which alarmed her to expect something very extraordinary, impressed it. It is the same word that is used by the LXX. (Gen. 25. 22.) for the struggling of Jacob and Esau in Rebecca's womb, and the mountains skipping, Ps. 114. 4. The babe leaped as it were to give a signal to his mother that he was now at hand, whose fore-runner he was to be, about six months in ministry, as he was in being; or, it was the effect of some strong impression made upon the mother. Now began to be fulfilled what the angel said to his father, (v. 15.) that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb; and perhaps he himself had some reference to this, when he said, (John 3. 29.) The friend of the Bridegroom rejoiceth greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice, heard, though not by him, yet by his mother.

Elisabeth was herself, filled with the Holy Ghost; or a Spirit of prophecy; by which, as well as by the particular suggestions of the Holy Ghost she was filled with, she was given to understand that the Messiah was at hand, in whom prophecy should revive, and by whom the Holy Ghost should be more plentifully poured out than ever, according to the expectations of those who waited for the consolation of Israel. The uncommon motion of the babe, a hundredth, thousandth, or millionth part of a second, is the expression of her spirit under a divine impulse. Note, Those whom Christ graciously visits, may know it by their being filled with the Holy Ghost; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

III. The welcome which Elisabeth, by the Spirit of prophecy, gave to Mary, the mother of our Lord; not as to a common friend making a common visit, but as to one whom she knew to be the carrier of good news from heaven. She congratulates her on her honour, and though perhaps she knew not of it till just now, she acknowledges it with the greatest assurance and satisfaction. She speak with a loud voice; this does not at all intimate (as some think) that there was a floor or a wall between them, but that she was in a transport or exultation of joy, and said what she cared not who knew. She said, Blessed art thou among women, the same word that the angel had said; (v. 28.) for thus this will of God, concerning honouring the Son, should be done on earth as it is done in heaven. But Elisabeth adds a reason, Therefore blessed art thou, because blessed is the fruit of thy womb; thence it was that she derived this excelling dignity. Elisabeth was the wife of a priest, and in years, yet she grudges not, that her kinswoman, who had been a barren woman, and Christ in the forming there, should have the honour of conceiving in her virginity, and being the mother of the Messiah, whereas the honour put upon her was much less; she rejoices in it, and is well pleased, as her son was afterward, that she who conceived after, is preferred before her, John 1. 27. Note, While we cannot but own that we are more favoured of God than our fore-fathers, and that others are more highly favoured than we are.

2. She acknowledges her condescension, in making her this visit; (v. 43.) Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Observe, (1.) She calls the Virgin Mary the mother of her Lord, (as David, in spirit, called the Messiah, Lord, his Lord,) for she knew he was to be Lord of all. (2.) She not only bids her welcome to her home, though she knew the occasion was unusual, and circumstance uncommon, but reckons this visit a great favour, which she thought herself unworthy of; Whence is this to me? Is it in reality, and not in compliment, that she said, “This was a greater favour than I could have expected.” Note, Those that are filled with the Holy Ghost, have low thoughts of their own merits, and high thoughts of God's favours. Her son the Baptist spake to the same purport with this, when he said, Come unto me? Matthew 3. 14.

3. She acquaints her with the concurrence of the babe in her womb, in this welcome to her; (v. 44.) “Thou certainly bringest some extraordinary tidings, some extraordinary blessing, with thee, for as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, not only my heart leaped for joy, though I knew not immediately why or wherefore, but the babe in my womb, who was not capable of knowing it, did so too.” He leaped as it were for joy that the Messiah, whose harbinger he was to be, would himself come so soon after him. This would serve very much to strengthen the faith of the virgin, that there were such assurances as these given to others; and it would be in part the accomplishment of what had been so often foretold, that there should be universal joy before the Messiah's coming. Ps. 28. 9.

4. She commends her faith, and encourages it; (v. 45.) Blessed is she that believed. Believing souls are blessed souls, and will be found so at last; this blessedness cometh through faith, even the blessedness of being related to Christ, and having him formed in the soul. They are blessed, who believe the word of God, for that word will not fail them; there shall, without doubt, be a performance of those things which the Holy Ghost hath spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets,Luke 1. 26. The inviolable certainty of the promise is the undoubtedly felicity of those that build upon it, and expect their all from it. The faithfulness of God is the blessedness of the faith of the saints. Those that have experienced the performance of God's promises themselves, should encourage others to hope that he will be as good as his word to them also. I will tel] you, saith God, and ye shall see. Luke 1. 39.

IV. Mary's song of praise, upon this occasion. Elisabeth's prophecy was an echo to the virgin Mary's salutation, and this song is yet a stronger echo to that prophecy, and shows her to be no less filled with the Holy Ghost than Elisabeth was. We may suppose the blessed Virgin to come in, very much fatigued with her journey; yet she forgets that, and is inspired with new life, and vigour, and joy, upon the confirmation she here meets with of her
faith; and since, by this sudden inspiration and transport, she finds that this was designed to be her errand hither, weary as she is, like Abraham’s servant, she would neither eat nor drink till she had told her errand.

1. Here are the expressions of joy and praise, and God alone the Object of the praise and Centre of the joy. Some compare this song with that which her mother, the sister of Moses, sung, upon the triumphant departure of Israel out of Egypt, and their triumphant passage through the Red sea; others think it better compared with the song of Hannah, upon the birth of Samuel, which, like this, passes from a family-mercy to a public and general one. This begins, like that, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, 1 Sam. 2. 1. Observe how Mary has spoken of God.

(1.) With great reverence of him, as the Lord; “My soul doth magnify the Lord; I never saw him so great as now I find him so good.” Note, Those, and those only, are advanced in mercy, who are thereby brought to think the more highly and honourably of God; whereas there are those whose prosperity and preferment make them say, What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? The more honour in heaven, the more honour on earth; and if we must put upon us, that kind of honour which we are sure to be in, there are some among us who are left behind, and then only we are accepted in magnifying the Lord, when our souls magnify him, and that all is within us. Praising-work must be soul-work.

(2.) With great complacency in him as her Saviour; My spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour. This seems to have reference to the Messiah, whom she was to be the mother of. She calls him God her Saviour, for the angel had told her that he should be the Son of the Highest, and that his name should be Jesus, a Saviour; this she fastened upon, with application to herself; He is God my Saviour. Even the mother of our Lord had need of an interest in him as her Saviour, and would have been undone without it: and she glories more in that happiness which she had in common with all believers than in being his mother, which was an honour peculiar to herself; and this agrees with the preference Christ gave to obedient believers above his mother and brethren; see Matt. 12. 50. Luke 11. 27, 28. Note, Those that have Christ for their God and Saviour, have a great deal of reason to rejoice, to rejoice in spirit, that is, rejoicing as Christ did, (Luke 10. 21.) with spiritual joy.

2. Here are just causes assigned for this joy and praise.

(1.) Upon her own account, v. 48, 49. [1.] Her spirit rejoiceth in the Lord, because of the kind things he had done for her; his condescension and compassion to her; He has regarded the low estate of his handmaid; he had looked upon her with pity, for so the word is commonly used. “He has chosen me to honour, notwithstanding my great meanness, poverty, and obscurity.” Nay, the expression seems to argue that he had taken pity on her (to put a principle of compassion into his heart, John 6. 15.) that her family was poor in Judah, but that she was the least in her father’s house, as if she were under some particular contempt and disgrace among her relations, was unjustly neglected, and the outcast of the family, and God put this honour upon her, to balance abundantly that contempt. I rather suggest this, for we find something of such honour as this put upon others, on the like occasion, in the case of Hannah. Though Leah was hated, he opened her womb, Gen. 29. 31. Because Hannah was provoked, and made to fret, and insulted over, by Peninnah, therefore God gave her a son, 1 Sam. 1. 19. Whom men wrongfully depress and despise, God sometimes, in compassion to them, especially if they have borne it patiently, doth prefer and advance; see Judg. 11. 7. So in Mary’s case. And if God regard her low estate, he not only thereby gives a specimen of his favour to the whole race of mankind, whom he remembers in their low estate, as the psalmist speaks, (Ps. 136. 23.) but secures a lasting honour to her; (for such the honour is that God bestows, honour that fades not away;) “From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, shall think me a happy woman, and highly advanced.” All that embrace Christ and believe in him, shall say, God has set his support under them, bore him, and the fruits which he sucked. Luke 11. 27. Elisabeth had once and again called her blessed: “But that is not all,” saith she, “all generations of Gentiles as well as Jews shall call me so.” [2.] Her soul magnifies the Lord, because of the wonderful things he has done for her; (v. 49.) He that is mighty, has done to me great things. A great thing need, that a virgin should conceive the which thing indeed, that Messiah, who had been so long ago promised to the church, and so long expected by the church, should now at length be born. It is the power of the Highest that appears in this. She adds, and holy is his name; for so Hannah saith in her song, There is none holy as the Lord, which she explains in the next words, for there is none beside he, 1 Sam. 2. 2. God is a being by himself, and holy in his being, as well as holy in his actions; for the whole of our redemption. He that is mighty, even he whose name is holy, has done to me great things. Glorious things may be expected from him that is both mighty and holy; who can do every thing, and will do every thing well and for the best.

(2.) Upon the account of others. The Virgin Mary, as the mother of the Messiah, is become a kind public person, wears a public character, and is therefore immediately endowed with another spirit, a more public spirit than before she had, and therefore looks abroad, looks about her, looks before her, and takes notice of God’s various dealings with the children of men, (v. 50, &c.) as Hannah; (1 Sam. 2. 3.) in this she has especially an eye to the coming of the Redeemer, and God’s manifesting himself therein.

[1.] It is a certain truth, that God has mercy in store, mercy in reserve, for all that have a reverence for his majesty, and a due regard to his sovereignty and authority. But never did this appear so, as in sending his Son into the world to save us; (v. 50.) His mercy is on them that fear him; it has always been so; he has ever looked upon them with an eye of peculiar favour, who have looked up to him, and have cast their eyes upon him, as Elijah did. But he hath manifested the same, so as never before, in sending his Son to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and work out an everlasting salvation, for them that fear him; and this from generation to generation, for there are gospel-privileges transmitted by entail, and intended for perpetuity. Those that fear God, as their Creator and Judge, are encouraged to hope for mercy in him, through their Mediator and Advocate, Christ Jesus, who is the Rhinoceros. Fear God, pardoning mercy, healing mercy, accepting mercy, crowning mercy, from generation to generation, while the world stands. In Christ he keeps mercy for thousands.

[2.] It has been a common observation, that God in his providence puts content upon the haughty, and honour upon the humble; and this he has done remarkably in the way of grace. As a man thinketh in himself, so doth God think of him. As God had, with his mercy to her, showed himself mighty also, (v. 48, 49.) so he had, with his mercy on them that fear him, showed strength likewise with his arm. First, In the course of his providence, it is his usual method to cross the expectations of men, and proceed quite otherwise than they promise themselves. Proud men expect to carry all before them, to have their way and
Note, that Isa. and he is whose which the He abased because special many 53. appeared when a appears, projects, seats nour, dence were the strong, pare case enlarged those in 9. those in priestii who very devised twelve scattered, hands, Those with is out themselves, they are righteous, do as aipear not thejlrsh, them in chirist, degree. This is desirous things, and them self, and think the her at her name, and therefore find, that Mary remained, and before the story of Elizabeth, yet that Mary stayed till her cousin was (as we say) down and again: that she might attend to her in her living, and have her own faith confirmed by the full accomplishment of the promise of God concerning Elisabeth. But most bind themselves to the order of the story as it lies, and think she returned again when Elisabeth was near her time; because she still affected retirement, and therefore would not be there, when the birth of this child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. Those who are in Christ is formed, take we're delight than they used to do, in sitting alone and keeping silence.

57. Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60. And his served, to their own righteousness and strength which they trusted to.

[5.] It was always expected that the Messiah should be, in a special manner, the Strength and Glory of his people Israel, and so he is in a peculiar manner; (v. 54.) He hath holfen his servant Israel, atran^hs. He hath taken them by the hand, and helped them up that were fallen, and could not help themselves. Long as the wrens of a broken covenant of innocency, are helped up by the blessings of a renewed covenant of grace. The sending of the Messiah, on whom help was laid for poor sinners, was the greatest kindness that could be done, the greatest help that could be provided for his people Israel, and that which magnifies it is,

First, That it is in remembrance of his mercy; the meeknessfulness of his nature, the mercy he has in store for his servant Israel. When this blessing being deferred, his people, who waited for it, were often ready to ask, Has God forgotten to be gracious? But now he made it appear that he had not forgotten, but remembered, his mercy. He remembered his former mercy, and repeated that to them in spiritual blessings, which he had done formerly to them in temporal favours. He remembered the days of old; Where is he that brought them out of the sea? out of Egypt? (Isa. 63. 11.) He will do the like again; which that was a type of.

Secondly, That it is in performance of his promise; it is a mercy not only designed, but declared, (v. 55.) it was what he spake to our fathers, that the seed of the woman should break the head of the serpent; that God should dwell in the tents of Shem; and particularly to Abraham, that in his Seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed, with the best of blessings that are for ever, and in the seed that shall be for ever; that is, his spiritual seed, for his carnal seed were cut off a little after this. Note, What God hath spoken he will perform; what he hath spoken to the fathers, will be performed to their seed; to their seed's seed, in blessings that shall last for ever.

Lastly, Mary's return to Nazareth, (v. 56.) after she had continued with Elisabeth about three months, she returned, being fully satisfied concerning herself, that she was with child, and to be confirmed therein by her cousin Elisabeth. Some think, though her return is here mentioned, before Elisabeth's being delivered, because the evangelist would finish this passage concerning Mary, before he preceded with the story of Elisabeth, yet that Mary stayed till her cousin was (as we say) down and up again: that she might attend to her in her living, and have her own faith confirmed by the full accomplishment of the promise of God concerning Elisabeth. But most bind themselves to the order of the story as it lies, and think she returned again when Elisabeth was near her time; because she still affected retirement, and therefore would not be there, when the birth of this child of promise would draw a great deal of company to the house. Those who are in Christ is formed, take we're delight than they used to do, in sitting alone and keeping silence.
mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. 61. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvellled all. 64. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God. 65. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea: 66. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

In these verses, we have,

I. The birth of John Baptist, v. 57. Though he was conceived in the womb by miracle, he continued in the womb according to the ordinary course of nature; (so did our Saviour;) Elisabeth's full time came, that she should be delivered, and then she brought forth a son. Promised mercies are to be expected when the full time for them is come, and not before.

II. The great joy that was among all the relations of the family, upon this extraordinary occasion; (v. 58.) Her neighbours and her cousins heard of it; for it would be in everybody's mouth, as next to miraculous. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Hebron was inhabited by priests of the family of Aaron, and that those were the cousins she spoken of; but the fields and villages about, by the children of Judah, and that those were the neighbours. Now these here discovered, 1. A pious regard to God; they acknowledged that the Lord had magnified his mercy to her; so the word is. It was a mercy to have her speech taken away, a mercy to have her family built up, and the more, being a family of priests, devoted to God, and employed for him. Many things concurred to make the mercy great—that she had been long barren, was now old, but especially that the child should be great in the sight of the Lord. 2. A friendly regard to Elisabeth; when she rejoiced, they rejoiced with her. We ought to take pleasure in the prosperity of our neighbours and friends, and to be thankful to God for their comforts as for our own.

III. The dispute that was among them, concerning the naming him; (v. 59.) On the eighth day, as God had appointed, they came together, to circumcise the child; it was here, in Hebron, that circumcision was first instituted; and Isaac, who, like John Baptist, was born by promise, was one of the first that was submitted to it, at least, the chief event in the institution of it. They that rejoiced in the birth of the child, came together to the circumcising of him. Note, The greatest comfort we can take in our children, is, in giving them up to God, and recognizing their covenant relation to him. The Baptism of our children should be more our joy than their birth.

First was the custom, when they circumcised their children, to name them, because, when Abram was circumcised, God gave him a new name, and called him Abraham; and it is not unfit that they should be left nameless till they are by name given up to God. Now,

1. Some proposed that he should be called by his father's name, Zacharias; we have not any instance in scripture, that the child should bear the father's name; but perhaps it was of late come into use, and that John—called thus, as it suited us, and they intended hereby to do honour to the father, who was not likely to have another child.

2. The mother opposed it, and would have him called John; having learned, either by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, (as is most probable,) or by information in writing from her husband, that God appointed this to be his name; (v. 60.) He shall be called John—Graceful, because he shall introduce the gospel of Christ, wherein God's grace shines more bright than ever.

3. The relations objected against that; (v. 61.) There is none of thy kindred, none of the relations of thy family, that is called by that name; and therefore, if he may not have his father's name, yet let him have the name of some of his kindred, and that as a piece of respect to have such a child of wonders as this named from them.” Note, As those that have friends must shew themselves friendly, so those that have relations, must be obliging to them in all the usual regards that are paid to kindred.

4. They appealed to the father, and would try if they could possibly get to know his mind, for it was his office to name the child, v. 62. They made signs to him, and whispering to him in his ear, What shall I call him? as dumb; now, it should seem, mindless of any thing, else one would think they should at first have desired him to write down his child’s name, if he had ever yet communicated any thing by writing since he was struck. However, they would carry the matter as far as they could, and give him to understand what the dispute was, which he only could determine; whereupon he made signs to them to write it with his finger, and then write to his wife; as the pencil he wrote these words, His name is John, v. 63. Not, “It shall be so,” or, “I would have it so,” but, “It is so.” The matter is determined already; the angel had given him that name. Observe, When Zacharias could not speak, he wrote. When ministers have their mouths stopped, that they cannot preach, yet they may be doing it, and as well as they have not their hands tied, that they cannot write. Many of the martyrs in prison wrote letters to their friends, which were of great use; blessed Paul himself did so. Zacharias’s pitching upon the same name that Elisabeth had chosen, was a great surprise to the company; They marvelled all; for they knew not that, though by reason of his deafness and dumbness they could not converse together, yet they were both guided by one and the same Spirit; or, perhaps they marvailed that he wrote so distinctly and intelligently, which (the stroke he was under, being somewhat like that of a palsy) he had not done before.

5. He thereupon recovered the use of his speech; (v. 64.) His mouth was opened immediately. The time prefixed for his being silenced, was, till the day that these things should be fulfilled, (v. 20.) not all the things, but certain things—routinly of his own speaking, but those which relate to his birth and name; (v. 13.) that time was now expired, whereupon the restraint was taken off, and God gave him the opening of the mouth again, as he did to Ezekiel, ch. 3. 27. Dr. Lightfoot compares this case of Zacharias with that of Moses. Exod. 4. 24. 26. Moses, for distrust, is in danger of his life, as Zacharias, for the fear of the circumcision of his child, and recovery of his faith, there, as here, the danger is removed. Infidelity closed his mouth, and now believing opens it again; he believes, therefore he speaks. David lay under guilt from the conception of his child till a few days after its birth; then the Lord takes away his sin; upon his
repentance, he shall not die, so here he shall be no longer dumb: his mouth was opened, and he spoke, and praised God. Note, When God opens our lips, our mouths must show forth his praise; as good be without our speech as not use it in praising God; for then our tongue is most our glory, when it is employed for God's glory.

6. These things were told all the country over, to the great amazement of all that heard them, v. 65, 66. The sentiments of the people are not to be slighted, but taken notice of. We are here told, (1.) That these sayings were discourse of; and were the common talk about all the hill-country of Judea; it was pity but a narrative of them had been drawn up, and published in the world, immediately. (2.) That most people who heard of these things, were pricked with amazement by them: Fear came on all them that dwelt round about there. If we have not a good hope, as we ought to have, built upon the gospel, we may expect that the tidings of it will fill us with fear. They believed and trembled, whereas they should have believed and triumphed. (3.) It raised the expectations of people concerning this child, and obliged them to have their eye upon him, to see what he would come to. Both of them pressed in their hearts, treasured them up in mind and memory, as foreseeing they should hereafter have occasion to recollect them. Note, What we hear, that may be of use to us, we should treasure up, that we may be able to bring forth, for the benefit of others, things new and old, and, when things come to perfection, may be able to look back upon the pressings thereof, and to say, "It was what we might expect." They said within themselves, and said among themselves, "What manner of child shall this be? What will be the fruit these are the buds, or rather, when the root is out of such a dry ground?" Note, When children are born into the world, it is very uncertain what they will prove; yet sometimes there have been early indications of something great, as in the birth of Moses, Samson, Samuel, and here of John. And we have reason to think that there were some of those living at the time when John began his public ministry, who could, and did, remember these things, and relate them to others, which contributed as much as any thing to the great flocking there was after him.

Lastly, It is said, The hand of the Lord was with him; that is, he was taken under the especial protection of the Almighty, from his birth, as one designed for something great and considerable, and the confidence of many instances of it. It appeared likewise that the Spirit was at work upon his soul very early. As soon as he began to speak or go, you might perceive something in him very extraordinary. Note, God has ways of operating upon children in their infancy, which we cannot account for. God never made a soul but he knew how to sanctify it.

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71. That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72. To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, 73.

The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, 74. That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75. In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. 76. And thou, child, shalt be called The Prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77. To give knowledge of salvation unto his people, by the remission of their sins, 78. Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, 79. To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.
hath visited them as a friend, to take cognizance of their case. God is said to have visited his people in bondage when he delivered them, (Exod. 3. 16.—4. 31.) to have visited his people in famine, when he gave them bread, Ruth 1. 6. He had often sent to them by his prophets, and had still kept up a correspondence with them; but now he himself made them a visit.

(2.) He has wrought out redemption for them; He has redeemed his people. This was the errand on which Christ came into the world—to redeem those that were sold for sin, and sold under sin; even God's own people, his Israel, his son, his first-born, his free-born, need to be redeemed, and are undone if they be not. Christ redeems them by price out of the hands of God's justice, and redeems them by power out of the hands of Satan's tyranny, as Israel out of Egypt.

(3.) He has fulfilled the covenant of royalty made with the most famous Old-Testament prince, that is, David. Glorious things had been said of his family, that on him, as a mighty one, help should be laid, that his horn should be exalted, and his seed perpetuated, Ps. 89. 19, 20, 24, 29. But that family had been long in a manner cast off and abhorred, Ps. 89. 36. There was a gloomy promise, and according to the promise, the horn of David should again be made to bud, for, (Ps. 132. 17.) He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, (v. 69.) there, where it was promised and expected to arise. David is called God's servant, not only as a good man, but as a king that ruled for God; and he was an instrument of the salvation of Israel, by being employed in the government of Israel; so Christ is the Author of eternal redemption, specially to those only that obey him. There is in Christ, and in him only, salvation for us, and it is a horn of salvation; for, [1.] It is an honourable salvation, it is raised up above all other salvations, none of which are to be compared with it; in it the glory both of the Redeemer and of the redeemed are advanced, and their horn exalted with honour. [2.] It is a plentiful salvation; it is a cornucopia—a horn of plenty, a salvation in which we are blessed with spiritual blessings, in heavenly things, abundantly. [3.] It is a powerful salvation; the strength of the beast is in his horn; he has raised up such a salvation as shall fell down our spiritual enemies, and protect us from them. In the chariots of this salvation the Redeemer shall go forth, and go on, conquering and to conquer. [4.] He has fulfilled all the precious promises made to the church by the most famous Old-Testament prophets; (v. 70.) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets. His doctrine of salvation by the Messiah is confirmed by an appeal to the prophets, and the greatness and importance of that salvation thereby evidenced and magnified; it is the same that they spake of, which therefore ought to be understood and searched after, (1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.) which therefore ought not to be slighted, or thought meanly of. God is now doing that which he has long ago spoken of; and therefore be silent, O all flesh, before him, and attend to him. See, [1.] How sacred the prophecies of this salvation were: the prophets who delivered them, were holy prophets, that spoke from the Holy Ghost; he made them to be the instrument of promoting holiness among men; and it was the holy God himself that spake by them. [2.] How ancient they were; ever since the world began. God having promised, when the world began, that the Seed of the woman should break the serpent's head, that promise was echoed to, when Adam called his wife's name Eve—Life, for the sake of that Seed of hers; when Eve called her first son Cain, saying, I have gotten a man from the Lord, and another son Seth, settled; when Noah was called rest, and foretold that God should dwell in the tents of Shem. And it was not long after the new world began in Noah, that the promise was made to Abraham, that in his Seed the nations of the earth should be blessed. [4.] What a wonderful harmony and concert we perceive among them; God spake the same thing by them all, and therefore it is said to be his prophecy, not by the mouths, but by the mouth, of the prophets, for the all-spake of Christ is set forth with one mouth.

Now what was his salvation which was prophesied of? First, It is a rescue from the malice of our enemies; it is σωτηρία, a salvation out of our enemies, from among them, and out of the power of them that hate us; (v. 71.) it is a salvation from sin, and the dominion of Satan over us, both by corruptions within and temptations without. The carnal mind was expected to be delivered from under the Roman yoke, but intimation was betimes given that it should be a redemption of another nature. He shall save his people from their sins, that they may not have dominion over them, Matt. 1. 21.

Secondly, It is a restoration to the favour of God; it is to perform the mercy promised to our forefathers, v. 72. The Redeemer shall not only break the serpent's head, that was the author of our sin, but he shall reinstate us in the mercy of God, and reestablish us in his covenant; he shall bring us as it were into a paradise again, which was signified by the promises made to the patriarchs, and the holy covenant made with them, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, v. 73. Observe, 1. That which was promised to the fathers, and is performed to us, is mercy, pure mercy; nothing in it is owing to our merit, (we deserve wrath and the curse,) but all to the mercy of God, which designed us grace and life: ex meru motu—of his own good pleasure he loved us, because he would love us. 2. God herein had an eye to his covenant, his holy covenant, that covenant with Abraham: I will be a God to thee and to thy seed. This his seed had really forfeited by their transgressions, this he seemed to have forgotten in the calamities brought upon them; but he will now remember it, will make it appear that he remembers it, for upon that are grounded all his returns of mercy; (Lev. 26. 42.) Then will I remember my covenant.

Thirdly, It is a qualification for, and an encouragement to, the service of God. Thus was the oath he swore to our father Abraham. That could not be fulfilled without grace, and grace to serve him, in an acceptable manner to him, and a comfortable manner to ourselves, v. 74, 75. Here seems to be an allusion to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, which, God tells Moses, was in pursuance of the covenant he made with Abraham, (Exod. 3. 6—8.) and that this was the design of his bringing them out of Egypt, that they might serve God upon this mountain, Exod. 23. 8. By the covenant is here understood, not to discharge us from, but to engage us to, and encourage us in, the service of God. Under this notion Christianity was always to be looked upon, as intended to make us truly religious, to admit us into the service of God, to bind us to it, and to quicken us in it. We are therefore delivered from the iron yoke of sin, that our necks may be put under the yoke of the Lord Jesus. The very bonds which he has loosed, do bind us faster unto him, Ps. 116. 16. We are hereby enabled, 1. To serve God without fear—sin. We are therefore put into a state of holy safety, that we might serve God with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that are quiet from the fear of evil. God must be served with a filial fear, a reverent, obedient fear, an awakening, quickening fear, but not with a slavish fear, like that of the slavish servant, who
represented him to himself as a hard Master, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has torment and amazement in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit, a spirit of bondage, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a spirit of adoption. 2. To serve him in holiness and righteousness, which includes the whole duty of man toward God and our neighbour. It is both the intention, and the direct tendency, of the gospel, to renew upon us that image of God, in which man was at first made, which consisted in righteousness and true holiness, Eph. 4. 24. Christ redeemed us, that we might serve God, not in the legal services of sacrifice and offerings, but in the spiritual service of holiness and right service. Ps. 50. 14. 3. To serve him, before him, in the duties of his immediate worship, wherein we present ourselves before the Lord, to serve him as those that have an eye always upon him, and see his eye always upon us, upon our inward man; that is serving him before him. 4. To serve him all the days of our life. The design of the gospel is to engage us to constancy and perseverance in the service of God, by showing us his love, and indicating unto us, that we do not draw back; and by showing us how Christ loved us to the end, and thereby engaged us to love him to the end.

2. He blessed God for the work of preparation for this salvation, which was to be done by John Baptist; (v. 76.) Thou child, though now but a child of eight days old, shall be called the prophet of the Highest. Those here to be made wise and strong in the Lord were the same we are before informed, blessed for evermore, (Rom. 9. 5.) equal with the Father. John Baptist was his prophet, as Aaron was Moses's prophet; (Exod. 7. 1.) what he said was as his mouth, what he did was as his harbinger. Prophecy had now long ceased, and in John it revived, as it had done in Samuel, who was born of an aged mother, as John was, after a long cessation. John's blessing to him is the highest for he is God over all, blessed for evermore.

(1.) To prepare people for the salvation, by preaching repentance and reformation as great gospel duties; Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, and a little before him, to prepare his ways, to call his people to make room for him, and get ready for his entertainment. Let every thing that may obstruct his progress, or embarrass it, or hinder people from coming to him, be taken away; see Isa. 40. 3. The wilderness shall be made firm, and the desert be brought forth like a flower. (2.) To give the people in this high condition, that they might know, not only what to do, but what to expect; for the doctrine he preached was, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There are two things in which you must know that this salvation consists.

1. The forgiveness of what we have done amiss; it is salvation by the remission of sins, those sins which are all brought down upon us by our nature. v. 77. John Baptist gave people to understand that, though their case was sad, by reason of sin, it was not desperate, for pardon might be obtained through the tender mercy of our God; the bowels of mercy, so the word is; there was nothing in us but a fit case to recommend us to the divine compassion.

2. Direction to do better, for the time to come. The gospel-salvation not only encourages us to hold out the works of darkness shall be forgiven us, but sets us up a clear and true light, by which we may order our steps aright. In it the day-spring hath visited us from on high; (v. 78.) and this also is owing to the tender mercy of our God. Christ is the morning light, the rising Sun, Mal. 4. 2. The gospel brings light with it, (John 3. 19.) leaves us not to wander in the darkness of Pagan ignorance, or in the moonlight of the Old-Testament types, or figures, but in the day dawns; in John Baptist it began to break, but increased space, and shone more and more to the perfect day. We have as much reason to welcome the gospel-day, who enjoy it, as those have to welcome the morning, who had long waited for it. First, The gospel is discovering; it shows us that which before we were utterly in the dark about; (v. 79.) it is to give light to them that sit in darkness, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; the day-spring visited this dark world, to lighten the Gentiles, Acts 26. 18. Secondly, It is reviving; it brings light to them that sit in the shadow of death, as condemned prisoners in the dungeon, to bring them the tidings of a pardon, at least of a reference, and opportunity of procuring a pardon; it proclaims the opening of the prison, (Isa. 61. 1.) brings the light of life. How pleasant is that light! Thirdly, It is directing; it is to guide our feet in the way of peace, into that way which will bring us to peace at last. It is not only a light to our eyes, but a light to our feet; (Ps. 119. 105.) it guides us into the way of making our peace with God, of keeping up a comfortable communication; that way of peace, which as sinners we have wandered from, and have not known, (Rom. 3. 17.) nor could ever have known of ourselves.

In the last verse, we have a short account of the younger years of John Baptist. Though he was the son of a priest, he did not, like Samuel, go up, when he was a child, to minister before the Lord, for he was to prepare the way for a better priesthood. But we have this account of John:

1. Of his eminence as to the inward man: The child grew in the capacities of his mind, much more than other children; so that he waxed strong in spirit, had a strong judgment and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him, that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this it appeared that he was betimes fitted with the Holy Ghost; for those that are strong in the Lord, are strong in spirit.

2. Of his obscurity as to the outward man: He was in the deserts; not that he lived a hermit, cut off from the society of men; no, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zuph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbins. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are long so buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his showing to Israel, when he was in the thirty-second year of his age, and fitly fixed for the showing of those favours to Israel, which are reserved; the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not be.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have an account of the birth and infancy of our Lord Jesus; having had notice of his conception, and of the birth of John Baptist, we are now to have an account of the birth of Jesus Christ. The first-beginning is here brought into the world; let us go meet him with our hosannas, blessed is he that cometh. Here is, I. The place and other circumstances of his birth; II. The first deliverance and praise, one little child, and a son in safety, and such a one as we needed, but not such a one as the Jews expected, v. 1. 7. II. The notifying of his birth to the shepherds, that in that neighbourhood by an angel, the song of praise which the angels sung upon that occasion, and the spreading of the report of it by the shepherds, v. 8. 20. III. The circumcision of Christ, and the naming of him, v. 21. IV. The presenting of him in the temple, v. 22. 24. V. The testimonies of Simeon, and Anna the
prophets, concerning him, v. 25. 39. VI. Christ's growth and capacity, v. 40. 52. VII. His observing of the passover at twelve years old, and his disputing with the doctors in the temple, v. 41. 51. And this, with what we have met with, (Matt. 1. and 2.) is all we have concerning our Lord Jesus, till he entered upon his public work, in the thirty sixth year of his age.

1. AND it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) 5. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. 6. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

The fulness of time was now come, when God would send forth his Son made of a woman, and made under the law; and it was foretold that he should be born at Bethlehem. Now here we have an account of the time, place, and manner, of it.

1. The time when our Lord Jesus was born. Several things may be gathered out of these verses, which intimate to us that it was the proper time.

1. He was born at the time when the fourth monarchy was in its height, just when it was become more than any of the three before it, a universal monarchy. He was born in the days of Augustus Cesar, when the Roman empire extended itself further than ever before or since, including Parthia one way, and Britain another way; so that it was the commencement of an empire—The empire of the whole earth; and here that empire is called all the world, (v. 1.) for there was scarcely any part of the civilized world, but what was dependent on it. Now this was the time when the Messiah was to be born, according to Daniel's prophecy, (Dan. 2. 44.) In the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

2. He was born when Judea was become a province of the empire, and tributary to it; as appears evidently by this, that, when all the Roman empire was taxed, the Jews were taxed among the rest. Jerusalem was taken by Pompey the Roman general, about sixty years before this, who granted the government of the church to Hyrcanus, but not the government of the state; by degrees it was more and more reduced, till now at length it was quite subdued; for Judea was ruled by Cyrenius, the Roman governor of Syria; (v. 2.) the Roman writers call him Sulpicius Quirinus. Now just at this juncture, the Messiah was to be born, for so was dying Jacob's prophecy, That Shiloh should come when the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet, Gen. 49. 10. This was the first taxing that was made in Judea, the first badge of their servitude; therefore now Shiloh must come, to set up his kingdom.

3. There is another circumstance as to the time, implied in this general enrolment of all the subjects of the empire, which is, that there was now univer-
sal peace in the empire. The temple of Janus was now shut; which never used to be if any wars were on foot; and now it was fit for the Prince of Peace to be born, in whose days swords should be beaten into plough-shares.

It was then where our Lord Jesus was born, in very observable, he was born at Bethlehem; so it was foretold, (Mic. 5. 2.) the scribes so understood it, (Matt. 2. 5, 6.) so did the common people, John 7. 42. The name of the place was significant; Bethlehem signifies the house of bread; a proper place for him to be born in, who is the Bread of life, the Bread that came down from heaven. But that was not all; Bethlehem was the city of David, where he was born, and therefore there he must be brought up. He was the Son of David. Zion was also called the city of David, (2 Sam. 5. 7.) yet Christ was not born there; for Bethlehem was that city of David, where he was born in meaness, to be a Shepherd; and that our Saviour, when he humbled himself, chose for the place of his birth; not Zion, where he ruled in power and prosperity, that was to be a type of the church of Christ, that Mount Zion. Now when the Virgin Mary was with child, and near her time, Providence so ordered it, that, by order from the emperor, all the subjects of the Roman empire were to be taxed; that is, they were to give in their names to the proper officers, and they were to be registered and enrolled, according to their families, which is the proper signification of the word here used, as being taxed in their own name. It is supposed that they made profession of subjection to the Roman empire, either by some set form of words, or at least by payment of some small tribute, a penny suppose, in token of their allegiance, like a man's attending tenant. Thus are they vassals upon record, and may thank themselves.

According to this decree, the Jews (who were now twice as in distinction and subjection to a foreign government) appear the more formidable; but Providence had another reach in it. All the world shall be at the trouble of being enrolled, only that Joseph and Mary may; this brought them up from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, because they were of the stock and lineage of David; (v. 4. 5.) and perhaps, being poor and low, they thought the royalty of their extraction rather a burden and exposure to them than a matter of pride. Because it is difficult to suppose that every Jew (women as well as men) was obliged to repair to the city of which their ancestors were, and there be enrolled, now, at a time when they kept not to the bounds of their tribes, as formerly, it may be offered as a conjecture, that this great exactness was used only with the fancy to lie David's concern, concerning which, if the emperor gave particular orders, it having been the royal family, and still talked of as designed to be so, that he might know its number and strength. Divers ends of Providence were served by this.

1. Hereby the Virgin Mary was brought, great with child, to Bethlehem, to be delivered there, according to the prediction; whereas she had designed to lie David's concern, See which it is purposes and God's designs; and how Providence orders all things for the fulfilling of the scripture, and makes use of the projects men have for the serving their own pur poses, quite beyond their intention, to serve his.

2. Hereby it appeared that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David; for what brings his mother to Beth
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Though now, but because she was of the stock and lineage of David? This was a material thing to be proved, and required such an authentic proof as this.

Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two of the most early advocates for the christian religion, appeal to these rolls or records of the Roman empire, for the proof of Christ's being born of the house of David.

3. Hereby it appeared that he was made under the law; for he became a subject of the Roman empire as he was born, a Servant of rulers, Is. 49. 7.

Many suppose that, being born on this side of the taxing, he was enrolled as well as his father and mother, that it might appear how he made himself an object of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; instead of having kings tributaries to him; when he came into the world he was himself a tributary.

III. The circumstances of his birth, which were very mean, and under all possible marks of contempt.

He was indeed a First-born Son, but it was poor honour to be the first-born of such a poor woman as Mary was, who had no inheritance to which he might be entitled as First-born, but what was in activity.

1. He was under some abasements in common with other children; he was swaddled in swaddling clothes, as other children are when they are newborn. All he could be bound, or needed to he kept straight. He that makes darkness a road, and the bed for the sea, was himself swaddled in swaddling clothes, Job 38. 9. The everlasting Father became a child of time, and men said of him, whose out-goings were of old from everlasting, We know this man, whence he is, John 7. 27. The Ancient of days became an Infant of a span long.

2. He was under some abasements peculiar to himself. (1.) He was born at an inn. That Son of David that was the Glory of his father's house, had no inheritance that he could command, no, not in the city of David, no, not a friend that would accommodate his mother in distress with lodgings to be brought to bed in. Christ was born in an inn, to intimate that he came into the world but to sojourn here for a while, as in an inn, and to teach us to do likewise.

He receives all comers, and so does Christ. He hangs out the banner of love for his signs, and whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast out; only unlike other inn's, he welcomes those that come with out money and without price. All is on free cost.

(2.) He was born in a stable; so some think the word signifies, which we translate a manger, a place for cattle to stand to be fed in; because there was no room in the inn, and for want of conveniences, may for want of necessities, he was laid in the manger, instead of a cradle. The word which we render swaddling clothes, some derive from a word that signifies to read, or tear, and thence infer that he was so far from having a good suit of childhood-linen, that his very swaddles were ragged and torn. His being born in a stable and laid in a manger, was an instance, [1.] Of the poverty of his parents. Had they been rich, room would have been made for them but, being poor, they must shift as they could. [2.] Of the corruption and degeneracy of manners in that age; that a woman in reputation for virtue and honour, should be used so barbarously. If there had been any common humanity among them, they would not have turned a woman in travail into a stable. [3.] It was an instance of the humiliation of our Lord Jesus. We were become by sin like an out-cast infant, helpless and forlorn; and such a one Christ was. Thus he would answer the type of Moses the great prophet and lawgiver of the Old Testament, who was in his infancy cast out in an ark of bulrushes, as Christ in a manger. Christ would hereby put a contempt upon all worldly glory, and teach us to slight it. Since his own received him not, let us not think it strange if they receive us not.

3. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. 10. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. 12. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 14. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. 15. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. 17. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. 18. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. 19. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. 20. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The meanest circumstances of Christ's humiliation were all along attended with some discoveries of his glory, to balance them, and take off the offence of them; for even when he humbled himself, God did in some measure exalt him, and give him earnest of his future exaltation. When we saw him swaddled in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, we were tempted to say, "Surely this cannot be the Son of God." But see his birth attended, as it is here, with a choir of angels, and we shall say, "Surely it can be no other than the Son of God, concerning whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, Let all the angels of God worship him," Heb. 1. 6.

We had in Matthew an account of the notice given of the arrival of this Ambassador, this Prince from heaven, to the wise men, who were Gentiles, by a star; there was no notice given of it to the shepherds, who were Jews, by an angel; to each God chose to speak in the language they were most conversant with.

1. See here how the shepherds were employed; they were abiding in the fields adjoining to Bethlehem, and keeping watch over their flocks by night. v. 8. The angel was not sent to the chief priests or the elders, (they were not prepared to receive these tidings,) but to a company of poor shepherds, who were, like Jacob, plain men dwelling in tents, not
like Esau, cunning hunters. The patriarchs were
shepherds, Moses and David particularly called
from keeping sheep to rule God's people; and by
this instance God would show that he had still a fa-
vor to those who were innocent of guile, and
mystified. Tidings were brought to Moses of the deliverance
out of Egypt, when he was keeping sheep, and to
these shepherds, who, it is probable, were devout,
pious men, the tidings were brought of a greater
salvation. Observe, 1. They were not sleeping
in their beds, when this news was brought them,
(though many had very acceptable intelligence from
heaven in shallow napping upon the bed,) but abiding in
the fields, and watching. Those who are in love
from God, must stir up themselves. They were
broad awake, and therefore could not be deceived
in what they saw and heard, so as those may be,
who are half asleep. 2. They were employed now,
not in acts of devotion, but in the business of their
calling; they were keeping watch over their flock;
to secure them from thieves and beasts of prey, it, pro-
bably, being in the summer time, when they kept
their cattle out all night, as we do now, and did not
nurse them. Note, We are not out of the way of
divine visits, when we are sensibly employed in an
honest calling, and abide with God in it.

II. How they were surprised with the appearance
of an angel; (v. 9.) Behold, an angel of the Lord
came upon them, of a sudden appeared, stood
over the place where they were, in the midst of them;
coming immediately from heaven. We read it, the
angel, as if it were the same that appeared once
and again in the chapter before, the angel Gabriel, that
was caused to fly swiftly: but that is not certain.
The angel's coming upon them intimates that they
little thought of such a thing, or expected it; for it
is in a prevenient way that gracious visits are made
unto us from heaven, or ever we ask for them. That
they might be sure it was an angel from heaven, they
saw and heard the glory of the Lord round about
them; such as made the night as bright as day, such
as glorified as to attend God's appearance, a heav-
ENous glory, or an exceeding great glory, such as
they could not bear the dazzling lustre of. This
made them sore afraid, put them into a consterna-
tion, as fearing some evil tidings: while we are con-
scious of much guilt, we have reason to fear,
lest every express from heaven be a messenger
of wrath.

III. What the message was, which the angel had
to deliver to the shepherds, v. 10—12. 1. He gave a
superscription to their fears; "Fear not, for we have
nothing to say to you, that needs be a terror to you;
you need not fear your enemies, and should not fear
your friends." 2. He furnished them with abundant
matter for joy: "Behold, I evangelize to you great
joy; I solemnly declare it, and you have reason to
bid it welcome, for it shall bring joy to all people,
and not to the people of the Jews only; that unto
you is born this day, at this time, a Saviour, the Saviour
that has been so long expected, which is Christ the
Lord, in the city of David," v. 11. Jesus is the Christ,
the Saviour, whose Saviour was a sovereign Prince;
he is God, for the Lord, in the Old Testament, answers to Jehovah. He is
a Saviour, and he will be a Saviour to those that only
accept of him for their Lord. The Saviour is born,
he is born this day; and since it is matter of great
joy to all people, it is not to be kept secret, you may
proclaim it, may tell it to whom you please. He is
born to save his people from their sins; yes, he should
be born, in the city of David; and he is born to you
Jews he is sent in the first place, to bless you, to
you shepherds, though poor and mean in the world.
This refers to Isa. 9. 6. Unto us a Child is born,
unto us a Son is given. To ye men, not to us an-
gels, he took not on him nature. This is matter
of joy indeed to all people, great joy. Long-looked
for is come at last. Let heaven and earth rejoice
before this Lord, for he cometh. 3. He gives them a
sign for the confirming of their faith in this matter.
"Ye, and all we find out this Child in Bethlehem,
which is now full of prophets, and with this sign shall
you know he is the Christ, which is the Lord, he was
called about it, v. 15. While the angels were singing
their hymn, they could attend to that only; but when they
were gone away from them into heaven, (for angels, when
they appeared, never made any long stay, but re-
turned as soon as they had despatched their busi-
ness,) the shepherds said one to another, Let us go
to Bethlehem. Note, When extraordinary messages from the upper world are no more to be expected, we must set ourselves to improve the advantages we have for the confirming of our faith, and the keeping up of our communion with God in this lower world. And it is no reflection upon the testimony of angels, no nor upon a divine testimony itself, to get it corroborated by observation and experience. These shepherds did not doubtfully see whether it be so or no; but with assurance, Let us go see this thing which is come to pass; for what room was left to doubt of it, when the Lord had thus made it known to them? The word spoken by angels was steadfast and unquestionably true. 2. They immediately made the visit, v. 16. They lost no time, but came with haste to the place, which, probably, the angel directed them to; and when they found Joseph and Mary, and the babe lying in the manger, the poverty and meanness in which they found Christ the Lord, were no shock to their faith, who themselves knew what it was to live a life of comfortable communion with God in very poor and mean circumstances. We have reason to think that the shepherds told Joseph and Mary of the vision of the angel, and of the song of the angels, that they had heard, which was a great encouragement to them, more than if a visit had been made them by the best ladies in the town. And it is probable that Joseph and Mary told the shepherds what visions they had had concerning the child; and so, by communicating their experiences to each other, they greatly strengthened one another's faith.

VI. The care which the shepherds took to spread this information among the rest. Where they had seen it, though they saw nothing in the child that should induce them to believe that he was Christ the Lord, yet the circumstances, how mean soever they were, agreeing with the sign that the angel had given them, they were abundantly satisfied; and as the lepers argued, (2 Kings 7. 9. This being a day of good tidings, we dare not hold our peace,) so they made known abroad the whole story of what they were made to see, to Joseph and Mary, concerning this child, that he was the Saviour, even Christ the Lord, that in him there is peace on earth, and that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. This they told every gody, and agreed in their testimony concerning it. And now, if when he is in the world, the world knows him not, it is their own fault, for they have sufficient notice given them. What impression did it make upon people? Truly, Alas! they had not heard it, wondered at these things which were told them by the shepherds, v. 18. The shepherds were plain downright honest men, and they could not suspect them guilty of any design to impose upon them, what they had said therefore, was likely to be true; and if it were true, they could not but wonder at it, that the Messiah should be born in a stable, and not in a palace; that angels should bring news of it to poor shepherds, and not to kings; and that he should be called the child of David, and yet the chief out in purple streams. 2. Though it was a shadow of good things to come. And though its institutions were beggarly elements, and rudiments of this world, as the apostle calls them, Christ submitted to it, that he might with the better grace cancel it, and set it aside for us. Now here we have two instances of his being made under that law, and submitting to it. 1. He was circumcised on the eighth day. (v. 21.) When eight days were accomplished, that day seven-night that he was born, they circumcised him. 1. Though it was a painful operation, (Surely a bloody husband thou hast bec, said Zipporah to Moses, because of the circumcision, Exod. 4. 25.) yet Christ would undergo it for us; nay, therefore he submitted to it, to give an instance of his early obedience, his obedience unto blood. Then he shed his blood by drops, which afterward he poured out for sinners. 2. Though it supposed him a Stranger, that was by that ceremony to be admitted into covenant with God, whereas he had always been his beloved Son; nay though it supposed him a Sinner, that needed to have his filthiness washed away, whereas he had no impurity or superfluity of naughtiness to be cut off, yet he served, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterward be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was vailed; and it is satisfaction enough to find that if no one else takes notice of these things, and pondered them in her heart, v. 19. She heard the evidences together, and kept them in remembrance, to be compared with the discoveries that should afterward be made her. As she had silently left it to God to clear up her virtue, when that was suspected, so she silently leaves it to him to publish her honour, now when it was vailed; and it is satisfaction enough to find that if no one else takes notice of these things, and pondered them in her heart, v. 19. She heard the evidences together, and kept them in remembrance.
mitten in; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he would be made in the likeness, not only of flesh, but of sinful flesh, Rom. 8. 3. 3. Though, therefore he made himself a Deutor to the whole law, (Gal. 5. 8.) yet he submitted to it; nay, therefore he submitted to it, because he took upon him the form of a servant, though he was the Son of God. Christ was circumcised, (1.) That he might own himself the seed of Abraham, and of that nation of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and who was to take on the seed of Abraham, Heb. 2. 16. (2.) That he might own himself a Surety for our sins, and an Undertaker for our safety. Circumcision was to the Jews, the sign of a bond, whereby we acknowledged ourselves debtors; and, as the Lord Christ, by being circumcised, did as it were set his hand to it, being made Sin for us. The ceremonial law consisted much in sacrifices; Christ hereby obliged himself to offer, not the blood of bulls or goats, but his own blood, which none that ever were circumcised before, could oblige themselves to. (3.) That he might justify, and put an honour upon, the dedication of the infant seed of the church; and, by that ordinance which is the instituted seal of the covenant, and of the righteousness which is by faith, as circumcision was, (Rom. 4. 11.) and baptism is. And certainly his being circumcised at eight days old, doth make much more for the dedicating of the seed of the faithful by baptism in their infancy, than his being baptized at thirty years old, for the dedication of the infant among the Jews, as John was; (Col. 4. 14.) as in this he would be made like unto his brethren. (2.) It was the name of two eminent types of him in the Old Testament; Joshua, the successor of Moses, who was commander of Israel, and conqueror of Canaan; and Joshua, the High Priest, who was therefore purposefully crowned, that he might prefigure Christ as a Priest upon his throne, Zech. 6. 11, 13. [3.] It was very significant of his undertaking. Jesus signifies a Saviour. He would be uncompromised with the glories of his divine nature, but from his gracious designs as a Mediator: he brings salvation.

II. He was presented in the temple. This was done with an eye to the law, and at the time appointed by the law, when he was forty days old, when the days of her purification were accomplished, v. 22. Many copies, and authentic ones, read aqei for apxu, the days of their purification, the purification both of the mother and of the child, for so it was intended to be by the law; and our Lord Jesus, though he had no impurity to be cleansed from, yet submitted to it, as he did to circumcision, because he was made Sin for us; and that, as by the circumcision of Christ we might be circumcised, in the virtue of our union and communion with him, with a spiritual circumcision, not without hands, (Col. 2. 11.) in the purification of Christ we might be spiritually purified from the filthiness and corruption which we brought into the world with us. Now, according to the law,

1. The Child Jesus, being a First-born Son, was presented to the Lord, in one of the courts of the temple. The law is here recited, (v. 23.) Every first-born of the Lord was to be presented to the Lord, because by a special writ of protection the first-born of Israel were preserved, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain by the destroying angel; so that Christ, as First-born, was a Priest by a title surer than that of Aaron's house. Christ was the First-born among many brethren, and was called holy to the Lord, so as never any other was; yet he was presented to the Lord, as other first-born were, and no otherwise. Though he was newly come out of the bosom of the Father, yet he was presented to him by the hands of a priest, as if he had been a stranger, that needed one to introduce him. His being presented to the Lord, now signified his presenting himself to the Lord as Mediator, when he was caused to draw near and approach unto him, Jer. 30. 31. But, according to the law, he was redeemed, Numb. 18. 15. The first-born of man shall thou redeem, and five shekels was the value, Lev. 27. 6. Numb. 16. 16. But probably in case of poverty the mother might offer a lamb of her own, and the priest would then give for it nothing, for no mention is made of it here. Christ was presented to the Lord, not to be brought back, for his ear was bored to God's door-post to serve him for ever; and though he is not left in the temple as Samuel was, to minister there, yet like him he is given to the Lord as long as he lives, and ministers to him in the true temple not made with hands.

25. And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. 26. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law. 28. Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said: 29. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; 30. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, 31. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; 32. A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. 33. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. 34. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold this child is set for the fall and
rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; 35. (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. 36. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity: 37. And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayer night and day. 38. And she came in that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. 39. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. 40. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Still Christ has honour done him, when he humbles himself, to balance the offence of it; that we might not be stumbled at the meanness of his birth, angels then did him honour; and that we may not be offended at his being presented in the temple, like other children born in sin, and without any manner of solemnity peculiar to him, but silently, and in the crowd of other children, Simeon and Anna now do him honour, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

1. A very honourable testimony is borne to him by Simeon, which was both a reputation to the Child, and an encouragement to the parents, and might have been a happy introducing of the priests into an acquaintance with the Saviour, if those watchmen had not been blind. Now observe here,

2. The account given of him here is, (1.) That he was just and devout, just toward men, and devout toward God; these two must always go together, and each will befriend the other, but neither will alone for the child. (2.) That he was endued for the consolation of Israel, that is, for the coming of the Messiah, in whom alone the nation of Israel, that was now miserably harassed and oppressed, would find consolation. Christ is not only the author of his people’s comfort, but the Matter and Ground of it, the Consolation of Israel. He was long a coming, and they who believed he would come, continued waiting, desiring his coming, and longed for it with patience. I had almost said with some degree of inquietude waiting till it came. He understood by books, as Daniel, that the time was at hand, and therefore was now more than ever big with expectation of it. The unbelieving Jews, who still expect that which is already come, use it as an oath, or solemn protestation, As ever I hope to see the consolation of Israel, so and so it is. Note, The consolation of Israel is to be waited for, and it is worth waiting for, and it will be welcome to those who have waited for it, and continue waiting. (3.) The Holy Ghost was upon him, not only as a Spirit of holiness, but as a Spirit of prophecy; he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to speak things above himself. (4.) He had a gracious promise made him, that before he died he should have a sight of the Messiah, p. 26. He was searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophecies did signify, and whether it was at hand; and he received this oracle, (for so the word signifies,) that he should not see death before he had seen the Messiah, the Lord’s Anointed. Note, Those, and those only, can with courage see death, and look it in the face without terror, that have by faith a sight of Christ.

3. The abundant satisfaction wherewith he welcomed this sight; He took him up in his arms, (v. 28.) he embraced him with the greatest affection imaginable, laid him in his bosom, as near his heart as he could, which was as full of joy as it could hold. He took him up in his arms, to present him to the Lord, (so some think,) to do either the parent’s part, or the priest’s part; for divers of the ancients say they who was presented must have this done. When we receive the record which the gospel gives us of Christ, with a lively faith, and the offer it makes us of Christ, with love and resignation, then we take Christ in our arms. It was promised him that he should have a sight of Christ; but more is performed than was promised, he has him in his arms.

4. The solemn declaration he made hereupon; He blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart, in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen the salvation I was promised a sight of before I died.” Here is, (1.) An acknowledgment that God had been as good as he
word; there has not failed one title of his good promises, as Solomon owns, 1 Kings 8:56. Note, Never may that hoped for be disappointed, of whom God's word, their God's unchangeable word, has promised. [2.] A thanksgiving for it; He blessed God that he saw that Salvation in his arms, which many prophets and kings desired to see, and might not. [3.] A confession of his faith, that this Child in his arms was the Saviour, the Salvation itself: thy Salvation, the Salvation of thine appointing, the Salvation which thou hast prepared with a great deal of care, of which it has been thus far in the coming, it hath still been in preparing. [4.] It is a farewell to this world; "Now let thy servant depart; now mine eyes have been blessed with this sight, let them be closed, and see no more in this world." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, (Ecc. 1:8.) till it hath seen Christ, and then it is. What a poor thing doth this world look to one that hath Christ in his arms, and salvation in his eye! Now add to all my friends and relations, all my enjoyments and employments here, even the temple itself. [5.] It is a welcome to death; "Now let thy servant depart. Note, Death is a departure, the soul's departure out of the body, from the world of sense to the world of spirits. We must not depart till God gives us our discharge, for we are his servants, and must not quit our service till we have accomplished our work; "He shall see Canaan, and then die; but he shall no more see that that word might be altered, Deut. 3. 24, 25. Simeon is promised that he should not see death, till he had seen Christ; and he is willing to construe that beyond what was expressed, as an intimation that, when he had seen Christ, he should die; Lord, be it so, saith he, now let me depart. See here, First, How comfortable the death of a good man is; he departs from this world, to his Father's house, and to that of his rest. He departs in peace, peace with God, peace with his own conscience; in peace with death, well reconciled to it, well-acquainted with it. He departs according to God's word, as Moses at the mouth of the Lord; (Deut. 34. 5.) the word of precept, Go up, and die; the word of promise, I will come again, and receive you to myself. Secondly, What is the ground of this comfort? For mine eyes have seen thy Salvation. This bespeaks more than a great complacency in the sight, like that of Jacob, (Gen. 46. 30.) Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. It bespeaks a believing expectation of a happy state on the other side death, through this salvation he now had a sight of, which not only takes off the terror of death, but makes it gain. Phil. 1. 21. Note, Those that have welcomed Christ, may welcome death. (2.) He has a pleasant prospect concerning the world, and concerning the church. This Salvation shall be, [1.] A Blessing to the world. It is prepared before the face of all people, not to be hid in a corner, but to be made known; to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, that now sit in darkness: they shall have joy and gladness everlasting. Go up, and Gilead shall be trodden down through him. This has reference to Isa. 49. 6. I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles; for Christ came to be the Light of the world, not a candle in the Jewish candlestick, but the Sun of righteousness. [2.] A Blessing to the church; the Glory of the people Israel. It was an honour to the Jewish nation, that the Messiah sprang out of one of their tribes, and was born, and lived, and died, among them. And of those who were Israelites indeed, of the spiritual Israel, he was indeed the Glory, and will be so to eternity, Isa. 60. 19. They shall glory in him. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory, Isa. 45. 25. When Christ ordered his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, therein he made himself a Light to lighten the Gentiles; and when he added, beginning at Jerusalem, he made himself the Glory of his people Israel. [3.] The prediction concerning the Messiah, and so doth he to us; what he delivered, with his blessing, to Joseph and Mary. They marvelled at these things which were still more and more fully and plainly spoken concerning this Child, v. 33. And because they were affected with, and had their faith strengthened by, that which was said to them, here is more said to them. (1.) Simeon shews them what reason they had to rejoice; not on the account of his heart, but on that of his children, their blessed hen. He prayed for them, that God would bless them, and would have others do so too. They had reason to rejoice, for this Child should be not only a Comfort and Honour to them, but a public Blessing; He is set for the rising again of many in Israel, for the conversion of many to God, that are dead and buried in sin, and for the consolation of many in God, that are sunk and lost in sorrow and despair. Those whom he is set for the fall of may be the same with those whom he is set for the rising again of. He is set si tuum maloration—for their fall, in order to their rising again; to humble and abase them, and bring them off from all confidence in themselves, that they may be exalted by relying on Christ's husband, wounds and then heals. Paul falls, and rises again. (2.) He shows them likewise what reason they had to rejoice with trembling, according to the advice given of old, with reference to the Messiah's kingdom, Ps. 2. 11. Least Joseph, and Mary especially, should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, here is a thorn in the flesh for them, an infirmity, or a trial, or an evil of the day, upon or in Christ, to exalt them and humble them. (1.) It is true, Christ shall be a Blessing to Israel; but there are those in Israel, whom he is set for the fall of, whose corruptions will be provoked, who will be prejudiced and enraged against him, and offended, and whose sin and ruin will be aggravated by the revelation of Jesus Christ; many who will extract poison to themselves out of the balm of Gilead, and spill their own blood on the Rock of Salvation, to whom this precious Foundation-stone will be a stone of stumbling. This refers to that prophecy, (Isa. 8. 14, 15.) He shall be for a Sanctuary to some, and yet for a Snare to others, 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8. Note, As it is pleasant to think how many there are, to whom Christ and his gospel are a savour of life unto life, so it is sad to think how many there are, to whom it is a savour of death unto death. He is set for them, to be admired by some, but by others, by many, spoken against. He had many eyes upon him, during the time of his public ministry, he was a Sign, but he had many tongues against him, the contradiction and reproach of sinners; he was continually cavilled at and abused: and the effects of this will be, that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed, (v. 33.) that is, upon this occasion, men will see their hearts and consciences, and be ashamed, and blush, and confound themselves. The secret good affections and dispositions in the minds of some, will be revealed by their embracing of Christ, and closing with him; the secret corruptions and vicious dispositions of others, that otherwise would never have appeared so bad, will be revealed by their enmity to Christ, and their rage against him. Men will be judged of by the thoughts of their hearts; their thoughts, and the things of their hearts, will be known. The word of God is a dissembler of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and by it are we discovered to ourselves, and shall be judged hereafter. (2.) It is true, Christ shall be a Comfort to his mother; but he not too proud of it, for a sword shall pass through thine own soul also. He shall be
a suffering Jesus; and, First, "Thou shalt suffer with him, by sympathy, more than any other of his friends, because of the nearness of thy relation, and strength of affection, to him. When he was abused, it was a sword in her bones. When she stood by his cross, and yet could not well think how inward grief was such, that it might truly be said, A sword pierced through her soul, it cut her to the heart. Secondly, Thou shalt suffer for him. Many understand it as a prediction of her martyrdom; and some of the ancients say that it had its accomplishment in that. Note, In the midst of our greatest delights and advancements in this world, it is good for us to know that we may at any time be called upon to suffer for his name, and have a part in the sufferings of his saints; this may be our end also, if we persevere in our profession of faith and love."

1. The account here given of this Anna, who she was; she was, (1.) A prophetess; the spirit of prophecy now began to revive, which had ceased in Israel above three hundred years. Perhaps no more in mean than that she was one who had understanding in the scriptures above other women, and made it her business to instruct the younger women in the things of God. Though it was a very degenerate age of the church, yet God left not himself without witnesses. (2.) She was the daughter of Phanuel; her father's name (saith Grothus) is mentioned, to put us in mind of Jacob's Phanuel, or Penuel, (Gen. 32. 50.) that now the mystery of that should be unfolded, when in Christ we should as it were see God face to face, and our lives be preserved; and her name signifies gracious. (3.) She was of the tribe of Asher, which was in Galilee; this, some think, is taken notice of, to refute those who said, Out of Galilee arose no prophet, but it appeared from Galilee. (4.) She was of a great age, a widow of about eighty-four years; some think she had now been eighty-four years a widow; and then she must be considered above eighty years old; others, rather than suppose that a woman so very old should be capable of fasting and praying as she did, suppose that she was only eighty-four years of age, and had been long a widow. Though she was a young widow, and had lived with her husband but seven years, yet she never married again, but continued a widow, to her dying day, which is mentioned to her praise. (5.) She was a constant attendant on the services of the temple. Some think she had lodgings in the courts of the temple, either in an alm-house, being maintained by the temple charities; or, as a prophetess, she was lodged there, as in a proper place to be consulted and advised with by those that desired to know the mind of God; others think her not departing from the temple means no more, but that she was constantly there at the time of divine service; when any minister was preaching, she took delight to join in it. It is most probable she had an apartment of her own among the out-buildings of the temple; and, besides her constant attendance on the public worship, abounded in private devotions, for she served God with fasting and prayers night and day; having no secular business to employ herself in, or being past it, she gave up herself wholly to her devotions, and not only fasted twice in the week, but alway fasted, and kept a constant attendance on the temple; and, by her constant attendance on the temple, she found her rest in it.

2. The testimony she bore to our Lord Jesus; (v. 38.) She came in at that instant when the child was presented, and Simeon discoursed concerning him; she, who was so constant to the temple, could not miss the opportunity. Now, (1.) She gave thanks likewise to the Lord, just as Simeon; perhaps like him, wishing now to depart in peace. Note, Those to whom Christ is made known, have reason enough to give thanks to the Lord for so great a favour; and we should be excited to that duty by the praises and thanksgivings of others; why should the Lord be thanked in private, as Anna concurred with Simeon, and helped to make up the harmony. She confessed unto the Lord; (so it may be read;) she made an open profession of her faith concerning this Child. (2.) She, as a prophetess, instructed others concerning him; She spake of him to all them that believed the Messiah would come, and with him look ed for redemption in Jerusalem. Redemption was the thing wanted, waited for, and wished for; redemp tion in Jerusalem, for from whence the word of the Lord was to go forth, Isa. 2. 3. Some there were in Jerusalem, that looked for redemption; yet, but a few, for Anna, it should seem, had acquaintance with them all that were joint-expectants with her of the Messiah; she knew where to find them, or they where to find her, and she told them all the good news, that she had seen the Lord; and it was great news, this of his birth now, as afterward that of his resurrection, and it appeared that she had an acquaintance with Christ to herself, should do all they can, to bring others acquainted with him. Lastly, Here is a short account of the infancy and childhood of our Lord Jesus. 1. Where he spent it, v. 59. When the ceremony of presenting the Child, and purifying the mother, was all over, they returned into Galilee. Luke relates no more concerning them, till they were removed by St. Matthew's gospel, (ch. 2.) that from Jerusalem they returned to Bethlehem, where the wise men of the east found them, and there they continued till they were directed to flee into Egypt, to escape the malice and rage of Herod; and returning from thence when Herod was dead, they were directed to go to their old quarters in Nazareth, whence they had been perhaps some years absent. It is here called their city, because by it they are understood to mean the same place, that by that name was celebrated in after years, for the relations they were there. He was ordered farther from Jerusalem, because his kingdom and priesthood were to have no affinity with the present government of the Jewish church or state. He is sent into a place of obscurity and reproach; for in this, as in other things, he must humble himself, and make himself of no reputation. 2. How he spent it, v. 46. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore
the day of his showing to Israel at twenty-nine years old, and therefore we are conceived to make much of this, for it is in vain to wish we had more.

Here we have Christ’s going up with his parents to Jerusalem, at the feast of the passover, v. 41, 42.
1. It was their constant practice to attend there, according to the law, though it was a long journey, and they were poor, and perhaps not well able, without straitening themselves, to bear the expenses of it. Note, Public ordinances must be frequented, and we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Worldly business must give way to spiritual concerns. Joseph and Mary had a Son in the house with them, that was able to teach them better than all the rabbins at Jerusalem; yet they went up thither, after the custom of the feast. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so should we. We have reason to suppose that Joseph went up likewise at the feast of Pentecost and Tabernacles, for all the males were to appear there three years in, but Mary only at the passover, which was the greatest of the three feasts, and had most gospel in it.

2. The child Jesus, at twelve years old, went up with them. The Jewish doctors say, that at twelve years old, children must begin to fast from time to time, that they may learn to fast at a proper time; and that at thirteen years old, a child begins to be a son of the commandment, that is, obliged to the duties of adult church-membership, having been from his infancy, by virtue of his circumcision, a son of the covenant. It is not said that this was the first time that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast, probably he had done it for some years before, having spirit and wisdom above his age; and all should attend on public worship, that can hear with understanding, Neh. 8. 2. Those children that are forward in other things, should be put forward in religion. It is for the honour of Christ, that children should attend on public worship, and he is pleased with their hosannas; and those children that were in their infancy dedicated to God, should be called upon, when they are greater, to give the gospel-passover, to the Lord’s supper, that they may make it their own act and deed to join themselves to the Lord.

II. Christ’s tarrying behind his parents at Jerusalem, unknown to them, in which he designed to give an early specimen of what he was reserved for.

1. His parents did not return till they had fulfilled the days; they had stayed there all the seven days at the feast, though it was not absolutely necessary that they should stay longer than the two first days, after which many went home. Note, It is good to stay to the conclusion of an ordinance, as becomes those who say, It is good to be here, and not to hasten away, as if we were like Dоеg, detained before the Lord.

2. The child tarrying behind in Jerusalem, not because he was loath to go home, or shy of his parents’ company, but because he had business to do there, and would let his parents know that he had a Father in heaven, whom he was to be observant of more than of them; and respect to him must not be construed disrespect to them. Some conjecture that he tarrying behind in the temple, for it was the custom of the pious Jews, on the morning that they went up, to go early to the temple to worship God; there he stayed behind, and found entertainment there till they found him again. Or, perhaps, he said at the house where they lodged, or some other friend’s house, (and such a child as he was, could not but be the Darling of all that knew him, and every one would court his company,) and went up to the temple only at church time; but so

We have here the only passage of story recorded concerning our blessed Saviour, from his infancy to
it was, that he stayed behind. It is good to see young people willing to dwell in the house of the Lord; they are then like Christ.

3. His parents went the first day's journey, without any suspicion that he was left behind, for they supposed him to have been in the company, v. 44. On these occasions, the crowd was very great, especially the first day's journey, and the roads full of people; and they concluded that he came along with some of their neighbours, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, that were upon the road, going down; Pray did you see our Son? or Did you see him? Like the spouse's inquiry, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? This was a Jewel worth seeking after. They knew that every one would be desirous of his company, and that he would be willing to do good among his kinsfolk and acquaintance, but among them they found him not, v. 43. There are many, too, who, through the kinsfolk and acquaintance, that we cannot avoid converse with, among whom we find little or nothing of Christ. When they could not hear of him in this and the other company upon the road, yet they hoped they should meet with him at the place where they lodged that night; but there they could learn no tidings of him. Compare this with Joh 23. 8, 9.

4. Then they found him not at their quarters at night, the evening were gone among them, being in Jerusalem, seeking him. Note, Those that would find Christ, must seek till they find, for he will at length be found of those that seek him, and will be found their bountiful Rewarder. Those that have lost their comforts in Christ, and the evidences of their interest in him, must heathen themselves where, and when, and how, they lost them, and must turn back again to the place where they last had them; lest remember some where they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works, and return to their first love, Rev. 2. 4, 5. Those that would recover their lost acquaintance with Christ, must go to Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, the place which he has chosen to put his name there; must attend upon him in his ordinances, in the gospel-passover, there they may hope to meet him.

The third day, they found him in the temple, in some conversation with his disciples, the temple, where the doctors of the law kept, not their courts, but their conferences rather, or their schools for disputation; and there they found him sitting in the midst of them, v. 46. not standing as a catechumen to be examined or instructed by them, for he had discovered such measures of knowledge and wisdom, that they admitted him to sit among them as a fellow or member of their society. This is an instance, not only that he was filled with wisdom, v. 40. but that he had both a desire to increase it, and a readiness to communicate it; and herein he is an Example to children and young people, who should learn of Christ, to delight in the company of those they may get good by, and choose to sit in the midst of the doctors rather than in the midst of the players. Let them begin at twelve years old, and sooner, to inquire after knowledge, and to associate with those that are able to instruct them; it is a hopeful and promising presage in youth, to be desirous of instruction. Many a youth at Christ's age now, would have been playing with the children in the temple, but he was sitting with the doctors in the temple. (1.) He heard them. Those that would learn, must be swift to hear. (2.) He asked them questions; whether, as a Teacher, (he had authority so to ask,) or as a Learner, (he had humility so to learn;) whether we are Joint-searchers after truth, must be found out by mutual amicable disquisitions. (3.) He returned answers to them, which were very surprising and satisfactory, v. 47. And his wisdom and understanding appeared as much in the questions he asked as in the answers he gave, so that all who heard him were astonished: they never heard one so young, nor indeed any of their greatest doctors, talk sense at the rate that he did; like David, he had more understanding than all his teachers, even, than the ancients, Ps. 119. 99, 100. Now Christ shewed forth some rays of his glory which were presently drawn out in his other discourses, v. 47. He gave them a little foretaste of his miracles and knowledge. Methekins, this public appearance of Christ in the temple, as a Teacher, was like Moses's early attempt to deliver Israel, which Stephen put this construction upon, that he supposed his brethren would have understood, by that, how God by his hand would deliver them, Acts 7. 24, 25. They might have taken the hint, and been delivered then, but they understood not; so they here might have had Christ (for augurs) to enter upon his work now, but they were only astonished, and understood not the indication; and therefore, like Moses, he retires into obscurity again, and they hear no more of him for many years after.

6. His mother talked with him privately about it; when the company broke up, she took him aside, and examined him about it with a deal of tenderness and affection, v. 48. Joseph and Mary had been acquainted with him, v. 49. Joseph had so much respect showed him as to be admitted to sit among the doctors, and to be taken notice of. His father knew he had only the name of a father, and therefore said nothing. But, (1.) His mother told him how ill they took it; “Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Why didst thou put us into such a fright?” They were ready to say, as Jacob of Joseph, “A wild beast has devoured him; or, he is fallen into the hands of some monstrous enemy, who at length found out that he was the young child whose life Herod had sought some years ago.” A thousand imaginations, we may suppose, they had concerning him, each more frightful than another.

“You, why hast thou given us occasion for these tears? Thy father and I have sought thee, sorrowing; not only troubled that we lost thee, but vexed at ourselves that we did not take more care of thee, to bring thee in the hands of some monstrous enemy, we have leave to complain of their losses, that think they have lost Christ; but their weeping did not hinder sorrowing; they did not sorrow, and sit down in despair, but sorrowed, and sought. Note, If we would find Christ, we must seek him sorrowing, sorrowing that we have lost him, that we have provoked him to withdraw, and that we have sought him no sooner. They that thus seek him in sorrow, shall find him, at length, with so much the greater joy.

(2.) He gently reproved their inordinate solicitude about him; (v. 49.) “How is it that ye sought me? Ye might have depended upon it, I would have followed you home when I had done the business I have to do here, I could not be lost in Jerusalem. Wist ye not that I ought to be, &c.” (so some read it;) where else should the son be, who abideth in the house for ye? I ought to be there? ”[1] “Understand ye not that I have Father's care and protection; and therefore you should have cast the care of me upon him, and not have burdened yourselves with it.” Christ is a shaft hid in his Father's quiver, Isa. 49. 2. He takes care of his church likewise, and therefore let not us ever despair of its safety. [2.] “At my Father's work!” (so we take it;) “I must he about my Father's business, and therefore could not come home so soon as you expected me.” [3.] When the young man perceived that concerning me, that I have devoted myself to the service of religion, and therefore must employ myself in the affairs of it.” Here, in he hath left us an example: for it becomes the children of God, in conformity to Christ, to attend
their heavenly Father's business, and to make all other business give way to it. This word of Christ we now think we understand very well, for he hath explained it in what he hath done, and said; it was his errand into the world, whereby he brought God and man; and yet at that time his parents understood not what he said, v. 50. They did not understand what business he had to do then in the temple of his Father. They believed him to be the Messiah, that should have the throne of his father David; but they thought that should rather bring him to the royal palace than to the temple. They understood not his prophetic office; and he was to do much of his work in that.

Lastly, Here is their return to Nazareth. This glimpse of his glory was to be short; it was now over, and he did not urge his parents either to come and settle at Jerusalem, or to settle him there, (though that was the place of improvement and preferment, and where he might have the best opportunities of showing his wisdom,) but very willingly retired into his obscurity at Nazareth, where for many years he was not heard of among men. He was, without a doubt, he came up to Jerusalem, to worship at the feast, which was a year, but whether he ever went again into the temple, to dispute with the doctors there, we are not told: it is not improbably that he might. But here we are told,

1. That he was subject to his parents; though once, to show that he was more than a man, he withdrew himself from his parents, to attend his heavenly Father's business. Yet it is not in point to his constant practice, nor for many years after, but was subject to them, observed their orders, and went, and came as they directed; and, as it should seem, worked with his father, at the trade of a carpenter. Herein he hath given an example to children to be dutiful and obedient to their parents in the Lord. Being made of a woman, he was under the law of the fifth commandment, to teach the seed of the faithful thus to approve themselves to him a faithful seed. Though his parents were poor and mean, though his father was only so spurned father, yet he was subject to them; though he was strong in spirit, and filled with wisdom, nay, though he was the Son of God, yet he was subject to his parents; how then will they answer it, who, though foolish and weak, yet are disobedient to their parents?

2. That his mother, though she did not perfectly understand his Son's savings, yet kept them in her heart, expecting that hereafter they would be explained to her, and she should fully understand them, and know how to make use of them. However we may neglect men's savings, because they are obscure, (Sic non vis intellige, debes negleg.)—If it be not intelligible, it is not valuable; yet we must not think so of God's sayings. That most was his first, though we know not what to make of it, may afterward become plain and easy; we should therefore lay it up for hereafter; see John 2. 22. We might find use for that, another time, which now we see not how to make useful to us. A scholar keeps those grammar-rules in memory, which at present he understands not the use of; because he is told that they will hereafter be of use. So it was with Christ; he was full of knowledge and wisdom; he understood the law and the prophets, v. 46. He increased in wisdom and stature. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this is meant of his human nature, that he so increased in stature and bulk, he grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom, and in all the endowments of a human soul. Though the Eternal Word was united to the human soul from his conception, yet the Divinity that dwelt in him, manifested itself to his humanity by degrees, ad medium recipient—In proportion to his capacity; as the faculties of his human soul grew more and more capable, the gifts it received from the divine nature were more and more communicated. And he increased in favour with God and man, that is, in all those graces that rendered him acceptable both to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an Infant, a Child, a Youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, as he grew up as an Infant, a Child, a Youth, than it did, or could, while he was an Infant and a Child. Note, Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom; and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man.

CHAP. III.

Nothing is related concerning our Lord Jesus from his twelfth year to his entrance on his thirtieth year; we often think it would have been a privilege and advantage to us, if we had journals, or at least annals, of occurrences concerning him; but we have as much as infinite Wisdom thought fit to communicate to us, and if we improve not that, neither should we improve more, if we had it. The great attention of the evangelists, was to give us an account of the gospel of Christ, and to answer all objections. And yet, as the prophecies did not consist in the enunciation of new things, but in the refutation of old objections, so we may be sure we should have many such prophecies, as the great prophecies do give us, concerning the persons, works, sufferings, and glories of Christ, and for the most part, concerning the church, in order to comfort their posterity. And this was necessary, that the church should be founded on a sure foundation, and that every objection should be answered, and every dispute be settled; and no new objections be raised, which could not be answered. The hope of salvation: now that began in the ministry and baptism of John, and therefore they hasten to give us an account of that. We could wish, perhaps, that Luke had wholly passed over what was related by Matthew and Mark, and had written only what was new, as he had done in his two first chapters. But it was the will of the Spirit, that some things should be established out of the mouth, not only of two, but of three witnesses; and we must reckon it a needless repetition, nor shall we do so, if we renew our meditations upon these things, with suitable affections. In this chapter, we have, 1. The beginning of John's baptism, and the several marks of his mission as a herald of the Man of Glory. v. 7. 8. His exhortation to the multitude; (v. 7. 9.) and the particular instructions he gave to those who desired to be told their duty, v. 10. 11. II. The notice he gave them of the approach of the Messiah, (v. 18.) and his death, and the things added, (though it happened after what follows,) the mention of his improvement, v. 19. 20. III. Christ coming to be baptized of John, and his entrance therein upon the execution of his prophetic office, v. 21. 22. IV. His exhortation and genealogy recorded up to Adam, v. 23. 38.

1. now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2. Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zecharias in the wilderness. 3. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; 4. As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; 6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. 7. Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8. Bring forth therefore, fruits worthy of repentance; and begin not to say within yourselves, We have
Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 9. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 10. And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? 11. He answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. 12. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? 13. And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. 14. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

John's baptism introducing a new dispensation, it was requisite that we should have a particular account of it. Glorious things were said of John, what a distinguished favourite of heaven he should be, and what a great blessing to this earth; (ch. 1. 15, 17.) but we lost him in the deserts, and there he remains until the day of his showing unto Israel, ch. 1. 80. And now at last that day dawns, and a welcome day it was to them that waited for it more than they that waited for the morning. Observe here,

1. The date of the beginning of John's baptism, when it was that he appeared; this is here taken notice of, which was not by the other evangelists, that the truth of the thing might be confirmed by the exact fixing of the time. And it is dated,

1. By the government of the heathen, which the Jews were under, to show that they were a conquered people, and therefore it was time for the Messiah to come to set up a spiritual kingdom, and an eternal one, upon the ruins of all the temporal dignity and dominion of David and Judah.

(1.) It is dated by the reign of the Roman emperor; it was in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar, the third of the twelve Caesars, a very bad man, given to covetousness, drunkenness, and cruelty; such a man is mentioned first, (saith Dr. Lightfoot,) as it were, to teach us what to look for from that cruel and abominable city wherein Satan reigned in all ages and succeions. The people of the Jews, after a long struggle, were of late made a province of the empire, and were under the dominion of this Tiberius; and that country once had made so great a figure, and had many nations tributaries to it, in the reigns of David and Solomon, is now itself an insconsiderable, despicable part of the Roman empire, and rather trampled upon than triumphed in.

[En quo discordia cives
Ferarum miseris,—
What dire effects from civil discord flow!

The lawyer was now departed from between Judas's feet; and as an evidence of that, their public acts are dated by the reign of the Roman emperor, and therefore now Siloh must come.

(2.) It is dated by the governments of the vice-roys that ruled in the several parts of the Holy Land under the Roman emperor, which was another badge of their servitude, for they were all foreigners, which bespeaks a sad change with that people whose governors used to be of their own nation, (Jer. 30. 21.) and it was their glory. How is the gold become dim! [1.] Pilate is here said to be the governor, president, or procurator, of Judea; this character is given of him by some other writers, that he was a wicked man, and one that made no conscience of a lie. He resigned his office, his last appointment was by Vespasian, president of Syria, and sent to Rome, to answer for his mal-administrations. [2.] The other three are called tetrarches, some think from the countries which they had the command of, each of them being over a fourth part of that which had been entirely under the government of Herod the Great. Others think that they are so called, from the post of honour they were in, in the government, they had the fourth part of the government. (h.) The order was thus: the first was the; the procurator, who governed a province the second; a king the third; and a tetrarch the fourth. So Dr. Lightfoot.

2. By the government of the Jews among themselves, to show that they were a corrupt people, and that therefore it was time that the Messiah should come, to reform them, v. 2. Annas and Caiphas were the High Priests. God had appointed that there should be but one High Priest at a time, but here were two, to serve some ill turn or other, he served one year, and the other the other year; some. One was the High Priest, and the other the Sagan, as the Jews called him, to officiate for him when he was disabled; or, as others say, one was High Priest, and represented Aaron, and that was Caiphas; Annas, the other, was Nasi, or head of the Sanhedrim, and represented Moses. But to us one is but one High Priest, one Lord of all, to whom all judgment is committed.

11. The original and tendency of John's baptism.

1. The original of it was from heaven; The word of the Lord came unto John, v. 2. He received full commission and full instructions from God to do what he did; it is the same expression that is used concerning the Old-Testament prophets; (Jer. 1. 2.) for John was a prophet, yea more than a prophet, and in him prophecy revived, which had been long suspended. We are not told how the word of the Lord came to John, whether by an angel, as to his father, or by dream, or vision, or voice, but it was to his satisfaction, and ought to be to ours. John is here called the son of Zacharias, to refer us to what the angel said to his father, when he assured him that he should have this son. The word of the Lord came to him in the wilderness; for these whom God fits he will find out, wherever they are. As the word of the Lord isInputChange in a fire, so it is not lost in a wilderness. The word of the Lord made its way to Ezekiel among the captives by the river of Chebar, and to John in the isle Patmos. John was the son of a priest, now entering upon the thirtieth year of his age; and therefore, according to the custom of the temple, he was now to be admitted into the temple service, where he should have attended as a candidate five years before; but God had called him first to his prophetic and then to his priestly office, and therefore the Holy Ghost enrols him here, since he was not enrolled in the archives of the temple; John the son of Zacharias began his ministry such a time.

2. The scope and design of it were, to bring all the people of his country off from their sins, and home to their God, v. 3. He came first into all the country about Jordan, the neighbourhood wherein he resided, that part of the country which Israel possessed under Joshua; first, as the land of promise under Joshua's conduct; there was the banner of the Gospel first displayed. John resided in the most solitary part of the country; but, when the word of the Lord came to him, he quitted his deserts, and came into the inhabited country. Those that are best pleased in their retirements, must cheerfully exchange them, when God calls them into
places of concourse. He came out of the wilderness into all the country, with some marks of distinction, preaching a new baptism; not a sect, or party, but a profession, or distinguishing badge; the sign or ceremony, such as was ordinarily used among the Jews, washing with water, by which proselytes were distinguished, or to believers, or disciples to some great master; but the meaning of it was, repentance for the remission of sins; that is, all that submitted to his baptism,

(1.) Were thereby obliged to repent of their sins, to be sorry for what they had done amiss, and to do so no more; the former they professed, and were concerned to be sincere in their professions; the latter they professed, and were convinced that which was promised. He bound them not, to such ceremonious observances as were imposed by the tradition of the elders, but to change their mind, and change their way, to cast away from them all their transgressions, and to make them new hearts, and to live new lives. The design of the gospel, which now began, was, to make men devout and pious, holy and heavenly, humble and meek, sober and chaste, just and merciful, charitable and kind, and good in every relation, who had been much otherwise; and this is to repent.

(2.) They were thereby assured of the pardon of their sins, upon their repentance. As the baptism he administered, bound them not to submit to the power of sin, so it sealed to them a gracious and pleadable discharge from the guilt of sin. Turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so instantly, shall not be your ruin; agreeing with the word of the Lord, by the Old-Testament prophets, Ezek. 18. 30.

III. The fulfilling of the scriptures in the ministry of John. The other evangelists had referred us to the same text that is here referred to, that of Esias, ch. 40. 3. It is written in the book of the words of Esias the prophet, which he heard from God, by which he spake for God, these words of which he were written for the generations to come. Among them it is found, that there should be the voice of one crying in the wilderness; and John is that voice, a clear distinct voice, a loud voice, an articulate one; he cries, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight. John’s business is to make way for the entertainment of the gospel in the hearts of the people, to bring them into such a frame and temper, that Christ might be welcome to them, and they welcome to Christ. Luke goes further on with the quotation than Matthew and Mark had done, and applies the following words likewise to John’s ministry, (v. 5, 6.) Every valley shall be filled. Dr. Hammond understands this as a prediction of the desolation coming upon the people of the Jews for their infidelity; the land should be made plain by the removals for the Romans, and should be laid waste by it, and there should then be a visible distinction made between the impenitent on the one side and the receivers of the gospel on the other side. But it seems rather to be meant of the immediate tendency of John’s ministry, and of the gospel of Christ, which that was the introduction of. 1. The humble shall by it be enriched with grace, and by it be made straight; for every valley shall be filled up; and the two confected that lift up their own top, shall have contempt put upon them; for, Every mountain and hill shall be brought low; if they repent, they are brought to the dust: if not, to the dust they shall be brought. Sinners shall be converted to God; The crooked ones shall be made straight; for though none can make that strait which God hath made crooked, (Exe. 7. 11.) yet God by his grace can make that straight which sin hath made crooked. 4. Difficulties that were hindering and discouraging in the way to heaven, shall be removed; The rough ways shall be made smooth; and they that love God’s law, shall have great peace, and nothing shall offend them. The gospel has made the way to heaven plain, and easy to be found, smooth, and easy to be walked in.

5. The great salvation shall be more fully discovered than ever, and the discovery of it shall spread further: (v. 6.) All flesh shall see the salvation of God; not the Jews only, but the Gentiles. All shall see it, they shall have it set before them, and offered to them, and some of all sorts shall see it, enjoy it, and have the benefit of it. When way is made for the gospel by the punishment of the wicked, their thoughts, and bringing of them into obedience to Christ, by the levelling of the soul, and the removing of all obstructions that stand in the way of Christ and his grace, then prepare to bid the salvation of God welcome.

IV. The general warnings and exhortations which he gave to those who submitted to his baptism, v. 7–9. In Matthew he is said to have preached these same words to many of the Pharisees and Sadducees, that came to his baptism; (Matt. 3. 7–10.) but here he is said to have spoken them to the multitude, that came forth to be baptized of him, v. 7. This was the purport of his preaching to all that came to him, and he did not alter it, in compliment to the Pharisees and Sadducees, when they came, but dealt as plainly with them, as with any other of his hearers. And as he did not flatter the great, so neither did he compliment the mean, or make his court to them, but gave the same reproofs of sin and warnings of wrath to the multitude, that he did to the Sadducees and Pharisees; for if they had not the same faults, they had others as bad. Now observe here.

1. That the guilty, corrupt race of mankind is become a generation of vipers, only poisoned, but poisonous; hateful to God, hating one another. This magnifies the patience of God, in continuing the race of mankind upon the earth, and not destroying that nest of vipers. He did it once by water, and will again by fire.

2. This generation of vipers is fairly warned to fire from the wrath to come, which is certainly before them if they continue such; and their being a generation of vipers, and the Pharisees and Sadducees being neither reproach nor loss to God, to cut them off. We are not only warned of this wrath, but are put into a way to escape it, if we look about us in time.

3. There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance. They that submitted to the baptism of repentance, thereby evidenced that they were warned to flee from the wrath to come, and took the warning; and we by our baptism profess to have fleed out of Sodom, for fear of what is coming upon it.

4. Those that profess repentance, are highly censured to live like penitents; (v. 8.) ‘Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; else, notwithstanding your professions of repentance, you cannot escape the wrath to come.’ By the fruits of repentance it will be known whether it be sincere or no. By the change of our mind, our way must be evidenced the change of our mind.

5. If we be not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church will stand us in no stead at all; Begin now to frame excurses from this great duty of repentance, by saying within ourselves, We have Abraham as our father. What will the children of Abraham do, if we be not godly, to be within the pale of the church, if we be not brought into the bond of the covenant?

6. We have therefore no reason to depend upon our external privileges and professions of religion.
because God has no need of us or of our services, but can effectually secure his own honour and interest without us. If we were cut off and ruined, he could raise up to himself a church out of the most unlikely; children to Abraham even out of stones.

7. The greater professions we make of repentance, the greater resistances and encouragements are given us to repentance, the nearer and the sorer will our destruction be, if we do not bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Now that the gospel begins to be preached, now that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, now that the axe is laid to the root of the tree, threatenings to the wicked and impenitent are now more terrible than before, as encouragements to repentance are now more considerable. "Now that you are upon your behaviour, look to yourselves."

8. Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length, it is the fittest place for them; Every tree that doth not bring forth fruit, good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire. If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.

V. The particular instructions he gave to several sorts of persons, that inquired of him concerning their duty; the people, the publicans, and the soldiers.

Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but we do not find them asking, What shall we do? For they thought that they knew what they had to do as well as he could tell them; or were determined to do what they pleased, whatever he told them. But the people, the publicans, and the soldiers, who knew that they had done wrong, and that they ought to do better, and were conscious to themselves of great ignorance and unacquaintedness with the divine law were particularly inquisitive; What shall we do? Note, 1. Those that are baptized, must be taught, and those that have baptized them, are concerned, as they have opportunity, to teach them, Matth. 28. 19, 20. 2. Those that profess and promise repentance in general, must evidence it by particular instances of reformation, according as their place and condition are. 3. They that would do their duty, must desire to know their duty, and inquire concerning it. The first good word Paul said, when he was converted, was, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? These here inquire not, What shall this man do; but, What shall we do? What fruits meet for repentance shall we bring forth? Now John gives answer to each, according to the case and place.

(1.) He tells the people their duty, and that is, to be charitable; (v. 11.) He that has two coats, and, consequently, one to spare, let him give, or lend at least, to him that has none, to keep him warm. Perhaps he saw among his hearers some that were overloaded with clothes, while others were ready to perish in rags, and he puts those who had superfluities, upon contributing to the relief of those that had no superfluities. The poor required no more clothes for comfort, and no more food, than they could use; and the design of it, is, to engage us to do all the good we can. Food and raiment are the two supports of life; he that hath meat to spare, let him give to him that is destitute of daily food, as well as he that has clothes to spare: what we have, we are but stewards of, and must use it accordingly, as our Master directs.

(2.) He tells the publicans their duty, the collection of the emperor's revenue; (v. 13.) Exact no more than that which is appointed you. They must do justice between the government and the merchant, and not oppress the people in levying the taxes, nor any way make them heavier or more burdensome than the law had made them. They must not think that because it was their office to take care that the people did not defraud the prince, they might therefore, by the power they had, bear hard upon the people; as those that have ever so little a branch of power, are apt to abuse it; "No, keep to your book of rates, and reckon it enough that you collect for Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and do not enrich yourselves by taking more."

The public revenues must be applied to the public service, and to gratify the avarice of private persons. Observe, He does not direct the publicans to quit their places, and to go no more to the receipt of custom; the employment is in itself lawful and necessary, but let them be just and honest in it.

(3.) He tells the soldiers their duty, v. 14. Some think that these soldiers were of the Jewish nation and religion; others think that they were Romans; for it was not likely either that the Jews would serve the Romans, or that the Romans would trust the Jews, in their garrisons in their own nation; and then it is an early instance of Gentiles embracing the gospel, and submitting to it. Military men seldom seem inclined to religion; yet these submitted even to the Baptist's strict profession, and desired to receive the word of command from him: What must we do? Those who more than other men have their lives in their hands, and are in deaths often, are concerned to enquire what they shall do, that they may be found in peace. In answer to this enquiry, John does not bid them lay down their arms, and desert the service; but cautions them against the sins that soldiers were commonly guilty of; for this is fruit meet for repentance. What must we do? [1.] They must not be injurious to the people among whom they were quartered, and over whom indeed they were set; "Do violence to no man. Your business is to keep the peace, and prevent men's doing violence to one another; but do not you do violence to any; shake no man;" (so the word signifies;) "do not put people into fear, for the sword of war as well as that of justice, is to be a terror only to evil doers, and to do well. Be not rude in your quarters; force not money from people by frightening them. Shed not the blood of war in peace; offer no iniquity either to man or woman, nor have any hand in the barbarous devastations that armies sometimes make." Nor must they accuse any falsely to the government, thereby to make themselves formidable, and get bribes. [2.] They must not be injurious to the people among whom they were quartered; for some think that caution, not to accuse falsely, has special reference to them; "Be not forward to complain one of another to your superior officers, that you may be re- 

15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not; 16. John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of
whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. 17. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. 18. And many other things, in his exhortation, preached he unto the people. 19. But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, 20. Added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

We are now drawing near to the appearance of our Lord Jesus publicly: the Sun will not be long after the morning-star. We are here told,

1. How the people took occasion, from the ministry and baptism of John, to think of the Messiah, and to think of him as at the door, as now come. Thus the way of the Lord was prepared, and people were prepared to bid Christ welcome; for when men’s expectations are raised, that which they are in expectation of, becomes doubly acceptable. Now when they observed what an excellent doctrine John Baptist preached, what a divine power went along with it, and what a tendency it had to reform the world.

1. They began presently to consider that now was the time for the Messiah to appear; the sceptre was departed from Judah, for they had no king but Caesar; and, the lawyer too was gone from between his feet, for Herod had lately slain the Sanhedrin; Daniel’s seventy weeks were now expiring; and therefore it was but three or four years after this, that they looked that the kingdom of heaven should appear immediately, Luke 19. 11. Never did the corrupt state of the Jews more need a reformation, nor their distressed state more need a deliverance than now.

2. Their next thought was, “Is not this he that should come?” All thinking men mused, or reasoned, in their hearts, concerning John whether he were the Christ or no. He had indeed nothing of the external pomp and grandeur in which they generally expected the Messiah to appear; but his life was holy and strict, his preaching powerful and with authority, and therefore why may we not think him to be the Messiah, and that he will shortly throw off this disguise, and appear in more glory? Note, That which puts people upon considering, reasoning with themselves, prepares the way for Christ.

II. How John disowned all pretensions to the honour of being himself the Messiah, but confirmed them in their expectations of him that really was the Messiah, vs. 16, 17. John’s office, as a crier or herald, was, to give notice that the kingdom of God and the King of that kingdom were at hand; and therefore, when he had told all manner of people severally what they must do, (“You must do this, and you must do that,”) he tells them one thing more, which they must all do—they must expect the Messiah now shortly to appear. And this serves as an answer to their misgivings and doubts concerning himself. Though he knew not their thoughts, yet, in declaring this, he answered them.

1. He declares that the utmost he could do, was, to baptize them with water; he had no access to the Spirit, nor could command it; he was impressed upon him he could not command it, to be removed, and confirm them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, or confer remission on them.

2. He consigns them, and turns them over, as it were, to Jesus Christ, for whom he was sent to fire-there the way, and to whom he was ready to transfer all the interest he had in the afflictions, the people, and would have them no longer to doubt whether John was the Messiah or no, but to look to him that was really so, the Messiah.

(1.) John owns the Messiah to have a greater excellence than he had, and that he was in all things preferable to him; he is one the latches of whose he does not think himself worthy to unloose; he does not think himself worthy to be the meanest of his servants, to help him on and off with his shoes. John was a prophet, yea, more than a prophet, more than any of the Old-Testament prophets, but Christ was a prophet more than John, for it was both by the spirit of Christ, and of the grace of Christ, that all the prophets prophesied, and John among the rest, 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. This was a great truth which John came to preach; but the manner of his expressing it bespeaks his humility, and in it he not only does justice to the Lord Jesus, but does him honour too;

“He is one whom I am not worthy to approach, or draw nigh to, no, not as a servant.” Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves.

(2.) He owns him to have a greater energy than he had; “He is mightier than I, and does that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful, and for the terror of hypocrites and dissimlers.” They thought that a wonderful power went along with John; but they thought that was the power with the power which Jesus would come clothed with. [1.] John can do no more than baptize with water, in token of this, that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will, baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire purges out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal, that he may cast it into a new mould. [2.] John can only preach a distinguishing doctrine, and by word and sign separate between the precious and the vile; but Christ hath his fan in his hand, with which he can, and will, perfectly part between the wheat and the chaff; he will thoroughly purge his floor, it is his own, and therefore he will purge it, and will cast out of his church the unbelieving unbelievers, and confine in it all that are found to be truly his people.

[3.] John can only speak comfort to those that receive the gospel, and, like other prophets, say to the righteous that it shall be well with them; but Jesus Christ will give them comfort. John can only promise them that they shall be safe; but Christ will make them so, he will gather the wheat into his garner; good, serious, solid people he will gather now into his church on earth, which shall be made up of such, and he will shortly gather them into his church in heaven, where they shall be for ever sheltered.

[4.] John can only threaten hypocrites, and tell the barren trees that they shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire; but Christ can execute that threatening; those that are as chaff, light, and vain, and worthless, he will burn with fire unquenchable. John refers our way of life to Moses, but Christ brings the burnt offering, that is purged, ye shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, for the day comes, that shall burn as an oven.

The evangelist concludes his account of John’s preaching, with an et cetera; (v. 18.) Many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people, which are not recorded. First, John was an affectionate preacher; he was affected with the things which happened, because he perceived things home upon his heart, followed his doctrine close, as one in earnest. Secondly, He was a practical preacher; much of his preaching was exhortation, quickening them to their duty, directing them in it, and not amusing them with matters of nice speculation. Thirdly, He was
a popular preacher; though he had written and published works, as well as many sermons, in which he recommended himself to the people, and, as he supposed, to the country, as a man of integrity and qualification for public office. He was an eloquent and persuasive preacher, so that the people were very much influenced by his arguments and reasoning. His sermons were well received, and he was much esteemed for his abilities and eloquence. He was especially praised for his knowledge of the Scriptures and his ability to explain and apply them to the practical duties of life. He was also a man of great personal appearance and presence, and his sermons were so well delivered that they were highly appreciated by his audience. He was a man of great charity and compassion, and he spent much of his time in visiting the sick and needy. He was a man of great sincerity and honesty, and he was always ready to serve his country and his fellow men. He was a man of great learning and knowledge, and he was always ready to answer the questions of his congregation.

111. How full a stop was put to John's preaching; when he was in the midst of his usefulness, going on thus successfully, he was imprisoned by the magistrate of Herod; (v. 19, 20.) Herod the tetrarch was persuaded by his brother Philip's wife, but for the many other evils which Herod had done, (for those that are wicked in one instance, are commonly so in many others,) he could not bear it, but contrived an antipathy to him for his plain dealing, and added this wickedness to all the rest, which was indeed above all, that he shut up John in prison, putting him in a dungeon under a guard. Because he could not bear his righteous judgments, others should be deprived of the benefit of his instructions and counsels. Some little good he might do to those who had access to him, when he was in prison; but nothing to what he might have done, if he had had liberty to go about all the country, as he had done. We cannot think of Herod's doing this, without the greatest compassion and lamentation; nor of God's permitting it, without admiring the depth of the divine counsels, which we cannot account for; must he be silenced, who is the voice of one crying in the wilderness? Must such a preacher be shut up in prison, who ought to have been set up in the courts of the temple? But thus the faith of his disciples must be tried; thus the unbelief of those who rejected him must be punished; thus he must be Christ's forerunner in suffering as well as preaching; and thus, having been for about a year and a half, people for Christ, he must now give way to him, and, the Son being risen, the morning-star must of course disappear.

21. Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heavens were opened. 22. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. 23. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Hel, 21. Which was the son of Malathias, which was the son of Levi, which was the son of Melch, which was the son of Jann, which was the son of Joseph. 25. Which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Amos, which was the son of Naum, which was the son of Esi, which was the son of Nagge, 26. Which was the son of Maath, which was the son of Mattathias, which was the son of Seme, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Judah. 27. Which was the son of Joanna, which was the son of Rhesa, which was the son of Zorobabel, which was the son of Salathiel, which was the son of Neri. 28. Which was the son of Melchis, which was the son of Addi, which was the son of Cosam, which was the son of Ednom, which was the son of Er, 29. Which was the son of Jose, which was the son of Elezer, which was the son of Jorim, which was the son of Matthai, which was the son of Levi. 30. Which was the son of Simon, which was the son of Juda, which was the son of Joseph, which was the son of Juan, which was the son of Eliakim. 31. Which was the son of Melea, which was the son of Menah, which was the son of Mattathia, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David. 32. Which was the son of Jesse, which was the son of Ordo, which was the son of Boaz, which was the son of Salmon, which was the son of Naasson. 33. Which was the son of Aminadab, which was the son of Arom, which was the son of Esrom, which was the son of Phares, which was the son of Juda. 34. Which was the son of Jacob, which was the son of Isaac, which was the son of Abraham, which was the son of Thara, which was the son of Nahor. 35. Which was the son of Saruch, which was the son of Ragau, which was the son of Phalec, which was the son of Heber, which was the son of Sala. 36. Which was the son of Cainan, which was the son of Arphaxad, which was the son of Sem, which was the son of Noe, which was the son of Lamech. 37. Which was the son of Methusala, which was the son of Enoch, which was the son of Jared, which was the son of Malelel, which was the son of Cainan. 38. Which was the son of Eno, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.

The evangelist mentioned John's imprisonment before Christ's baptism, though it was near a year after it, because he would finish the story of John's ministry, and then introduce that of Christ. Now here we have,

1. A short account of Christ's baptism, which had been more fully related by St. Matthew. Jesus came, to be baptized of John, and he was so, v. 21, 22.

2. It is here said, that when all the people were baptized, then Jesus was baptized; all that were present. Christ would be baptized last, among the common people, and in the rear of them; thus he humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, as one of the least, nay, as less than the least. He saw what multitudes were hereby prepared to receive him, and then he appeared.

2. Notice is here taken of Christ's praying when
he was baptized, which was not in Matthew; being baptized, and praying. He did not confess sin, as others did, for he had none to confess; but he confessed, as others did for him, that he would thus keep up communion with his Father. Note. The inward and spiritual grace which sacraments are the outward and visible signs of, must be fetched in by prayer; and therefore prayer must always accompany them. We have reason to think that Christ now prayed for this manifestation of God's favour to him, which immediately followed; he prayed for the discovery of his Father to him, and the descent of the Spirit. What was promised to Christ he must obtain by prayer; Ask of me and I will give thee. Thus he would put an honour upon prayer, would tie us to it, and encourage us in it.

3. When he prayed, the heaven was opened. He that by his power parted the waters, to make a way through them to Canaan, now by his power parted the air, another fluid element, to open a corresponding correspondence with the heavenly Canaan. Thus was there opened to Christ, and by him to us, a new and living way into the holiest: sin had shut up heaven, but Christ's prayer opened it again. Prayer is an ordinance that opens heaven; Knock and it shall be opened unto you.

4. The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove upon him; our Lord Jesus was now to receive another measure of the Spirit than before, to qualify him for his prophetic office, Isa. 61. 1. When he begins to preach, the Spirit of the Lord is upon him. Now this is here expressed by a sensible evidence for his encouragement in his work, and for the satisfaction of John the Baptist; for he was told before, that by this sign it should be notified to him, which was the Christ. Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, that he might be revealed to be a personal Substance, and not merely an Operation of the Godhead; and thus (saith he) was made a full, clear, and sensible demonstration of the Trinity, at the beginning of the gospel; and very fitly is this done at Christ's baptism, who was to make the ordinance of baptism a badge of the profession of that faith, in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There came a voice from heaven, from God the Father, from the excellent glory; (so it is expressed, 2 Pet. 1. 17.) Thou art my beloved Son, Here, and in Mark, it is expressed as spoken to Christ; in Matthew, as spoken of him; This is my beloved Son; it comes all to one, it was intended to be a notification to John, and as such was properly expressed by, This is my beloved Son; and likewise an answer to his prayer, and so it is most fittingly expressed by, Thou art. It was foretold concerning the Messiah, I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son, 2 Sam. 7. 14. I will make him my first-born, Ps. 89. 27. It was also foretold that he should be God's Elect in whom his soul delighted; (Isa. 42. 1.) and, accordingly, it is here declared, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This was the celebration of the Incarnate, the foreordained, which had been more briefly related by St. Matthew. Here is, 1. His age; He now began to be about thirty years of age. So old Joseph was, when he stood before Pharaoh, (Gen. 41. 46.) David, when he began to reign; (2 Sam. 5. 4.) and at this age the priests were to enter upon the full execution of their office, Numb. 4. 3. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that it is plain, by the manner of expression used, that he was a twenty-nine years old complete, and entering upon his thirtieth year, in the month Tisri; that, after this, he lived three years and a half, and died when he was thirty-two years old and a half. Three years and a half, the time of Christ's ministry, is a period of time very remarkable in scripture; three years and six months the heavens were shut up in Elijah's time, Luke 4. 25. Jam. 5. 17. This was the half week in which the Messiah was to confirm the covenant, 1. Thess. 2. 15. This period is expressed in the prophetic writings by three years, and a half year, (Dan. 12. 4.) by a period of time, and by a half year. It is in the time fixed for the witnesses' prophesying in sackcloth, in conformity to Christ's preaching in his humiliation just so long.

His pedigree, v. 23, &c. Matthew had given us somewhat of this, (he goes no higher than Abraham,) but Luke brings it as high as Adam. Matthew designed to show that Christ was the Son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, and that he was Heir to the throne of David; and therefore he begins with Abraham, and brings the genealogy down to Jacob, who was the father of Joseph, an heir-male of the house of David; but Luke, desiring to show that Christ was the Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head, traces his pedigree upward as high as Adam, and begins it with Eli, or Helio, who was the father, not of Joseph, but of the Virgin Mary. And some suggest, that the supply which our translators all along insert here, is not right, and that it should not be read which, that is, which Joseph was the son of Luke, 3. and not of his father, but of his father, of Joseph, the elder of Ebed, of Mattheat, &c. and he, that is, Jesus, was the son of Seth, of Adam, of God, v. 38. The difference between the two evangelists in the genealogy of Christ, has been a stumbling-block to infidels that cavil at the word; but such a one as has been removed by the labours of learned men, both in the early ages of the Church, and in latter times, to which we refer ourselves. Matthew draws the pedigree from the natural line of kings, in Jecasias, the legal right was transferred to Salathiel, who was of the house of Nathan, another son of David, which line Luke more pursues, and so leaves out all the kings of Judah. It is well for us, that our salvation doth not depend upon our being able to solve all these difficulties, nor is the divine authority of the gospels at all weakened by them; for the evangelists are not supposed to write genealogies, either of their own knowledge, or by divine inspiration, but to have copied them out of the authentic records of the genealogies among the Jews, the heralds' books, which therefore they were obliged to follow; and in them they found the pedigree of Jacob, the father of Joseph, to be as it is set down in Matthew; and the pedigree of Helio, the father of Mary, to be as it is set down here; and this is the meaning of euangelista, (v. 23.) not, as it was supposed, referring only to Joseph, but ali sanctim in est leges—as it is entered into the books, as we find it upon record; by which it appeared, that Jesus was both by father and mother's side the Son of David; witness this extract out of their own records, which any one might at that time have liberty to compare with the original, and further the evangelists needed not to pay any regard to it, that they had not gained their point. Its not being contradicted at that time, is satisfaction enough to us now, that it is a true copy, as it is further worthy of our observing, that, when those records of the Jewish genealogies had continued thirty or forty years after these extracts out of them, long enough to justify the evangelists therein, they were all lost and destroyed by the Jewish state and nation; for now there was no more occasion for them.

One difficulty occurs between Abraham and Noah, which gives us some perplexity, v. 35, 36. Sala is said to be the son of Caiman, and he the son of Arphaxad, whereas Sala was the son of Arphaxad, (Gen. 10. 24.—11. 12.) and there is no such man as Caiman found there. But as to that, it is sufficient
to say that the Seventy interpreters, who, before our Saviour's time, translated the Old Testament into Greek, for reasons best known to themselves inserted that Cainam; and St. Luke, writing among the Hellenist Jews, was obliged to make use of that translation, and therefore to take it as he found it. The genealogy concludes with this, who was the son of Adam, the son of God. (1.) Some refer it to Adam; he was in a peculiar manner, the son of God, being, more immediately than any of his offspring, the offspring of God by creation. (2.) Others refer it to Christ, and so make the last words of this genealogy to speak his divine and human nature. He was both the Son of Adam and the Son of God, that he might be a proper Mediator between God and the sons of Adam, and might bring the sons of Adam to be, through him, the sons of God.

CHAP. IV.

We left Christ newly baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him. Now, in this chapter, we have, 1. A further preparation of him for his public ministry, by his being tempted in the wilderness, of which we had the same account before in Matthew as we have here. II. His entrance upon his public work, in Galilee, (v. 14, 15.) particularly. 1. At Nazareth, the city where he had been bred up, (v. 16, 30.) which we had no account of before in Matthew. 2. At Capharnaum, where, having preached to admiration, (v. 31, 32.) he cast the devil out of a man that was possessed, (v. 33, 34.) cured Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, (v. 38, 39.) and many others that were sick and possessed; (v. 40, 41.) and then went, and did the same in other cities of Galilee, v. 42. 44.

1. AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. 2. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 3. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5. And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine. 8. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9. And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10. For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee; 11. And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12. And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

13. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.

The last words of the foregoing chapter, that Jesus was the Son of Adam, bespeak him to be the Seed of the woman; being so, we have him here, according to the promise, breaking the serpent's head, baffling and foiling the devil in all his temptations, who, by one temptation had baffled and foiled our first parents. Thus, in the beginning of the war, he made renewal on the conqueror, and conquered the conqueror.

In this story of Christ's temptation, observe,

I. How he was prepared and fitted for it. He that designed him the trial, furnished him accordingly; for though we know not what exercises may be before us, nor what encounters we may be reserved for, Christ did, and was provided accordingly; and God doth for us, and we hope will provide accordingly.

1. He was full of the Holy Ghost, who had descended on him like a dove; he had now greater measures of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Holy Ghost than ever before. Note, Those are well armed against the strongest temptations, that are full of the Holy Ghost.

2. He was newly returned from Jordan, where he was baptized, and owned by a voice from heaven to be the beloved Son of God; and thus he was prepared for the trials of a public ministry. Note, When we have had the most comfortable commencements with God, and the clearest discoveries of his favour to us, we may expect that Satan will set upon us, (the richest ship is the pirate's prize,) and that God will suffer him to do so, that the power of his grace may be manifested and magnified.

3. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, by the good Spirit, who led him as a Champion into the field, to fight the enemy that he was sure to conquer. His being led into the wilderness, (1.) Gave him an advantage to the tempter; for there he had him alone, no friend with him, by whose prayers and advice he might be assisted in the hour of temptation. Woe to him that is alone! He might give Satan advantage, who knew his own strength; we may not, who know our own weakness. (2.) He gained some advantage to himself, during his forty days fasting in the wilderness; we may suppose that he was wholly taken up with personal meditation, and in consideration of his own undertaking, and the work he had before him, that he spent all his time in immediate, intimate converse with his Father, as Moses in the mount, without any diversion, distraction, or interruption. Of all the days of Christ's life in the flesh, these seem to come nearest to the angelic perfection and the heavenly life, and this prepared him for Satan's assaults, and hereby he was fortified against them.

4. He continued fasting; (v. 2.) In those days he did eat nothing. This fast was altogether miraculous, like those of Moses and Elijah, and shows him to be, like them, a Prophet sent of God. It is probable that it was in the wilderness of Horeb, the same wilderness in which Moses and Elijah fasted. As by retiring into the wilderness he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the world, so by his fasting he showed himself perfectly indifferent to the flesh; and Satan cannot easily take hold of those who are thus loosen'd from, and dead to, the world and the flesh. The more we keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, the less advantage Satan has against us.

II. How he was assaulted by one temptation after another, and how he defeated the design of the tempter in every assault, and became more than a conqueror. During the forty days, he was tempted of the devil; (v. 2.) not by any inward suggestions, for the prince of this world had nothing in Christ,
by which to inject any such, but by outward solicitation, perhaps, in the likeness of a serpent, as he tempted our first parents. But at the end of the forty days he came nearer him, and did as it were close with him, when he perceived that he was an hungered, v. 2. Probably, our Lord Jesus then began to look about among the trees, to see if he could find any thing there that was eatable, whereas the devil took occasion to make the following proposal to him.

1. He tempted him to distrust his Father's care of him, and to set up for himself, and shift for provision for himself in such a way as his Father had not appointed for him; (v. 3.) "If thou be the Son of God, as the voice from heaven declared, command this stone to be made bread. (1.) "I counsel thee to do it; for God, if he be thy Father, has forgotten thee, and it will be long ere he sends either ravens or angels to feed thee." If we begin to think of being our own carvers, and of living by our own forecast, without depending upon Divine Providence, of getting wealth by our might and the power of our hands, we must look upon it as a temptation and reject it accordingly; it is Satan's counsel to think of the independent power of God. (2.) "I challenge thee to do it, if thou canst; if thou dost not, I will say thou art not the Son of God; for John Baptist said lately, God is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, which is the greater; thou therefore hast not the power of the Son of God, if thou dost not of stones make bread for thyself, when thou needest it, which is the lesser. Thus the God himself tempted in the wilderness; Can he furnish a table? Can he give bread? Ps. 78. 19, 20.

Now, [1.] Christ yielded not to the temptation: he would not turn that stone into bread, or, no, though he was hungry; First, Because he would not do what Satan bid him do, for that would have looked as if there had been indeed a compact between him and the power of the devil. Note, We must not do anything that looks like giving place to the devil. Miracles were wrought for the confirming of faith, and the devil had no faith to be confirmed, and therefore he would not do it for him. He did his signs in the presence of his disciples, (John 20. 30.) and particularly the beginning of his miracles, turning water into wine, which he did, that his disciples might believe on him; (John 2. 11.) but here in the wilderness, where he did not his miracles. Secondly, he wrought miracles for the ratification of his doctrine, and therefore till he began to preach he would not begin to work miracles. Thirdly, He would not work miracles for himself and his own supply, lest he should seem impatient of hunger, whereas he came not to please himself, but to suffer grief, and that grief among others; and because he would show that he pleased not himself; he would rather do nothing of himself, than strive at the convenience of his friends, than stones into bread, for his own necessary supply. Fourthly, He would reserve the proof of his being the Son of God for hereafter, and would rather be upbraid by Satan with being weak, and not able to do it, than be persuaded by Satan to do that which it was not fit for him to do; thus he was upbraid by his enemies as if he were not of himself, and come down from the cross, when he could have had as much, but not, because it was not fit that he should. Fifthly, He would not do any thing that looked like distrust of his Father, or acting separately from him, or any thing disagreeable to his present state. Being in all things made like unto his brethren, he would, like the other children of God, live in a dependence upon the Divine Providence and promise, and trust him either to send him a supply into the wilderness, or to lead him to a city of habitation where there was a supply, as he used to do, (P. 107. 5—7.) and in the mean time would suffer him, though he was hungry, as he had done, these forty days past.

2. He returned a scripture-answer to it; (v. 4.) It is written. This is the first word recorded as spoken by Christ after his instalment in his prophetic office; and it is a quotation out of the Old Testament, to show that he could maintain the authority of the scripture as uncontrollable, even by Satan himself. And though he had the Spirit without measure, and had a doctrine of his own to preach, and a religion to found, yet it agreed with Moses and the prophets, whose writings he therefore lays down as a rule to himself, and recommends to us as a reply to Satan and his temptations. The word of God is our sword, and that word is our shield; we should therefore be mighty in the scriptures, and go in that might, go forth, and go on, in our spiritual warfare, know what is written, for it is for our learning, for our use. The text of scripture he made use of, is quoted from Deut. 8. 3. "Man shall not live by bread alone." I need not turn the stone into bread, for God can send manna for my nourishment, and food for Israel, and fish from the sea; and flesh of the God, but whatever God will appoint that he shall live by." How had Christ lived, lived comfortably, these last forty days? Not by bread, but by the word of God, by meditation upon that word, and communion with it, and with God in and by it: and in like manner he could live yet, though now he began to be an hungered. God has many ways of providing for his people, and will never suffer them to want, and therefore he is not at any time to be distrusted, but at all times to be depended upon, in the way of duty. If meat be wanting, God can take away the appetite, or give such degrees of patience as will enable a man even to laugh at destruction and famine, (Job 5. 22.) or make juice and water more nourishing than all the portion of the king's meat, (Dan. 1. 12, 13.) and enable his people to rejoice in the Lord, when the fig-tree doth not blossom, Hab. 1. 12, 13. She was an active believer, who said that she had made many a meal's meat of the promises when she wanted bread.

1. He tempted him to accept from him the kingdom, which, as the Son of God, he expected to receive from his Father, and to do him homage for, v. 5—8. This evangelist put this temptation second, which John had placed first. Satan seems, was really the last; but Luke was full of it, as the blackest and most violent, and therefore hastened to it. In the devil's tempting of our first parents, he represented to them the forbidden fruit, first as good for food, and then as pleasant to the eyes; and they were overpowered by both these charms. Satan here first tempted Christ to turn the stones into bread, which would be good for food, and then afterwards, that he would accept of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, which was pleasant to the eyes; but in both these, he overpowered Satan, and perhaps, with an eye to that, Luke changes the order. Now observe,

(1.) How Satan managed this temptation, to prevail with Christ to become a Tributary to him, and to receive his kingdom by delegation from him. [1.] He represented to him a prospect of all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, an airy representation of them, such as he thought most likely to strike the fancy, and seem a real prospect; to succeed the better, he took him up for this purpose into a high mountain; and because we next after the temptation find Christ on the other side Jordan, some think it probable that it was to the top of Pisgah that the devil took him, whence Moses had a sight of Canaan; that it was but a phantasm that the devil held presented our Saviour with, as the prince
of the power of the air, is confirmed by that circumstance which Luke here takes notice of, that it was done in a moment of time; whereas, if a man take a prospect of but one country, he must do it successively, must turn himself round, and take a view first of one part and then of another. Thus the devil thought to impose upon our Saviour with a fallacy, a deceitful virus; and by making him believe that he could show him all the kingdoms of the world, would draw him into an opinion that he could give him all the kingdoms of the world. 2. He boldly alleged, that these kingdoms were all delivered to him, that he had power to dispose of them, and all their glory, and to give it to whomsoever he would, v. 6. Some think that herein he pretended to be an angel of light, and that, as one of the angels that was set over the kingdoms, he had cut-bought, or out-fought, all the rest, and that was insinuated with the disposal of them all. A bold undertaking. God's name, would give them him, knowing they were designed for him; but clogged with this condition, that he should fall down and worship him; which a good angel would have been so far from demanding, that he would not have admitted it, no, not upon showing much greater things than these, as appears, Rev. 14. 10.—22. But I rather take it, that he claimed this power as Satan, and as delivered to him, that he might deliver them to that man that he would. He pretended to be of these kingdoms, who gave their power and honour to the devil, Eph. 2. 2. Hence he is called the god of this world, and the prince of this world. It was promised to the Son of God, that he should have the heathen for his inheritance, Ps. 2. 8. "Why," saith the devil, "the heathen are mine, are my subjects and vassals; but, however, they shall be thine, I will give them thee, upon condition that thou wor- ship me for them, and say that the glory of them which I have given thee, as others have done before thee, (Hos. 2. 12.) and consent to have and hold them by, from, and under, me." [3.] He demanded of him homage and adoration; if thou wilt worship me, all shall be thine, v. 7. First, He would have him worship him himself. Perhaps he does not mean so as never to worship God, but let him worship him in conjunction with God; for the Son of God, though God but once come in a partner, he shall soon be sole proprietor. Secondly, He would indent with him, that, when, according to the promise made to him, he had got possession of the kingdoms of this world, he should make no alteration of religions in them, but permit and suffer the nations, as they had done hitherto, to sacrifice to devils, (1 Cor. 10. 20.) that he should still keep up demon-worship in the world, and then let him take all the power and glory of the kingdoms, if he please. Let who will take the wealth and grandeur of this earth, Satan has all he would have, if he can but have men's hearts, and affections, and adora- tions, can but work in the children of disobedience; for then he effectually devours them. (2.) How our Lord Jesus triumphed over this temptation. He gave it a peremptory repulse, rejected it with abhorrence; (v. 8.) "Get thee behind me, Satan." I cannot hear the mention of it. What! worship the enemy of God, whom I came to serve, and of man, whom I came to save? No, I will never do it." Such a temptation as this, was not to be reasoned with, but immediately refused; it was pre- sently knocked on the head with one word, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and not only so, but him only, him, and no other. And therefore Christ will not worship Satan, nor, when he has the kingdom, will he deliver it to him, by his Father, as he expects shortly to have, will suffer any remains of the worship of the devil to continue in them. No, it shall be perfectly rooted out and abolished, wherever his gospel comes. He will make no composition with him. Polytheism and idolatry must go down, as Christ's kingdom gets up. Men must be turned from the power of Satan unto God, from the worship of devils to the worship of the only living and true God; this is the great divine law that Christ will re-establish among men, and by his holy religion reduce men to the obedience of, That God only is to be served and worshipped; and therefore whoever sets up any creature as the object of his worship, the true religion, the Son of God, or the Virgin Mary herself, they directly thwart Christ's design, and relapse into heathenism. 3. He tempted him to be his own Murderer, in a presumptuous confidence of his Father's protection, as such he had no warrant for. Observe, (1.) What he designed in this temptation; If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, v. 9. [1.] He would have him seek for a new proof of his being the Son of God, as if that which his Father had given him by the voice from heaven, and the descent of the Spirit upon him, were not sufficient, which would have been a dishonour to God, as if he had not chosen the most proper way of giving him the assurance of it; and it would have argued a distrust of the Spirit's dwelling in him, which was the great and most con- vincing proof to himself of his being the Son of God, Heb. 1. 8. 9. [2.] He would have him seek a new proof of his being the Son of God, by performing this to the world. The devil, in effect, suggests, that it was in an obscure corner that he was attested to be the Son of God, among a company of ordinary people who attended John's baptism, that his honours were proclaimed; but if he would now declare from the pinnacle of the temple, among all the great people who attend the temple-service, that he was the Son of God, and then, for proof of it, throw himself down from hence, which he could do, having been made a Messenger sent from heaven. Thus Satan would have him seek honours of his devising, (in contempt of those which God had put on him,) and manifest himself in the temple at Jerusalem; whereas as God designed he should be more manifest among John's penitents, to whom his doctrine would be more welcome than to the priests. [3.] It is probable, that he had some hopes, that, though he could not throw him down to death, he could throw him down, the fall might be his death, and then he should have got him finely out of the way. (2.) How he hacked and enforced this temptation. He suggested, It is written, v. 10. Christ had quoted scripture against him; and he thought he would be quits with him, and would show that he could quote scripture, as well as he. It has been usual with heretics and seducers, to pervert scripture, and thus the sacred writings into the service of the worst of wickedness. He shall give his angels charge over thee, if thou be his Son, and in their hands they shall bear thee up. And now that he was upon the pinnacle of the temple, he might especially expect this mi- nistration of angels; for if he were the Son of God, the temple was the proper place for him to be in, (ch. 2. 46.) and if any place under the sun had a guard of angels constantly, it must needs be that, Ps. 68. 17. It is true, God has promised the protec- tion of angels, to encourage us to trust him, not to tempt him; as far as the promise of God's presence with us, so far the promise of the angels' ministration goes, but no further; "They shall keep thee when thou goest on the ground, where thy way lies, but not if thou wilt presume to fly in the air." (3.) How he was baffled and defeated in the temptation; v. 12. Christ quoted Deut. 6. 16. where it is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, desiring a sign for the proof of divine revelation, when he has already given that which is sufficient; for so Israel did, when they tempted God in the wil-
derness, saying, He gave us water out of the rock; but can he give flesh also? This Christ would be guilty of, if he should say, "He did indeed prove me to be the Son of God, by sending the Spirit upon me, which is the greater; but he can also give his angels a charge concerning me, which is the lesser."

III. What was the result and issue of this combat, v. 13. Our victorious Redeemer kept his ground, and came off a conqueror, not for himself only, but for us also.

1. The devil emptied his quiver; He ended all the temptation. Christ gave him opportunity to say and do all he could against him; he let him try all his force, and yet defeated him. Did Christ suffer, being tempted, till all the temptation was ended? And must not we expect also to pass all our trials, to go through the hour of temptation assigned us? 2. He then quitted the field; he departed from him; he saw it was to no purpose to attack him; he had nothing in him for his fiery darts to fasten upon; he had no blind side, no weak or unguarded part in his wall, and therefore Satan gave up the cause. Note, If we resist the devil, he will flee from us.

3. Yet he continued his malice against him, and departed with a resolution to attack him again; he departed but for a season, yet for a season, till a season, or till the season when he was again to be let loose upon him, not as a tempter, to draw him to sin, and so to strike at his head, which was what he now aimed at, and was wholly defeated in; but as a persecutor, to bring him to suffer by Judas, and the other wicked instruments whom he employed, and so to bruise his heel, which it was told him (Gen. 3. 15.) he should have to do, and would do, though it would be the breaking of his own head. He desisted now till that season came, which Christ calls the power of darkness, (ch. 22. 53.) and when the prince of this world would again come, John 14. 30.

14. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. 17. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 18. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. 22. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? 23. And he said unto them, Yea will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. 24. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. 25. But I tell you of a truth, Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: 26. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. 27. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed saving Naaman the Syrian. 28. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, 29. And rose up, and thrust him out of the city and led him unto the brow of the hill, whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. 30. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.

After Christ had vanquished the evil spirit, he made it appear how much he was under the influence of the god of Christ's humiliation, that he began against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act offensively, and to make those attacks upon him by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe, 1. What is here said, in general, of his preaching, and the entertainment it met with in Galilee, a remote part of the country, distant from Jerusalem: it was as much a sign of Christ's having defeated himself against the devil's assaults, he now begins to act offensively, and to make those attacks upon him by his preaching and miracles, which he could not resist or repel. Observe, 1. That he came in the power of the Spirit. The same Spirit that qualified him for the exercise of his prophetic office, strongly inclined him to it. He was not to wait for a call from men, for he had light and life in himself. 2. There he taught in their synagogues, their places of public worship, where they met, not, as in the temple, for ceremonial services, but for the moral acts of knowing, to read, expound, and apply the word, to pray and praise, and for church-discipline; these came to be more frequent since the captivity, when the ceremonial worship was near expiring. 3. This he did so as that he gained a great reputation: A fame of him went through all that region; (v. 14.) and it was a good fame; for (v. 15.) he was glorified of all. Every body admired him, and cried him up; they never heard such preaching in all their lives. Now, at first, he met with no contempt or contradiction; all glorified him, and there were none as yet that vilified him.

II. Of his preaching at Nazareth, the city where he was brought up; and the entertainment it met with there. And here we are told, how he preached there, and how he was persecuted.

He came, and he taught there. In that observe, 1. The opportunity he had for it; He came to Nazareth when he had gained a reputation in other places, in hopes that thereby something at least of the contempt and prejudice with which his countrymen would look upon him, might be worn off. There he took occasion to preach, [1.] In the synagogue, the proper place, where it had been his custom to attend when he was a private person, v. 16. We ought to attend on the public worship of God, as we have opportunity. But now that he was entered upon his public ministry, there he preached. Where
the multitudes of fish were, there this wise Fisherman would cast his net. [2.] On the sabbath-day, the proper time, which the pious Jews spent, not in a mere ceremonial rest from worldly labour, but in the duties of God's worship, as of old they frequented the schools of the prophets, on the new moons, and the sabbaths. Note, It is good to keep sabbaths in solemn assemblies.

(2.) The call he had to it. [1.] He stood up to read. They had in their synagogues seven readers every sabbath, besides the three Levites, and the other five Israelites of that synagogue. We often find Christ preaching in other synagogues, but never reading, except in this synagogue at Nazareth, of which he had been many years a member; now he offered his service as he had perhaps often done; he read one of the lessons out of the prophets, Acts 15. 15. Note, The reading of the scripture is very graces work, and yet we confound assemblies and Christ himself did not think it any disparagement to him to be employed in it. [2.] The book of the prophet Esaias was delivered to him, either by the ruler of the synagogue, or by the minister mentioned, (v. 20.) so he was no intruder, but duly authorized pro hac vice—on this occasion. The second lesson for that day being in the prophecy of Esaias, they gave him that volume to read in.

He stood up; He stood up to read, to teach us reverence in reading and hearing of the word of God. When Ezra opened the book of the law all the people stood up; (Neh. 8. 5.) so did Christ here, when he read in the synagogues. Now the book being delivered to him, [1.] He opened it. The books of the Old Testament were in a manner shut up till Christ opened them, Isa. 29. 13. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to take the book of the law, (which was the book of the law only, but the understanding.) [2.] He found the place which was appointed to be read that day in course, which he needed not to be directed to; he soon found it, and read it, and took it for his text; now his text was taken out of Isa. 61. 1, 2, which is here quoted at large, v. 18, 19. There was a provocation in it, that that portion of scripture should be read that day, which speaks so expressly of the Messiah, that it might be a strong evidence, who knew him not, though they heard the voices of the prophets read every sabbath-day, which bare witness of him, Acts 13. 27. This text gives a full account of Christ's undertaking, and the work he came into the world to do. Observe, First, How he was qualified for the work; The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. All the gifts and graces which Christ conferred upon him, not by measure, as upon other prophets, but with measure, John 3. 34. He now came in the power of the Spirit, v. 14.

Secondly, How he was commissioned; Because he has anointed me, and sent me. His extraordinary qualification amounted to a commission; his being anointed, signifies both his being fitted for the undertaking, and called to it. Those whom God anoints to any service he appoints for it, "Because he hath sent me, he hath sent his Spirit along with me." Thirdly, What his work was; he was qualified and commissioned.

1. To be a great Prophet. He was anointed to preach; that is three times mentioned here, for that was the work he was now entering upon. Observe, (1.) To whom he was to preach; to the poor; to those that were poor in the world, whom the Jewish doctors disdained to converse with, and spake of with contempt; to those that were poor in spirit, to the meek and humble, and to those that are truly sorrowful for sin: to them the gospel and the grace of it will be welcome, and they shall have it, Matth. 11. 5. (2.) What he was to preach; in general, he must preach the gospel. He is sent. . . . . to evangelize them; not only to preach to them, but to make that preaching effectual; to bring it, not only to their ears, but to their hearts, and deliver them into the mould of it.

Three things he is to preach:

[1.] Deliverance to the captives. The gospel is a proclamation of liberty, that is, to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon, and to Gentiles in other parts of the world, which shall be made free from the bonds of guilt, and by his Spirit and grace from the bondage of corruption. It is a deliverance from the worst of thraldoms, which all those shall have the benefit of, that are willing to make Christ their Head, and are willing to be ruled by him.

[2.] Recovering of sight to the blind. He came, not only by the word of his gospel to bring light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, but by the power of his grace to give sight to them that were blind; not only the Gentile world, but every unregenerate soul, that is not only in bondage, but in blindness, like Samson and Zedekiah. Christ came, to tell us that he has eye-salve for us, which we may have for the asking; that, if our prayer be, Lora, that our eyes may be opened, his answer shall be, Receive your sight.

[3.] The acceptable year of the Lord. v. 19. He came to seven signs of the new order of things in which they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to accept of them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him, that there is now a time of. . . . . toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or that of jubilee, which was an acceptable year to servants, who were then set at liberty; to debtors, against whom all actions then dropped; and to those who had offended, to them was given the year of the Lord; and thus he brought them to rest, who were weary, and heavy laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption.

3. To be a great Redeemer. He not only proclaims liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did to the Jews in Babylon; (Whoever will, may go up;.) he set them at liberty that were bruised; he doth by his Spirit incline and enable them to make use of the liberty granted, as they did not, but those that he has first lifted up, Ezra 1. 5. He came, in God's name, to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophets could but proclaim liberty, but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive sins, came to set at liberty; and therefore this clause is added here. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, according to a liberty the Jews allowed their readers, to compare scripture with scripture, that their reading, for the explanation of the text, Christ added it from Isa. 58. 6, where it is made the duty of the acceptable year, to let the oppressed go free, where the phrase the LXX use, is the same with this here.

(4.) Here is Christ's application of this text to himself; (v. 21.) When he had read it, he rolled up the book, and gave it again to the minister, or clerk, that attended, and sat down, according to the custom of the Jewish teachers; he sat down in the temple, teaching. Matth. 26. 53. Now he began his discourse thus, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This which Isaiah wrote by way of prophecy, I have now read to you by way of history." It now began to be fulfilled in Christ's entrance upon his public ministry; now, in the report they
hearing of his preaching and miracles in other places; now, in his preaching to them in their own synagogue. It is most probable that Christ went on, and showed particularly how this scripture was fulfilled in the doctrine he preached concerning the kingdom of heaven at hand; that that was preaching liberty, and sight to the blind, and all the works of God acceptable year of the Lord. Many other gracious words proceeded out of his mouth, which these were but the beginning of; for Christ often preached long sermons, which we have but a short account of. This was enough to introduce a great deal; This day is this scripture fulfilled. Note, [1. ] All the scriptures of the Old Testament, that were to be fulfilled in Christ, had in their full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus, which abundantly proves that this was the that should come. [2. ] In the providences of God, it is fit to observe the fulfilling of the scriptures. The works of God are the accomplishment not only of his secret word, but of his word revealed; and it will help us to understand both the scriptures and the providences of God, to compare them one with another.

There is the attention and admiration of the auditors.

[1.] Their attention; (v. 20.) The eyes of all them that were in the synagogue (and, probably, there were a great many) were fastened on him, big with expectation what he would say, having heard so much of late concerning him. Note, It is good, in hearing the word, to keep the eye fixed upon the minister by whom God is speaking to us: for as the eye affects the heart, so, usually, the heart follows the eye, and is wandering or fixed, as that is. Or, rather, let us learn hence to keep the eye fixed upon Christ speaking to us in and by the minister. What saith my Lord unto his servants? [2. ] Their admiration; (v. 22.) They all bare him witness, that he spake admirably well, and to the purpose. They all commended him, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; and yet, as appears by what follows, they did not believe in him. Note, It is possible that those who are admirers of good ministers and good preaching, may yet be themselves no true christians. Observe, First, What it was they admired; the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. The words of grace; good words, and spoken in a winning, melting way. Note, Christ's words are words of grace, for, grace being poured into his lips, (Ps. 45. 2.) words of grace poured from them; and these words of grace are to be wondered at; Christ's name was, Wonderful, and in nothing was he more so than in his grace, in the words of his grace, and the power that went along with those words. We may well wonder that he should speak such words of grace to such graceless wretches as we are. Secondly, What it was that increased their wonder; and that was, the consideration of his original: They said, Is not this Joseph's Son, and therefore his extraction mean, and his education mean? Some from this suggestion took occasion perhaps so much the more to admire his gracious words, concluding he must needs be taught of God, for they knew no one else had taught him; while others perhaps with this consideration corrected their wonder at his gracious words, and concluded there could be nothing really admirable in them, whatever appeared, because he was the Son of Joseph. Can any thing great, or worthy our regard, come from one so mean? (c.) Christ's anticipating of an objection, which he knew to be in the mind of many of his hearers. Observe, [1. ] What the objection was; (v. 23.) 'Ye surely say to me, Physician, heal thyself. Because ye know that I am the Son of Joseph, your neigh-bour, you will expect that I should work miracles among you, as I have done in other places; as one would expect that a physician, if he be able, should heal, not only himself, but those of his own family and fraternity.' Most of Christ's miracles were cures; "Now why should not the sick in thine own city be healed as well as those in other cities? They were pleased to introduce the words, and he said, "Now why should not the converts of belief; "Now why should not the disease of unbelief, if it be indeed a disease, be cured in those of thine own city as well as in those of others? Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, that has been so much talked of, do here also in thine own country." They were pleased with Christ's gracious words, only because they hoped they were but the introduction of wondrous works of his; they wanted to have their laments, and blind, and sick, and lepers, healed and helped, that the charge of their town might be eased; and that was the chief thing they looked at. They thought their own town as worthy to be the stage of miracles as any other: and why should not he rather draw company to that than to any other? And why should not his neighbours at Nazareth have the benefit of his preaching and miracles, rather than any other? [2. ] How he answers this objection against the course he took. First, By a plain and positive reason why he would not make Nazareth his head-quarters; (v. 24.) because it generally holds true, That no prophet is accepted in his own country, at least not as well, nor with such probability of being obeyed, as in some other country; experience seals this. When prophets have been sent with messages and miracles of mercy, few of their own countrymen, that have known their extraction and education, have been fit to receive them. So Dr. Hammond. Familiarity breeds contempt; and we are apt to think meanly of those whose conversation we have been accustomed to; and they will scarcely be duly his city esteemed, as propheta, who were well known when they were in the rank of private men. That is most esteemed, that is far-fetch'd and dear-bought, above what is home-bred, though really more excellent. This arises likewise from the envy which neighbours commonly have towards one another, so that they cannot endure to see him their superior, whom a while ago they took to be every way their inferior. For this reason, Christ declined working miracles, or doing any thing extraordinary, at Nazareth, because of the rooted prejudices they had against him there. Secondly, By pertinent examples of two of the most famous prophets of the Old Testament, who chose to dispense their favours among foreigners rather than among their own countrymen, and that, not only, by divine direction. 1. Elijah maintained a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon, one that was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, when there was a famine in the land, v. 25, 26. The story we have, 1 Kings 17, 9, &c. It is said there, that the heaven was shut up three years and six months, whereas it is said, 1 Kings 18. 1. That in the third year Elijah showed himself to Ahab, and there was rain; but that was not the third year, but the fourth year of Elijah's sojournings with the widow at Sarepta. As God would hereby show himself a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, so he would show that he was rich in mercy to all, even to the Gentiles. 2. Elisha cleansed Naaman the Syrian of his leprous, though he was a Syrian, and not only a foreigner, but an enemy to Israel; (v. 27.) Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha, four particularly, that brought the news of the Syrians' raising the siege of Samaria with precipitation, and leaving the
plunder of their tents to enrich Samaria, when Eli¬
sha was himself in the besieged city, and this was the accom¬
plishment of his prophecy too; see 2 Kings 7. 1, 3, &c. And yet we do not find that Eli¬
sha cleansed them, no, not for a reward of their ser¬
vice, and the good tidings they brought, but only this Syrian; for none besides had faith to apply him¬
self to the prophet for a cure. Christ himself often met with greater faith among Gentiles than in Is¬
rael. And here he mentions both of these occasions, to show that he did not dispense the favour of his miracles by private respect, but according to God's wise appointment. And the people of Israel might as justly have said to Elijah, or Elisha, as the Nazare¬
nes to Christ, Physician, heal thyself. Nay, Christ wrought his miracles, though not among his town¬
men, yet among Israelites, whereas these great pro¬
phets wrought theirs among the Gentiles. The ex¬
ample he set whith, through thine to his own, and a bad action good, yet will help to free a good action from the blame of exceptions people.

2. How he was persecuted at Nazareth. (1.) That which provoked them was, his taking notice of the favour which God by Elijah and Elisha showed to the Gentiles; When they heard these things they were filled with wrath, (v. 28.) they were all amazed at the great things which were wrought at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth; thus uncertain are the opinions and affections of the multitude, and so very fickle. If they had mixed faith with these gracious words of Christ, which they wondered at, they would have been awakened by these latter words of his, to take heed of sinning away their opportunities; but these only pleased the ear, and went no further, and therefore these great events failed, and imprecated their ru¬
ner. They were angry that he should compare himself, whom they knew to be the Son of Je¬
seph, with these great prophets, and compare them with the men of that corrupt age, when all had bowed the knee to Baal. But that which especially exasperated them was, that he intimated some kind¬
ness God had in reserve for the Gentiles, which the Jews could by no means bear the thoughts of, Acts 22. 21. And this pleases masters, that it was such a thing as people expected, with the hopes of adding the Gentiles to the church; witness many of David's psalms and Isaiah's pro¬
phesies;) but this degenerate race, when they had forsook the covenant themselves, hated to think that any others should be taken in. (2.) They were provoked to that degree, that they made an attempt upon his life. This was a severe trial, now at his setting out, but a specimen of the unkindness men are inwardly, and made the more hard¬
ly they received him not. [1.] They rose up in a tu¬
multuous manner against him, interrupted him in his discourse, and themselves in their devotions, for they could not stay until their synagogue-worship was over. [2.] They thrust him out of the city, as one not worthy to have a residence among them, though there he had had a settlement so long. They thrust from them the Saviour and the salvation, as if he had been the Offending of all things. How justly might he have called for fire from heaven upon them! But this was the day of his patience. [3.] They led him to the brow of the hill, with a purpose to throw him down headlong, as one not fit to live. Though they knew how inoffensively he had for so many years lived among them, how shining his conversation had been, though they had heard such a fame of him, and had but just now heard such great ones, and praised them, yet when cur¬
justice he ought to have been allowed a fair hear¬
ing, and liberty to explain himself, yet they hurried him away in a popular fury, or frenzy rather, to put him to death in a most barbarous manner. Some¬
times they were ready to stone him for the good works he did; (John 10. 32.) here, for not doing the good works they expected from him. To such a height of wickedness was violence springing up. (3.) Yet he escaped, because his hour was not yet come; He passed through the midst of them, un¬
hurt; either he blinded their eyes, as the Sodom¬
ites and Syrians were, or he bound their hands, or filled them with confusion, so that they could not do what they designed; for his work was not done, it was but just begun, his hour was not yet come; when it was come, he freely surrendered himself. They drove him from them, and he went his way. He would have gathered Nazareth, but they would not, and therefore their house is left to them desolate. This added to the reproach of his being Jesus of Nazareth, that not only it was a place whence no good thing was expected, but that it was so wicked, rude place, and so kind to him. Yet there was a providence in it, that he should not be much respected by the men of Nazareth, for that would have looked like a collusion between him and his old acquaintance; but now, though they received him not, there were those that did.

31. And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath-days. 32. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. 33. And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34. Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee whom thou art; the Holy One of God. 35. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. 36. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! For with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. 37. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about. 38. And he arose out of the syna¬
gogue, and entered into Simon's house; and Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39. And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her; and imme¬
diately she arose and ministered unto them. 40. Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases, brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them. 41. And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God. And he, rebuking them, suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ. 42. And when it was day, he departed, and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. 43. And
he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. 44. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

When Christ was expelled Nazareth, he came to Capernaum, another city of Galilee; the account we have in them verses of his preaching and miracles spoken, we had before, Mark 1. 21, &c. Observe,

I. His preaching; He taught them on the sabbath-days, v. 51. In hearing the word preached, as an ordinance of God, we worship God, and it is a proper work for sabbath days. Christ's preaching much affected the people; (v. 32.) they were astonished at his doctrine, there was weight in every word he said, and admirable discourses were made to them by it. The doctrine itself was astonishing, and not only as it came from one that had not had a liberal education.

His word was with power; there was a commanding force in it, and a working power went along with it to the consciences of men. The doctrine Paul preached, hereby proved itself to be of God, that it came in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.

II. His miracles. Of these we have here,

1. Two particularly specified, showing Christ to be,

(1.) A Controller and Conqueror of Satan, in the world of mankind, and in the souls of people, by his power to cast them out of the bodies of those he had taken possession of; for for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. This unclean spirit is an uncleanser, a spirit, his nature directly contrary to that of the pure and holy God, and degenerated from what it was at first. This unclean spirit worked in the children of men, in the souls of many, as then in men's bodies. It is possible that those who are very much under the power and working of Satan, may yet be found in the synagogue, among the worshippers of God. Even the devils knew and believe that Jesus Christ is the Holy One of God, is sent of God, and is a Holy One. They believe and tremble. This unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice, under a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and apprehensive that Christ was now come to destroy him. Unclean spirits are subject to continual frights.

(2.) The devils have nothing to do with Jesus Christ, nor desire to have any thing to do with him; for he taketh not of the works of Satan. Here he shows that the devil under check; He rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace; and this word he spake with power; quidem—Be muzzled; Christ did not only enjoin him silence, but stopped his mouth, and forced him to be silent against his will. In the breaking of Satan's power, both the enemy that is conquered, shows his malice, and Christ, the Conqueror, shows his power. Here he shows what he would have done, when he threw the man in the midst, with force and fury, as if he would have dashed him to pieces. But, Secondly, Christ showed what a power he had over him, in that he not only forced him to leave him, but to leave him without so much as hurting him, without giving him a parting blow, a parting gripe. Whom Satan cannot destroy, he will do all the hurt he can to; but the devil left him, without further harm that Christ permits; nay, he shall not do them any real harm. He came out, and hurt him not; that is, the poor man was perfectly well in an instant, though the devil left him with so much rage, that all that were present thought he had torn him to pieces.

Christ's power over devils was universally acknowledged and adored, v. 36. No one doubted of the truth of the miracle, it was evident beyond traditio, nor was anything suggested to diminish the story of it, for they were all amazed, saying, What a word is this? They that pretended to cast out devils, did it with abundance of charms and spells, to pacify the devil, and lull him asleep, as it were; but Christ commanded them with authority and power, which they could not gainsay or resist. Even the princes of the power of the air is his vassal, and trembles before him. This, as much as any thing, gained Christ a reputation, and spread his name. It is a very convincing instance, that now-a-days make light of, was then, by them that were eye-witnesses of it, and those no fools neither, but men of penetration, magnified, and was looked upon as greatly magnifying him; (v. 37.) upon the account of this, the fame of him went out, more than ever, into every place of the country round about.

Our Lord Jesus, when he set out at first in his public ministry, was greatly talked of, and had a high re-ward, when people's admiration wore off with the novelty of the thing.

(2.) Christ showed himself to be a Healer of diseases. In the former, he struck at the root of man's misery, which was Satan's enmity, the origin of all the mischief; in this, he strikes at one of the most spreading branches of it, one of the most common calamities. Every man's age is his own, and that is, bodily diseases, which came in with sin, are the most common and sensible corrections for it in this life, and contribute as much as any thing toward the making of our few days full of trouble. These our Lord Jesus came to take away the sting of, and, as an indication of that intention, when he was on earth, chose to confirm his doctrine by such miracles, mostly, as took away bodily diseases; for though all diseases are not more common or fatal to grown people than fevers; these come suddenly, and suddenly cut off the number of men's months in the midst; there are sometimes epidemical, and slay their thousands in a little time. Now here we have Christ's curing of a fever with a word's speaking; the place was in Simon's house, his patient was Simon's wife's mother, v. 38, 39. Observe, [1.] Christ is a Guest that will pay well for his entertainment; those that bid him welcome into their hearts and houses, shall be no losers by him; he comes with healing. [2.] Even families that Christ visits, may be visited with sickness. Houses that are blessed with his distinguishing favours, are liable to the common calamities of this life. Simon's wife's mother was ill of a fever, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. Even the first she was taken with the greatest of diseases, with the sharpest afflictions, more grievous than others; She was taken with a great fever, very acute, and high, and threatening; perhaps it seized her head, and made her delirious. The most gentle fevers may by degrees prove dangerous; but this was at first a great fever. [4.] No age can exempt from diseases. It is probable that Peter's mother-in-law, being seventy years old, was not in the best of health; and as all relations are sick, we ought to apply ourselves to Christ, by faith and prayer, on their account; They besought him for her; and there is a particular promise, that the prayer of faith shall benefit the sick. Christ has a tender concern for his people when they are in sickness and distress; He stood over her, as one concerned for her, and comforting her case. [7.] Christ had, as he said, the power to recover; He rebuked the fever, and with a word's speaking commanded it away, and it left her. He saith to diseases, Go, and they go; Come, and they come; and can still reduce fevers, even great fevers.

This proves Christ's cures to be miraculous, that they were done in an instant; Immediately she arose. [8.] Where Christ gives a new life, in recovery of sick, he design and expects that it should be a new life indeed, spent more than ever in his service, to his glory. If dis-
tempered be rebuked, and we arise from a bed of sickness, we must set ourselves to minister to Jesus Christ. 10. Those that minister to Christ, must be ready to minister to all that are for his sake; she ministered to them, not only to him that had cured her, but to them that had besought him for her. We must study to be grateful to them that have prayed for us.

2. A general account given by wholesale, of many other miracles of the same kind, which Christ did.

He cured many that were diseased, even all without exception that made their application to him; (v. 40.) it was when the sun was setting, in the evening of that sabbath-day which he had spent in the synagogue. Note, It is good to do a full sabbath-day's work, to abound in the work of the day, in some good work or other, even till sun-set; as those that call the sabbath, and the business of it, a devil, convenient respite, because we are not set as well as rich, and though they were sick of divers diseases; so that there was no room to suspect that he had only a specific for some one disease; he had a remedy for every malady. The sign he used in healing was, laying his hands on the sick; not lifting up his hands for them, for he healed as having authority. He healed by his own power. And thus he would put honour upon that sign, which was afterwards the Holy Ghost. (2.) He cast the devil out of many that were possessed, v. 41. Confessions were extorted from the demoniacs; they said, Thou art Christ the Son of God, but they said it, crying with rage and indignation, it was a confession upon the rack, and therefore was not admitted in evidence: Christ rebuked them, and did not suffer them to say that they knew him to be the Christ, that it might appear, beyond all doubt, that he was the Son of God, and made no attempt to conquer over them, and not a compact with them.

3. Here is his removal from Capernaum, v. 42, 43. (1.) He retired for a while into a place of solitude; it was but a little while that he allowed himself for sleep; not only because a little served him, but because he was content with a little, and never indulged himself in ease; but when it was day, he went into a boat; if a man can live constantly like a hermit, but to be sometimes alone with God, as even those should be, and contrive to be, that are most engaged in public work, or else their work will go on but poorly, and they will find themselves never less alone than when thus alone. (2.) He returned again to the places of concourse, and to the work he had to do there. Though a desert place may be a convenient retreat, yet it is not a convenient place, nor a place for ministers of God, to live in this world, to live to ourselves, nor to the best part of ourselves only, but to glorify God, and do good in our generation.

[1.] He was earnestly solicited to stay at Capernaum. The people were exceedingly fond of him; I doubt, more because he had healed their sick than because he had preached repentance to them. They sought him, inquired which way he went; and, though it was in a desert place, they came unto him. A desert is no desert if we be with Christ there; and they stayed him that he should not depart from them, so that if he would go, it should not be for want of invitation. His old neighbours at Nazareth had driven him from them, but his new acquaintance at Capernaum were very important for his continuance with them. Note, It ought not to discourage the ministers of Christ, that some reject them, for the we do meet with others that will welcome them and their message.

[2.] He chose rather to diffuse the light of his gospel to many places than to fix it to one, that no one might pretend to be a mother-church to the rest. Though he was welcome at Capernaum, and had done abundance of good there, yet he is sent to preach the gospel to other cities also; and Capernaum must not insist upon his stay there. They that enjoy the benefit of the gospel, must be willing that others also should share in that benefit, and not covet the monoply of it. And those ministers who are not driven from one place, may yet be drawn to another by a prospect of greater usefulness. Christ, though he preached not in vain in the synagogue at Capernaum, yet would not be tied to that, but preached in the synagogues of Galilee, v. 44. Be not conatus diffusivum—What is good is self-diffusive. It is well for us, that our Lord Jesus has not tied himself to any one place or people, but wherever two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them; and even in Galilee of the Gentiles, his special presence is in the christian synagogues.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's preaching to the people out of Peter's ship, for want of a better pulpit, v. 1. 3. 11. The recompense he made to Peter for the loan of his boat, in a miraculous draught of fishes; by which he intimated to him and his partners his design to make them, as apostles, fishers of men, v. 4. 11. III. His cleansing of the leper, v. 12. 15. IV. A short account of his general doctrine and power, v. 16. 17. V. His cure of the man sick of the palsy, v. 18. 26. VI. His calling of Levi the publican, and conversing with publicans on that occasion, v. 27. 32. VII. His justifying of his disciples, in not fasting so freely as the disciples of John and the Pharisees did, v. 33, 35.

1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesaret, 2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. 3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. 5. And Simon, answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. 6. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. 7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. 8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. 9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: 10. And so was also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. 11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.
This passage of story fell, in order of time, before the two miracles we have in the close of the foregoing chapter, and is the same with that which was more briefly related by Matthew and Mark, of Christ's calling Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, Mark 1. 16. They had not related this miraculous draught of fishes at that time, having only more briefly related the calling of the disciples. Let us give as that story as one of the many signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, which had not been written in the foregoing books. John 20. 30, 31. Observe here,

1. What vast crowds attended Christ's preaching;
The people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, (v. 1.) insomuch that no house would contain them, but they flocked about him to the sea-shore, that they might be reminded of the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand upon the sea-shore, (Gen. 22. 17.) and yet of them but a remnant shall be saved, Rom. 9. 27. The people flocked about him; (so the word signifies;) they showed respect to his preaching, though not without some rudeness to his person, which was very excusable, for they pressed upon him, and some were rude and rough spoken to him, to be thus cried up by the vulgar, when none of the rulers or of the Pharisaees believed on him; but he reckoned it an honour to him, for their souls were as precious as the souls of the grandees; and it is his aim to bring not so much the mighty as the many sons to God; and it was foretold concerning him, that to him shall the gathering of the people be. Christ was a popular preacher; so much so, that he was called abroad, at twelve, to dispute with the doctors, yet he chose, at thirty, to preach to the capacity of the vulgar. See how the people relished good preaching, though under all external disadvantages; they pressed to hear the word of God; they could perceive it to be the word of God, by the divine power and evidence that went along with it, and therefore they coveted to hear it. He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, (v. 1.) upon the level with the crowd, so that they could not see him, or hear him; he was lost among them, and, every one striving to get near him, he was crowded, and in danger of being crowded into the water: what must he do? It does not appear that his hearers had any contrivance to give him advantage, but there were two ships, or fisher-boats, belonging to his belonging to his brothers, Simon and Andrew, the other to Zebedee and his sons, v. 2. At first, Christ saw Peter and Andrew fishing at some distance; (so Matthew tells us, ch. 4. 18.) but he waited till they came to land, and till the fishermen, that is, the servants, were gone out of them, having washed their nets, and thrown them by for that time: so Christ entered into that ship that belonged to Simon, and begged of him that he would lend him for a pulpit; and though he might have commanded him, yet, for love's sake, he rather prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land, which would he the worse for his being heard, but Christ would have it so, that he might the better be seen; and it is his being lifted up, that draws men to him. Wisdom cries in the top of high places; (Prov. 8. 1.) Christ was in the world, but he came not into the world to be adored, but to save sinners; and he was a strong voice, strong indeed, for he made the dead to hear it, and that he did not desire to favour himself. There he sat down, and taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

II. What a particular acquaintance Christ, hereupon, fell into with these fishermen. They had had some conversation with him before, which began at John's baptism, (John 1. 40, 41.) they were with him at Caesarea Philippi, (John 2. 23.) and in Judæa, (John 4. 2.) but as yet they were not called to attend him constantly, and therefore here we have

1. When Christ had done preaching, he ordered Peter to apply himself to the business of his calling again; Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets, v. 4. It was not the sabbath-day, and therefore the fish were over, he set them to work. Time spent on week-days in the public exercises of religion, may be but little hinderance to us in time, and a great furtherance to us in temper of mind, in our worldly business. With what cheerfulness may we go about the duties of our calling, when we have been in the mount with God, and from thence fetch a double blessing into our worldly work, and thereby make that holy, and thus him sanctified to us by the word and power. It is very necessary to learn how to manage our religious exercises, as that they may befriend our worldly business, and so to manage our worldly business, as that it may be no enemy to our religious exercises.

2. Peter having attended upon Christ in his preaching, Christ will accompany him in his fishing; he is to go with Christ at the shore, and now Christ will launch out with them into the deep. Note, Those that will be constant followers of Christ, shall have him a constant Guide to them.

3. Christ orders Peter and his ship's crew to cast their nets into the sea, which they do, in obedience to him, though they had been hard at it all night, and had caught nothing, v. 4, 5. We may observe here,

Christ's business by his business was now been; "Master, we have toiled all the night, when we should have been asleep in our beds, and have taken nothing, but have had our labour for our pains." One would have thought that that should have excused them from hearing the sermon; and such a love had they to the word of God, that it was more refreshing and reviving to them, after a wearisome night, than the softest slumbers. But they mention it to Christ, when he bids them go a fishing again. Note, [1.] Some callings are much more tolerable than others are, and more pleasant; yet Providence has so ordered it for the common good, that there is no useful calling so discouraging but some or other have a genius for it. Those who follow their business, and get abundance by it with a great deal of ease, should think with compassion of those who are obliging to none but toil and fatigue, and hardly get a bare livelihood by it. When we have rested all night, let us not forget those who have toiled all night, as Jacob, when he kept Laban's sheep. [2.] Be the calling ever so laborious, it is good to see people diligent in it, and make the best of it; these fishermen, that were thus industrious, Christ singled out for his favourites. They were set for to his preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who had thus learned to endure hardness. [3.] Even those who are most diligent in their business, often meet with disappointments; who they toiled all night, yet caught nothing; for the race is not always to the swift. God will have us to be diligent, purely in duty to his command, and dependence upon his goodness, rather than with an assurance of it. They were fit to be preferred as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who bid them, when they had, they will renew their toil, for they know that they who wait on him, shall renew their strength, as work is renewed upon their
hands; for every fresh service they shall have a fresh supply of grace sufficient. [2.] Though they have taken nothing, yet, if Christ bid them let down for a draught, they will hope to take something. Note, We must not abruptly quit the callings whereby we are called, because we have not the success in them we promised ourselves. The ministers of the gospel must continue to let down that net, though they do not such a draught, or such a draught, as they expected, and this is thine worthy, to continue unwearied in our labours, though we see not the success of them. [3.] In this, they have an eye to the word of Christ, and a dependence upon that; "At thy word, I will let down the net, because thou dost enjoin it, and thou dost encourage it." We are then likely to succeed well, when we follow the guidance of Christ's word.

The draught of fishes they caught, was not such beyond the reach of providence, as amounted to a miracle; (v. 6.) They inclined a great multitude of fishes, so that their net brake, and yet, which is strange, they did not lose their draught; it was so great a draught, that they had not hands sufficient to draw it up; but they were fain to beckon to their partners, who were at a distance, out of call, to come, and help them, v. 7. But the greatest evidence of Christ's presence was the draught, that filled both the ships with fish, to that degree, that they overloaded them, and they began to sink, so that the fish had like to have been lost again with their own weight; as many an overgrown estate, raised out of the water, returns to the place whence it came. Suppose these ships were but five or six tons a piece; what a vast quantity of fish must there be to load, say, to overfeed them both.

Now by this vast draught of fishes, (1.) Christ intended to show his dominion in the seas as well as on the dry land; over its wealth as over its waves. Thus he would show that he was that Son of man, under whose feet all things were put, and particularly the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, Ps. 8. 8. (2.) He intended hereby to confirm the doctrine he had just now preached out of Peter's ship. We may suppose that the people on shore who heard the sermon, having a notion that the Preacher was a Prophet sent of God, carefully attended his motions afterward, and stayed halting about there, to see what he would do next; and this miracle, immediately following, would be a confirmation to their faith, of his being at least a Teacher come from God. (3.) He intended hereby to repay Peter for the loss of his boat; for Christ's gospel now, as his ark formerly, in that house of Obed-edom, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for its kind entertainment. None shall shut a door or kindle a fire in God's house for naught, Mal. 1. 10. Christ's recompenses for services done to his name, are abundant, they are superabundant. (4.) He intended hereby to give a specimen to those who were to be his ambassadors to the world, of the success of their embassy, that, though they might for a time, and in one particular place, fail and catch nothing, will be sure to make amends, rich amends, for their kind entertainment. None shall shut a door or kindle a fire in God's house for naught, Mal. 1. 10. Christ's recompenses for services done to his name, are abundant, they are superabundant.

5. The impression which this miraculous draught of fishes made upon Peter, was very remarkable. [1.] All concerned were astonished, and the more astonished for their being concerned. All the boat's crew were astonished at the draught of fishes which they had taken, (v. 8.) They were all surprised; and they that had seen the circumstances of it, the more they were wonder-struck. I had almost said thunder-struck, at the thought of it, and so were also James and John, who were partners with Simon, (v. 10.) and who, for aught that appears, were not so well acquainted with Christ, before this, as Peter and Andrew were. Now they were the more affected with it, [1.] Because they understood it better than others did. They that were well acquainted with the sea, and, it is probable, had plied upon it many years, had never seen such a draught of fishes fetched out of it, nor anything like it, anything near it; and therefore they could not be tempted to diminish it, as others might, by suggesting that some evidence of it was false, and what might at all have happened at any time. It greatly corroborates the evidence of Christ's miracles, that those who were best acquainted with them, most admired them. [2.] Because they were most interested in it, and benefited by it. Peter and his partners were gainers by this great draught of fishes, it was a rich booty for them; and therefore it transported them, and their joy was a help to Peter. When Christ's followers consider are to us in particular works of grace, then especially they command our faith in his doctrine.

(2.) Peter, above all the rest, was so astonished, to such a degree, that he fell down at Jesus's knees, as he sat in the stern of his boat, and said, as one in an ecstasy or transport, that knew not where he was, or what he said, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord, v. 8. Not this, Depart from me, as some uncertainly read it. A sinful man, he was indeed, to sink him, because he was a sinful man, but that he thought himself unworthy of the favour of Christ's presence in his boat, and worthy that it should be to him a matter rather of terror than of comfort. This word of Peter's came from the same principle with theirs who, under the Old Testament, so often said that they did exceedingly fear and quake at the extraordinary displays of the divine glory and majesty. It was the language of Peter's humility and self-denial, and had not the least tincture of the devils' dialect. What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? [1.] His acknowledgment was very just, and what it becomes us all to make; I am a sinful man, O Lord. Note, Even the best men are sinful men, and should be ready on all occasions to own it, and especially to own it to Jesus Christ; for to whom else, but to him who came into the world to save sinners, should sinful men apply themselves? [2.] His inference from it was what might have been just, though really it was not so: If I be a sinful man, as indeed I am, I ought to say, "Come to me, O Lord, or let me come to thee, or I am undone, for ever undone." But considering what reason sinful men have to tremble before the holy Lord God, and to dread his wrath, Peter may be well excused, if, in a sense of his own sinfulness and vileness, he cried out, Depart from me. Note, Those whom Christ designs to admit to the most intimate acquaintance with him, he first makes sensible that they deserve to be set at the greatest distance from him. We must all own ourselves sinful men, and that therefore Jesus Christ might justly depart from us; but we must therefore fall down at his knees, to pray to him that he would not depart; for we unto us, if he leave us, if the Saviour depart from us, v. 9. The occasion which Christ took from hence to intimate to Peter, (v. 10.) and soon after to James and John, (Matt. 4. 21.) his purpose to make them his apostles, and instruments of his planting religion in the world. He said unto Simon, who was in the greatest surprise of any of them, at this prodigious draught of fishes, "Then shall both see and do greater things than these; fear not; let not this astonishing thee, but think of the occasion which this honour, it is so great, that I shall never do thee more; no, from henceforth shalt catch men, by inclosing them in the gospel-net, and that shall be a greater instance of the Redeemer's power, and his favour to thee, than this is; that shall be a more astonishing miracle, and infinitely more advantageous than this." When by Peter's preaching...
three thousand souls were, in one day, added to the church, then the type of this great draught of fishes was abundantly answered.

Lastly, The fishermen's farewell to their calling, in order to the constant attendance on Christ; (v. 11.) When they had brought their ships to land, instead of going to seek for a market for their fish, that they might make the best hand they could of this miracle, they forsook all, and followed him, being more solicitous to serve the interests of Christ than to advance any secular interests of their own. It is observable, that they left all, to follow Christ, when their calling prospered in their hands more than ever it had done, and they had had uncommon success in it. When riches increase, and we are therefore most in temptation to set our hearts upon them, then to quit them for the service of Christ, this is thankworthy.

12. And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold, a man full of leprosy; who seeing Jesus, fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 13. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. 14. And he charged him to tell no man: but go and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

15. But so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. 16. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Here is,

1. The cleansing of a leper, v. 12—14. This narrative we had, both in Matthew and Mark; it is here said to have been in a certain city, (v. 12.) which the Commentators think to have been Samaria, but the evangelist would not name it, perhaps because it was a reflection upon the government of the city, that a leper was suffered to be in it. This man is said to be full of leprosy, he had that distemper in a high degree, which doth the more fitly represent our natural pollution by sin; we are full of that leprosy, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in us. Now let us learn here,

1. What we must do in the sense of our spiritual leprosy. (1.) We must see Jesus, inquire after him, acquaint ourselves with him, and reckon the discoveries made us of Christ by the gospel, the most acceptable and welcome discoveries that could be made us. (2.) We must humble ourselves before him, as this leper, seeing Jesus, fell on his face. When they be ashamed of our pollution, and, in the sense of it, blush to lift up our faces before the holy Jesus. (3.) We must earnestly desire to be cleansed from the defilement, and cured of the disease of sin, which renders us unfit for communion with God. (4.) We must firmly believe in Christ's ability and sufficiency to cleanse us; Lord, thou canst make me clean, though I be full of leprosy; no doubt is to be made of the merit and grace of Christ. (5.) We must be importunate in prayer for pardoning mercy and renewing grace; he fell on his face, and besought him; they that would be cleansed, must reckon it a favour worth wresting for. (6.) We must refer ourselves to the good will of Christ; Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. This is not so much the language of his diffidence, or distrust of the good will of Christ, as of his submission and reference of himself and his case to the will, to the good will, of Jesus Christ.

What we may expect from Christ, if we thus apply ourselves to him. (1.) We shall find him very condescending, and forward to take cognizance of our case; (v. 13.) He put forth his hand, and touched him. When Christ visited this leprous world, unasked, unsought unto, he showed how low he could stoop, to do good. His touching of the leper was wonderful condescension; but it is much more easy to us to have ourselves touched with the feeling of our infirmities. (2.) We shall find him very compassionate, and ready to relieve us; he said, "I will, never doubt of that; whosoever comes to me to be healed, I will in no wise cast him out." He is as willing to cleanse leprous souls as they can be to be cleansed. (3.) We shall find him all-sufficient, and able to heal and cleanse us, though we be ever so full of this leprous leprosy. One word, one touch, from Christ, did the business; immediately the leprosy departed from him. If Christ saith, "I will, be thou justified, be thou sanctified," it is done; for he has power on earth to forgive sin, and to give the Holy Spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 11.

3. What he requires from those that are cleansed, v. 14. Has Christ sent his word, and healed us? We must be very humble, v. 14. He charged him to tell no man. That should bid him telling it to the honour of Christ, but he must not tell it to his own honour. Those whom Christ hath healed and cleansed, must know that he hath done it in such a way as doth for ever exclude boasting. (2.) We must be very thankful, and make a grateful acknowledgment of the divine grace; Go, and offer for thy cleansing. Christ did not require him to give him a fee, but to bring the praise to God, for so far was he from using his power to the prejudice of the law of Moses. (3.) We must keep close to our duty; go to the priest, and those that attend him. The man whom Christ had made whole he found in the temple, John 5. 14. Those that by any affliction have been detained from public ordinances, when the affliction is removed, should attend on them the more diligently, and adhere to them for the sake of their welfare.

5. Christ's public serviceableness to men, and his private communion with God; these are put together here, to give lustre to each other.

(1.) Though never any had so much pleasure in his retirements, as Christ had, yet he was much in a crowd, to do good, v. 15. Though the leper should altogether hold his peace, yet the thing could not be hid, so much the more went there a fame abroad of him; the more he sought to conceal himself under a veil of humility, the more notice did people take of him; for honour is like a shadow, which flees from those that pursue it. (for a man to seek his own glory, is not glory,) but follows those that decline it, and draw from it. The less good men say of themselves, the more will others say of them. But Christ rendered it, to his fame abroad; it was much more so, that hereby multitudes were brought to receive benefit by him. (1.) By his preaching; they came together, to hear him, and to receive instruction from him concerning the kingdom of God. (2.) By his miracles; they came, to be healed by him of their infirmities; that invited them to come to hear him, confirmed his doctrine, and manifested him to be the Lord. Let not the hands ever sprawl, that did so much good in public, yet he found time for pious and devout retirements; (v. 16.) He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed; not that he needed to avoid either distraction or ostentation, but he would set us an example, who need to order the circumstances
of our devotion so as to guard against both. It is likewise our wisdom so to order our affairs, as that our public works and our religious work may not in tend upon, or interfere with, one another. Note, Secret prayer must be performed secretly; and those that have ever so much to do of the best business in this world, must keep up constant and sta tioned times for it.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. 18. And, behold, men brought in a dead a man which was taken with the palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. 19. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went upon the house-top, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. 20. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee. 21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? 22. But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? 23. Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? 24. But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house. 25. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. 26. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.

Here is,

I. A general account of Christ's preaching and miracles, v. 17. 1. He was teaching on a certain day, not on the sabbath-day, then he would have said so, but on a week-day; six days shall thou labour, not only for the world, but for thy soul, and the welfare of that. Preaching and hearing the word of God are good works, if they be done well, any day in the week; as well as on sabbath-days. It was not in the synagogue, but in a private house; for even there where we ordinarily converse with our friends, it is not improper to give and receive good instruction. 2. There he taught, he healed; as before (v. 15.) and the power of the Lord was to heal them—σωθησηςταμαρτηματα. It was mighty to heal them, it was exerted and put forth, to heal them, to heal them whom he taught; we may understand it so; to heal their souls; to cure them of their spiritual diseases, and to give them a new life, a new nature. Note, Those who receive the word of Christ in faith, will find a divine power going along with that word, to heal them— for Christ came with his comforts to heal the broken hearted, ch. 4. 18. The power of the Lord is present with the word, present to those who pray, and submit to it, present to heal them. Or it may be meant, the healing mercy actually (though not yet seen) of the healing of those who were diseased in body, who came to him for cures. Whenever there was occasion, Christ was not to seek for his power, it was present to heal. 3. There were some grandees present in this assembly, and, as it should seem, more than usual; There were Pharisees, and doctors of the law, the scribes, &c.; not sitting at his feet, to learn of him; then I should have been willing to take the following clause as referring to them who were present immediately before; (the power of the Lord was present to heal them;) and why might not the word of Christ reach their hearts? But by what follows, (v. 2L) it appears that they were not healed, but cavilled at Christ, which forces us to make that to refer to others, not to them; for they sat by as ferociously unconcerned, as if the word of Christ were nothing to them. They sat by as spectators, censurers, and spies, to pick up something on which to ground a reproach or accusation. How many are there in the midst of our assemblies, where the gospel is preached, that do not sit under the word, but sit by! It is to them as a tale that is told them, not as a message that is sent them; they are willing that we should preach before them, not that we should preach to them. The Pharisees and scribes (or doctors of the law) came out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem, they came from all parts of the nation; it is likely, they appointed to meet at this time and place, to see what remarks they could make upon Christ, and what he said and did. They were in a confederacy, as those that said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, and agree to smite him with the tongue, Jer. 18. 18. Report, and let us devise devices against him, and let us take hold on the LORD against his anointed, Jer. 20. 10. Observe, Christ went on with his work of preaching, and disorders, though he saw these Pharisees, and doctors of the Jewish church, sitting by, who, he knew, despised him, and watched to insnare him.

II. A particular account of the cure of the man sick of the palsy, which was retained much as it is here by both the foregoing evangelists: let us therefore only observe in short,

The disease that are taught us, and confirmed to us by the story of this cure. (1.) That sin is the fountain of all sickness, and the forgiveness of sin is the only foundation upon which a recovery from sickness can comfortably be built. They presented the sick man to Christ, and he said, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee; (v. 20.) that is the blessing thou art most to prize and seek; for if thy sins be forgiven thee, though the sickness be continued, it is in mercy; if they be not, though the sickness be removed, it is in wrath. The cords of our inward amends are the bands of our affliction. (2.) That Jesus Christ has power on earth to forgive sins, and his healing of diseases was an incontestable proof of it. This was the thing intended to be proved, (v. 24.) That ye may know and believe, that the Son of man, though now upon earth in his state of humiliation, hath power to forgive sins, and to release sinners, upon gospel-terms, from the sentence of condemnation, he saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, and walk; and he is cured immediately. Christ claims one of the prerogatives of the King of kings, when he undertakes to forgive sin, and it is justly expected that he should produce a good proof of it. “Well,” saith he, “I will put it upon this issue; here is a man struck with a palsy, and for his sin; if I do not with a word of speaking cure his disease in an instant, which cannot be done by nature or art, but surely he is immediately to be freed from all contagious power of efficacy of the God of nature, then say that I am not entitled to the prerogative of forgiving sin, am not the Messiah, am not the Son of
God, and King of Israel: but if I do, you must own that I have power to forgive sins." Thus it was put upon a fair trial, and one word of Christ determined it. He did but say, Arise, take up thy couch, and that chroniclial disease had an instantaneous cure; immediately he said as before, and they must own that there could be no cheat or fallacy in it; they that brought him, could attest how perfectly lame he was before; they that saw him, could attest how perfectly well he was now; insomuch that he had strength enough to take up and carry away the bed he lay upon. How well is it for us, that this most commodious doctrine of the gospel, that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour, has power to forgive sin, has such a full attestation. (3.) That Jesus Christ is God. He appears to be so, (1.) By knowing the thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees, (v. 22.) which it is God's prerogative to do; though these scribes and Pharisees knew as well how to conceal their thoughts, and keep their countenances, as most men, and probably were industrious to do it at this time, for they lay in wait secretly. (2.) By doing that which their thoughts owned none could do but God only; (v. 21.) Who can forgive sins, say they, but only God? "I will prove," saith Christ, "that I can forgive sins," and what follows then, but that he is God? What horrid wickedness then were they guilty of, who charged him with speaking the worst of blasphemies, then when he spake the words of God's own mouth? Then ther? 2. The duties that are taught us, and recommended to us, by this story. (1.) In our applications to Christ, we must be very pressing and urgent; that is an evidence of faith, and is very pleasing to Christ, and prevailing with him. They that were the friends of this sick man, sought means to bring him in before Christ; (v. 18.) and when they were baffled in their endeavour, they did not give up their cause; but, when they could not get in by the door, (it was so crowded,) they untiled the house, and let the poor patient down through the roof, into the midst before Jesus, v. 19. In this Jesus Christ saw their faith, v. 20. Now here he has taught us (and it were well if we could learn the lesson) to put the best construction upon words and actions that they will bear. We may use them long, and the very words of Christ, in no care at all to bring the patients they interceded for, into Christ's presence, but believed that he could cure them at a distance, he commended their faith. But though in these there seemed to be a different notion of the thing, and an apprehension that it was requisite the patient should be brought into his presence, yet he did not censure and condemn their weakness, did not ask them, "Why do you give this disturbance to the assembly? Are you under such a degree of infidelity, as to think I could not have cured him, though he had been out of doors?" But he made the best of it, and even in this he saw their faith. It is a comfort to us, that we serve a Master that is willing to make the best of us. (2.) When we are sick, we should be more in care to get our sins pardoned than to get our sickness removed. Christ, in these cases, seemed to warrant us, and to lead us to seek to God for health, to begin with seeking to him for pardon. (3.) The mercies which we have the comfort of, God must have the praise of. The man departed to his own house, glorifying God, v. 25. To him belong the escapes from death, and in them therefore he must be glorified. (4.) The miracles which Christ wrought, were amazing to them that saw them, and we ought to glorify God in them, v. 26. They said, "We have seen strange things today, such as we never saw before, nor our fathers before us; they are altogether new." But they glorified God, who had sent into their country such a Benefactor to it; and were filled with fear, with a reverence of God, with a jealous persuasion that this was the Messiah, and that he was not treated by their nation as he ought to be, which might prove in the end the ruin of their state; perhaps they were some such thoughts as these that filled them with fear, and a concern likewise for themselves.

27. And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. 30. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? 31. And Jesus answering, said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. 33. And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thinkeat and drink? 34. And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? 35. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days. 36. And he spake also a parable unto them: No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. 37. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. 38. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. 39. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better. 40. All this, except the last verse, we had before in Matthew and Mark; it is not the story of any miracle in nature wrought by our Lord Jesus, but it is an account of some of the wonders of his grace, which, to those who understand things aright, are no less cogent proofs of Christ's being sent of God than the other. 41. It was a wonder of his grace, that he would call a publican from the receipt of custom, to be his disciple and follower, v. 27. It was wonderful condescension that he would admit poor fishermen to that honour, men of the lowest rank; but much more wonderful, that he would admit publicans, men of the worst reputation, men of ill fame; in this, Christ humbled himself, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh; by this he exalted himself, and got the insinuous character of a Friend of publicans and sinners.
It was a wonder of his grace, that he would not only admit a converted publican into his family, but would keep company with unconverted publicans, that he might have an opportunity of doing their souls good; he justified himself in it, as agreeing with the great design of his coming into the world. Here is a wonder of grace indeed, the Christ of the Pharisees, the Physician of souls distempered by sin, and ready to die of the distemper: (v. 31. He is a Healer by office;) that he has a particular regard to the sick, to sinners as his patients, convinced, awakened sinners, that see their need of the Physician; that he came, to call sinners, the worst of sinners, to repentance, and to assure them of pardon, upon repentance, v. 32. This is glad tidings of great joy indeed.

It was a wonder of his grace, that he did so patiently bear the contradiction of sinners against himself and his disciples, v. 30. He did not express his resentments of the cavils of the scribes and Pharisees, as he justly might have done, but answered them with reason and meekness; and, instead of taking that occasion to show his displeasure against the Pharisees, as afterward he did, or of reprimanding upon them, he took that occasion to show his compassion to poor publicans, another sort of sinners, and to encourage them.

It was a wonder of his grace, that, in the discipline which he trained his disciples up under, he considered their frame, and proportioned their services to their strength and standing, and to the circumstances they were in. It was objectless, as a blemish upon his conduct, that he did not make his disciples to fast so often as those of the Pharisees, and John Baptist did, v. 32. He insisted most upon that which is the soul of fasting, the mortification of sin, the crucifying of the flesh, and the living of a life of self-denial, which is as much better than fasting and corporal penances as mercy is than sacrifice.

It was a wonder of his grace, that Christ reserved the trials of his disciples for their latter times, when by his grace they were in some good measure better prepared and fitted for them. When they were at first, the children of the bride chamber, when the Bridegroom is with them, when they have plenty and joy, and every day is a festival. Christ was welcomed, wherever he came, and they for his sake, and as yet they met with little or no opposition: but this will not last always. The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, v. 33. When Christ shall leave them with their hearts full of sorrow, their hands full of work, and then they will find that it is fruitless, and the day shall be shortened, shall not be so well fed as they are now. We both hunger and thirst, and are naked, 1 Cor. 4. 11. Then they shall keep only those more religious fasts than they do now, for Providence will call them to it, they will then serve the Lord with fastings, Acts 13. 2.

It was a wonder of his grace, that he proportioned his exercises to the strength and capacity of his disciples, and gave new wine not old wine, and not new wine into old bottles; (v. 37, 38.) he would not, as soon as ever he had called them out of the world, put them upon the strictness and austenities of discipleship, lest they should be tempted to fly off. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he would not bring them by the way of the Philistines, lest they should relent, when they saw war, and return into Egypt. Exod. 13. 17. So Christ would train up his followers gradually to the discipline of his family; for no man, having drunk old wine, will of a sudden, in a manner change, v. 23. The disciples were often tempted to think their old way of living better, till they are by degrees trained up to this way whereunto they are called. Or, turn it the other way; "Let them be accustomed a while to religious exercises, and then they will abound in them as much as you do; but we must not be too hasty with them." Calvin takes it as an admonition to the Pharisees, not to boast of their fasting, and the noise and show they made, nor to despise the disciples, because they did not in like manner signalize themselves; for the profession the Pharisees made, was indeed pompous and gay, like new wine that is brisk and sparkling, whereas all wise men say, The old is better; which, though it doth not give its colour so well in the cup, yet is more warming in the stomach, and more wholesome. Christ's disciples, though they had not so much of the form of godliness, had more of the power of it.

In this chapter, we have Christ's exposition of the moral law, which he came not to destroy, but to fulfill, and to fill up, by his gospel. 1. Here is a proof of the lawfulness of works of necessity and mercy on the sabbath day; the former, in eating, and drinking, and rejoicing; the latter, in plucking the ears of corn, the latter, in indication of himself healing the withered hand on that day, v. 1 . . 1 1. II. His retirement for secret prayer, v. 12. III. His calling of his twelve apostles, v. 13 . . 16. IV. His curing of the multitudes of those under various diseases, who made their application to him, v. 17 . . 19. V. The sermon that he preached to his disciples and the multitude, instructing them in their duty both to God and man, v. 20 . . 49.

1. AND it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. 2. And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? 3. And Jesus answering them said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hundred, and they which were with him; 4. How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone? 5. And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. 6. And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. 7. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him. 8. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. 9. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath-days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?
10. And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. 11. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

These two passages of story we have both in Matthew and Mark, and they were there laid together; (Matt. 12. 1. Mark 2. 23.—3. 1.) because though happening at some distance of time from each other, both were designed to rectify the mistakes of the scribes and Pharisees concerning the sabbath-day, on the bodily rest of which they laid greater stress, and required greater strictness, than the Lawgiver intended. Here.

1. Christ justifies his disciples in a work of necessity for themselves on that day, and that was, plucking the ears of corn, when they were hungry on that day. This story has a date, which we had not in the other evangelists, it was on the second sabbath after the first, (v. 1.) that is, as Dr. Whitby thinks pretty clear, the first sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread, from which day they reckon the seven weeks to the feast of Pentecost, the first of which they called סנהdeal טבשזיה, the second טבשזיה, and so on. Blessed be God, we need not be critical in this matter. Whether this circumstance be mentioned to intimate that this sabbath was thought to have some peculiar honour upon it, which aggravated the offence of the disciples, or only to intimate that, being the first sabbath after the offering of the first fruits, it was the time of the year when the corn was near ripe, is not material. We may observe,

1. Christ's disciples ought not to be nice and curious in their diet, at any time, especially on sabbath-days, but take up with what is easiest got, and he thankful. These disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat; (v. 1.) a little served them, and that which had no delicacy in it.

2. Many that are themselves guilty of the greatest crimes are forward to censure others for the most innocent and inoffensive actions, v. 2. The Pharisees quarrelled with them as doing that which was not lawful to do on the sabbath-days, when it was their own practice to feed deliciously on sabbath-days, more than on all other days.

3. Jesus Christ will justify his disciples when they are unjustly censured, and will neither deny or accept of the in many a thing which men tell them it is not lawful for them to do. How well is it for us that men are not to be our judges, and that Christ will be our Advocate.

4. Ceremonial appointments may be dispensed with, in cases of necessity; as the appropriating of the show-bread to the priests was dispensed with, when David was by Providence brought into more straiten than the Levites could have other than none, v. 3.

5. And if God's own appointments might be thus set aside for a greater good, much more may the traditions of men.

6. Works of necessity are particularly allowable on the sabbath-day; but we must take heed that we turn not this liberty into licentiousness, and abuse God's favourable concessions and condescensions to the prejudices of the work of the day.

6. Christ justifies, though he allowed works of necessity on the sabbath-day, will have us to know and remember that it is his day, and therefore is to be spent in his service, and to his honour; (v. 5.)

The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. In the kingdom of the Redeemer, the sabbath-day is to be turned into a Lord's day; the property of it is, in some respects, to be altered, and it is to be observed chiefly in honour of the Redeemer, as it had been before in honour of the Creator; (Jer. 16. 14. 15.) in token of this, it shall not only have a new name, the Lord's day, (yet not forgetting the old, for it is a sabbath of rest still,) but shall be transferred to a new day, the first-day of the week.

II. He justifies himself in doing works of mercy for others on the sabbath-day. Observe in this

1. Christ on the sabbath-day came into the synagogue. Note, It is our duty, as we have opportunity, to sanctify sabbaths in religious assemblies. On the sabbath there ought to be a holy convocation; and our place must not be empty without very good reason.

2. In the synagogue, on the sabbath-day, he taught. Giving and receiving instruction from Christ is very necessary for a sabbath-day, and for a synagogue. Christ took all opportunity to teach, not only his disciples, but the multitude.

3. Christ's patient was one of his hearers; A man whose right hand was withered, came to learn from Christ; whether he had any expectation to be healed by him, does not appear. But those that would be cured by the grace of Christ, must be willing to learn the doctrine of Christ. And those who were the hearers of Christ's excellent doctrine, and the eye-witnesses of his glorious miracles, there were some who came with no other design than to pick quarrels with him, v. 7. The scribes and Pharisees would not, as became generous adversaries, give him fair warning, that, if he did heal on the sabbath-day, they would construe it into a violation of the fourth commandment, which our Lord's in the sabbath-day, that is because it was a case without precedent, (none having ever cured as he did,) and therefore could not be an adjudged case; but they basely watched him, as the lion does his prey, whether he would heal on the sabbath-day, that they might find an accusation against him, and surprise him with a prosecution.

3. That Jesus Christ was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the purposes of his grace, in the face of those who, he knew, confronted them, v. 8. He knew their thoughts, and what they designed, and he bid the man rise, and stand forth, hereby to try the patient's faith and boldness.

6. He appealed to his adversaries themselves, and to the conviction of natural conscience, whether it was the design of the fourth commandment to restrain men from doing good on the sabbath-day, that is when they will find they have an opportunity for, and which cannot so well be put off to another time; (v. 9.) Is it lawful to do good, or evil, on the sabbath-days? No wicked men are such absurd and unreasonable men as persecutors are, who study to do evil to men for doing good.

7. He healed the poor man, and restored him to the present use of his right hand. With a world's speaking, though he knew that his enemies would not only take offence at it, but take advantage against him for it, v. 10. Let not us be drawn off, either from our duty or from our usefulness, by the oppression we meet with in it.

8. His adversaries were hereby enraged so much the more against him, v. 11. Instead of being convinced by this miracle, as they ought to have been, that he was a Teacher come from God; instead of being confirmed in love with him as a Benefactor to mankind, they were filled with madness, vexed that they could not frighten him from doing good, or hinder the growth of his interest in the affections of the people. They were mad at Christ, mad at the people, mad at themselves. Anger is a short madness, malice is a long one; impotent malice, especially, disappointed malice; such was theirs. They could not prevent his working of this miracle, they commenued one with another what they might do to
Jesus, what other way they might take to run him down. We may well stand amazed at it, that the sons of men should be so wicked as to do thus, and that the son of God should be so patient as to suffer it.

12. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out unto a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer. 13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14. Simon (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon called Zelotes. 16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. 17. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; 18. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. 19. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.

In these verses, we have our Lord Jesus in secret, in his family, and in publicity; and in all three acting like himself.

1. In secret, we have him praying to God, v. 12. This evangelist takes frequent notice of Christ's retirements, to give us an example of secret prayer, by which we must keep up our communion with God daily, and without which it is impossible that the soul should prosper. In those days, when his enemies were filled with madness against him, and were contriving what to do to him, he went out, to pray; that he might answer the type of David, (Ps. 109. 4.) For my love they are my adversaries, but I give myself unto prayer. Observe, 1. He was alone with God; he went out into a mountain to pray, where he might have no disturbance or interruption given him; we are never less alone than when we are thus alone. Whether there was any convenient place built upon this mountain, for devout people to retire to for their private devotions, as some think, and that that oratory, or place of prayer, is meant here by προσευχήν, or θάνατος, to me seems very uncertain. He went into a mountain, for privacy, and therefore, probably, would not go to a place frequented by others. 2. He was long alone with God; He continued all night in prayer. We think one hour a great deal to spend in the duties of the closet; but Christ continued a whole night in meditation and secret prayer. We have a great deal of business at the throne of grace, and we should take a great delight in communion with God, and by both these may be kept sometimes long at prayer. 3. His family, we have him nominating his immediate attendants, that should be the constant auditors of his doctrine, and eye-witnesses of his miracles, that hereafter they might be sent forth as apostles, his messengers to the world, to preach his gospel to it, and plant his church in it, v. 13. After he had continued all night in prayer, one would have thought, that when it was day, he should have restored himself, and got some sleep. No, as soon as any body was stirring, he called unto him his disciples. In serving God, our great care should be, not to lose time, but to make the end of one good day, the beginning of another; Ministers are to be ordained with prayer more than ordinarily solemn. The number of the apostles was twelve; their names here recorded, it is the third time that we have met with them. In each of the three places, the order of them differs, to teach both ministers and Christians not to be too particular, not in giving it, much less in taking it, but looking upon it as a thing not worth taking notice of; let it be as it lights. He that in Mark was called Thaddæus, in Matthew, Lebbonæ, whose surname was Thaddæus, is here called Judæus the brother of James, the son of Alphaæus. He that in Mark and Matthew was called the Canaanite, is here called Simon Zelotes, perhaps for his great zeal in religion. Concerning these twelve here named, we have reason to say, as the queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants, Happy are thy men, and happy are these thy servants, that stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom: never were men so privileged, and yet one of them had a devil, and proved a traitor; (v. 16.) Jesus when he chose him, was not deceived in him.

III. In public, we have him preaching and healing, the two great works between which he divided his time, v. 17. He came down with the twelve from the mountain, and stood in the plain, ready to receive those that resorted to him; and there were presently gathered about him, not only the company of his disciples, who used to attend him, but a great multitude of people, a mixed multitude out of all Judæa and Jerusalem; though it was some scores of miles from Jerusalem to that place of Galilee where Christ now was; though at Jerusalem they had abundance of famous rabbins, that had great names, and bore a mighty sway, yet they came to hear Christ. They came also from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon; though they who lived there, were generally men of business, and therefore they bordered upon Canaanites, yet here were some well affected to Christ; such there were dispersed in all parts, here and there one.

1. They came to hear him; and he preached to them. Those that have not good preaching near them, had better travel far for it than be without it. It is worth while to go a great way, to hear the word of Christ, and to go out of the way of other business for it. 2. They came to be cured by him, and he healed them. Some were troubled in body, and some in mind; some had diseases, some had devils; but both the one and the other, upon their application to Christ, were healed, for he has power over diseases and devils, (v. 17, 18,) over the effects and over the causes. Nay, it should seem, those who had no particular diseases to complain of, yet found it a great satisfaction and renovation to their bodily health and vigour, to partake of the virtue that went out of him; for, (v. 19,) the whole multitude sought to touch him, those that were in health as well as those that were sick, and they were all, one way or other, the better for him, he healed them all; and who is there that doth not need, upon some account or other, to be healed? Note, There is a fulness of grace in Christ, and healing virtue in him, and ready to go out to him, that is enough for all, enough for each.

20. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for...
ye shall laugh. 22. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. 23. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. 24. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. 25. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. 26. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Here begins a practical discourse of Christ, which is continued to the end of the chapter, most of which is found in the sermon upon the mount, Matth. 5, and 7. Some think that this was preached at some other time and place, and there are other instances of Christ's preaching the same things, or to the same purport, at different times; but it is probable that this is only the evangelist's abridgment of that sermon, as is thought that in Matthew text is an abridgment; the beginning and conclusion are much the same; and the story of the cure of the centurion's servant follows presently upon it, both there and here, but it is not material.

In these verses, we have,

1. Blessings pronounced upon suffering saints, as happy people, though the world fifies them; (v. 20.) He lifted up his eyes upon the house, not one of the twelve, but the whole company of them, (v. 17.) and directed his discourse to them; for when he had healed the sick in the plain, he went up again to the mountain, to preach; there he sat, as one having authority, thither they came to him, (Matt. 5. 1.) and to them he directed his discourse, to them he applied it, and taught them to apply it to themselves. When he had laid it down for a truth, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs, (v. 3.) blessed are ye poor. All believers, that take the precepts of the gospel to themselves and live by them, may take the promises of the gospel to themselves, and live upon them. And the application as it is here, seems especially designed to encourage the disciples, with reference to the hardships and difficulties they were likely to meet with, in following Christ.

1. "You are poor, you have left all to follow me, are content to live upon alms with me, are never to expect any worldly preferment in my service; you must work hard, and fare hard, as poor people do; but you are blessed in your poverty, it shall be no prejudice at all to your happiness; nay, you are blessed for it, all your losses shall be abundantly made up to you, for yours is the kingdom of God, all the comforts and graces of his kingdom hereafter, and all the glories and joys of his kingdom hereafter, yours it shall be, nay, yours it is." Christ's poor are rich in faith, Jam. 2. 5.

2. "You hunger now; (v. 21.) you are not fed to the full as others are, you often rise hungry, your commons are so short; or you are so intent upon your work, that you have no time to eat bread, you are glad of a few ears of corn, for a meal's meat; thus you hunger now in this world, but in the other world you shall be filled, shall hunger no more, not thirst any more." 3. "You weep now, are often in tears, tears of repentance, tears of sympathy; you are of them that mourn in Zion. But blessed are you; your present sorrows are no prejudices to, but preparatories for, your future joy; you shall laugh. You have triumphs in reserve; you are but sorrowing in tears, and shall shortly reap in joy," Ps. 126. 5, 6. That which now sorrow after a weary sort, and is weeping now for comforts for themselves, or, rather, God is preparing up comforts for them; and the day is coming, when their mouth shall be filled with laughing, and their life with rejoicing, Job 8. 21.

4. "You now undergo the world's ill will; you must expect all the base treatment that a spiritless world can give you for Christ's sake, because you serve him, and are interested in his interest. But wicked men will hate you, because your doctrine and life convict and condemn them; and those that have church-power in their hands will separate you, you will force you to separate yourselves, and then excommunicate you for so doing, and lay you under the most ignominious censures, will pronounce anathemas against you, as scandalous and incorrigible offenders; they will do this with all possible gravity and solemnity, and the pomp and pageantry of appeals to Heaven, to make the world believe, and almost you yourselves too, that it is ratified in heaven; thus will they endeavour to make you odious to others, and a terror to yourselves." This is supposed to be the proper notion of anathemata— they shall cast you out of their synagogues. "And they that have not this power, will not fail to show their malice, to the utmost of their power; for they will reproach you, will charge you with the blackest crimes, which you are perfectly innocent of, will fasten upon you the blackest characters, which you do not deserve; they will cast out your name as evil, your name as Christians, as apostles; they will do all they can, to render these names odious." This is the application of the eighth beatitude, Matth. 5. 10. Etc.

"Such usage as this seems hard; but blessed are you when you are so used; it is so far from depriving you of your happiness, that it will greatly add to it; it is an honour to you, as it is a brave hero to be employed in the wars, in the service of his prince; and therefore rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy, v. 23. Do not only bear it, but triumph in it. For," (1.) "You are hereby highly dignified in the sight of God; (2.) You are more in the right than the prophets were before you, and therefore not only need not be ashamed of it, but may justly rejoice in it, for it will be an evidence for you that you walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps, are engaged in the same cause, and employed in the same service, with them." (2.) "You will for this be abundantly recompensed in the kingdom of glory; not only your services to Christ, but your sufferings will come into the account; your reward is great in heaven. Venture upon your sufferings, in a full belief that the glory of heaven will abundantly counterbalance all these hardships; so that, though you may be losers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him in the end." II. Wars denounced against prophesying sinners as miserable people, though the world envies them. These we had not in Matthew. It should seem, the best expositions of these verses, compared with the foregoing blessings, is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Lazarus had the blessedness of those that are poor and hunger, and weep now, for in Abraham's bosom all the promises made to them who did so, were made good to him; but the rich man had the voices that follow here, as he had the character of those on whom these woes are entailed.

1. "You have no more to expect, that is, that trust in riches, that have abundance of this world's wealth, and, instead of serving God with it, serve their lusts with it; woe to them, for they have received their consolidation, which they placed their happiness in, and were willing to take up with for a
501. They in their life-time receiv'd their good things, which, in their account were the best things, and all the good things they are ever likely to receive from God. "That you are rich, are in temptation to set your hearts upon a smiling world, and to say, Soul, take thine ease, in the embraces of it. This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and the greatness of that which is to be done after them is past." (Rev. vii. 9, 10.) It is the fable of carnal work-killings, that they make the things of this world their consolation, which were intended only for their convenience, they please themselves with them, pride themselves in them, and make them their heaven upon earth; and to them the consolations of God are small, and of no account. (2.) It is their misery, that they are put off with them as their consolation; let them know it, to their terror, when they are parted therefrom. There is a kind of rest, a final end of it, and nothing remains to them but everlasting misery and torment.

2. Here is a woe to them that are full, (v. 25.) that are fed to the full, and have more than heart could wish, (Ps. 73. 7.) that have their bellies filled with the hid treasures of this world, (Ps. 17. 14.) that, when they have abundance of these, are full, and think they have enough, they need no more, they do not want, Rev. vii. 17. Woe. Now ye are rich. (1 Cor. 4. 8.) They are full of themselves, without God and Christ; woe to such, for they shall hunger, they shall shortly be straitly and emptied of all the things they are so proud of; and when they shall have left behind them in the world all those things which are their fulness, they shall carry away with them such appetites and desires as the world they remove to will afford them no gratifications of; for all the delights of sense, which they are now so full of, will in hell be denied, and in heaven superseded.

3. Here is a woe to them that laugh now, have always a disposition to be merry; and always something to make merry with; that know no other joy than that which is carnal and sensual, and know no other use of this world's goods than purely to indulge that carnal, sensual joy, that banishes sorrow, even godly sorrow, from their minds, and are always entertaining themselves with the laughter of the fool: woe unto such, for it is but now, for a little time, that they laugh, they shall mourn and weep shortly, shall mourn and weep eternally, in a world where there is nothing but weeping and wailing, endless, ceaseless, and remediless sorrow.

4. Here is a woe to them whom all men speak well of, that is, who make it their great and only care, to get the praise and applause of men, who value themselves upon that more than upon the favour of God and his acceptance; (v. 26.) i.e. woe unto you: it seems to intimate that you were not faithful to your trust, and to the souls of men, if you preached so as that no body would be disgusted; for your business is to tell people of their faults, and if you do that as you ought, you will get that ill will which no body can escape. The prophets indeed that flattered your fathers in their wicked ways, but prophesied smooth things to them, were caressed and spoken well of; and if you be in like manner cried up, you will be justly suspected to deal deceitfully as they did. We should desire to have the approbation of those that are wise and good, and not be indifferent to what people say of us; but as we should despise the reproaches, so we should also despise the praises, of the fools in Israel.

27. But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you; Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? For sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

These verses agree with Matth. 5. 38. to the end of that chapter; I say unto you that hear, (v. 27.) to all you that hear, and not to disciples only, for these are lessons of universal concern; He that hath a ear, let him hear. Those that diligently hearken to Christ, shall find he has something to say to them well worth their hearing. Now the lessons Christ here teacheth us are, I. That we must render to all their due, and be honest and just in all our dealings; (v. 31.) As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise, for this is loving our neighbour as ourselves. What we would expect, in reason, to be done to us, either in justice or charity, by others, if they were in our condition, and we in theirs, that, as the matter stands, we must do to them. We must put our souls into their souls' stead, and then pity and succour them, as we would desire and justly expect to be ourselves pitied and succoured.

II. That we must be free in giving to them that need; (v. 30.) "Give to every man that asketh of thee, to every one that is a proper object of charity, that wants necessities, which thou hast wherein to supply out of thy superfluities. Give to those that are not able to help themselves, to those that have not relations in a capacity to help them." Christ would have his disciples ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, to their power, in ordinary cases, and beyond their power in extraordinary.

III. That we must be generous in forgiving those that have been any way injurious to us.

We are taught in demanding our right, when it is denied us; "Him that taketh away thy cloak, either forcibly or fraudulently, forbid him not by any violent means to take thy coat also, v. 29. Let him have that too, rather than fight for it. And (v. 30.) of him that taketh thy goods," (so Dr. Hammond thinks it should be read,) "that borrows them, or that takes them up from thee upon trust, of such do not exact them; if Providence have made such means for thy self and family, that it doeth not good to continue any thing against them, but rather lose it than take them by the throat, Matth. 18. 28. If a man run away in thy debt, and take away thy goods with him, do not perplex thy self, nor be incensed against him." 2. We must not he rigorous in revenging a wrong, when it is done us; "Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, instead of bringing an action against
him, or sending for a writ for him, or bringing him before a justice, offer also the other; that is, pass it by, though thereby thou shouldst be in danger of bringing upon thyself another like indignity; which is commonly pretended in excuse of taking the advantage of the law in such a case. If any one smite thee on the cheek, rather than give another blow to him, that is, let not another answer from him; that is, leave it to God to plead thy cause, and do thou now, 14. shall be great, v. 35. What is given, or laid out, or lent and lost on earth, from a true principle of charity, will be returned to us in the other world, unspeakably to our advantage. "You shall not only be repaid, but rewarded, greatly rewarded; it will be said to you, Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom of glory." [33.] It will redound to our honour; for herein we shall resemble God in his goodness, which is the greatest glory; "Ye shall be the children of the Highest; shall be owned by him as his children, being like him." It is the glory of God, that he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil; bestows the gifts of common providence even upon the worst of men, who are every day provoking him, and rebelling against him as god and master; gives them very precious gifts to their dishonour. Hence he infers, (v. 36.) Be merciful as your Father is merciful; this explains Matth. 5. 48. "Be perfect as your Father is perfect. Imitate your Father in those things that are his highest perfections." Those that are merciful, as God is merciful, even to the evil and the unthankful, are perfect, as God is perfect; so he is pleased graciously to accept it, though infinitely falling short. Charity is called the bond of perfectness, of all the virtues; and should strongly engage us to be merciful to our brethren, even such as have been injurious to us; not only that God is so to others, but that he is so to us, though we have been, and are, evil and unthankful; it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.

37. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38. Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. 39. And he spake a parable unto them: Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? 40. The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. 41. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 42. Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite! cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye. 43. For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 44. For every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. 45. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. 46. And why...
call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say! 47. Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48. He is like a man which built an house, and dugged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth: against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell: and the ruin of that house was great.

All these sayings of Christ we had before in Matthew; some of them, ch. 7. others in other places. They were sayings that Christ often used; they needed only to be mentioned, it was easy to apply them. Grotius thinks that we need not be critical here in seeking for the coherence: they are golden sentences, like Solomon’s proverbs, or parables. Let us observe here,

1. We ought to be very candid in our censures of others, because we need grains of allowance ourselves. To give others the benefit of the doubt ourselves is not to condene not others, because then you yourselves shall not be condemned, v. 37. Exercise towards others the charity which thinks no evil, which bears all things, believes and hopes all things: and then others will exercise that charity toward you. God will not judge and condemn you, men will not. They that are merciful to other people’s names, shall find others merciful to theirs.

2. If we are of a giving and a forgiving spirit, we shall ourselves reap the benefit of it; Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. They that forgive the injuries done to them by others, others will forgive them their inadvertencies. They that forgive others’ trespasses against them, God will forgive them their trespasses against him. And he will be no less mindful of the liberal than of the liberal graces; v. 38. Give, and it shall be given to you. God, in his providence, will recompense it to you; it is lent to him, and he is not unrighteous to forget it, (Heb. 6. 10.) but he will pay it again. Men shall return it into your own bosom; for God often makes use of men as instruments, not only of his avenging, but of his rewarding, justice. If we in a right manner give to others, when they need, God will incline the hearts of others to give to us, when we need, and to give liberally; good measure foreward down and shaken together. That sow plentifully, shall reap plentifully. Whom God recompenses he abundantly recompenses.

3. We must expect to be dealt with ourselves as we deal with others; With the same measure that ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. Those that deal hardly with others, must acknowledge, as Adoni-bezek did, (Judg. 1. 7.) that God is righteous, if they should deal thus with them, and they may expect to be paid in their own coin: but they that deal kindly with others, have reason to hope that, when they have occasion, God will raise them up friends who will deal kindly with them. Though Providence does not always go by this rule, because the full and exact retributions are reserved for another world, yet, ordinarily, it observes a proportion sufficient to deter us from all acts of rigour, and to encourage us in all acts of beneficence.

4. Those who put themselves under the guidance of the ignorant and erroneous, are likely to perish with them; (v. 39.) Can the blind lead the blind? Can the Pharisees who are blinded with pride, prejudice, and bigotry, lead the blind people into the right way? or must we think that the two are together in the ditch? How can they expect any other? Those that are led by the common opinion, course, and custom, of this world, are themselves blind, and are led by the blind, and will perish with the world that sits in darkness. Those that ignorantly, and at a venture, follow the multitude to do evil, follow the blind in the broad way that leads the many to destruction.

Christ’s followers cannot expect better treatment in the world than their Master had. Let them not promise themselves more honour or pleasure in the world than Christ had, nor aim at the worldly pomp and grandeur which he never was ambitious of, but always declined; nor affect that power in secular things, which he would not assume: but every one that would show himself perfect, an established disciple, let him be as his Master, dead and risen again. Let them live a life of labour and self-denial, as his Master doth, and make himself a servant of all; let him stoop, and let him toil, and do all the good he can, and then he will be a complete disciple.

6. Those who take upon them to rebuke and reform others, are concerned to look to it, that they be themselves blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke, v. 41, 42. (1.) Those with a very ill grace and not prudent others, who are not aware of their own faults. It is very easy for the better to tend to be so quick-sighted, as to spy small faults in others, like a mote in the eye, when they are themselves so perfectly past feeling, as not to perceive a beam in their own eye. (2.) Those are altogether unfit to help to reform others, whose reforming charity doth not begin at home. How canst thou offer thy service to thy brother, to put out the thorn from his eye, which maketh a good nation blind as a good man, when thou thyself hast a beam in thine own eye, and makest no complaint of it? (3.) Those therefore who would be serviceable to the souls of others, must first make it appear that they are solicitous about their own souls. To help to pull the mote out of our brother’s eye, is a good work, but then we must qualify ourselves for it by beginning with ourselves; and our reforming of our own lives, must in some degree, if possible, contribute to others reforming theirs.

7. We may expect that men’s words and actions will be according as they are, according as their hearts are, and according as their principles are.

(1.) The heart is the tree, and the words and actions are fruit according to the nature of the tree, v. 43. 44. If a man be really a good man, if he have a principle of grace in his heart, and the prevailing bent and habit of his heart is toward God and his own gracious, though perhaps he may not abound in fruit, though some of his fruits be blasted, and though he may be sometimes like a tree in winter, yet he doth not bring forth corrupt fruit; though he may not do all the good he should, yet he will not in any material instance do you hurt. If he cannot reform ill manners, he will not corrupt good manners. If the fruit that a man brings forth be corrupt, if a man’s deportment is not right, and if his conversation is just, as it is not always the case, a man’s conversation he vicious, if he be a drunkard or fornicator, if he he a swearer or liar, if he be in any instance unjust or unnatural, his fruit is corrupt, and you may be sure that he is not a good tree. On the other hand, a corrupt tree doth not bring forth good fruit, though it may bring forth green leaves; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble do they gather grapes. You may, if you please, stick figs upon thorns, and hang a bunch of grapes upon a bramble, but they neither are, nor can be,
the natural product of the trees; so neither can you
expect any good conduct from the wicked, who have justly
been made, and who therefore must be good, you may
conclude that the tree is so; if the conversation be holy,
heavenly, and regular, though you cannot infallibly
know the heart, yet you may charitably hope that
that is upright with God; for every tree is known by
its own fruit. But the vile person will speak villany;
(Isa. 59. 7.) and the experience of the moderns
herein agrees with the proverb of the ancients, that
mischief proceedeth from the wicked, 1 Sam. 24.
13.

(2.) The heart is the treasure, and the words and
actions are the expenses or produce from that treasure,
p. 45. This we had, Matth. 12. 34, 35. The
reigning love of God and Christ in the heart denomini-
ates a man a good man; and it is a good treasure in
the heart, it enriches a man, it furnishes him with a
good stock to spend upon, for the benefit of others;
out of such a good treasure a man may bring forth
that which is good; but where the love of the world
and the flesh reigns, there is an evil treasure in the
heart, out of which an evil man is continually bring-
ning forth that which is evil; and by what is brought
forth, you may know what is in the heart, as you
may know what is in the vessel, water or wine; by
what a man draws out from it. John 2. 8, 9. Of the trea-
ure of the heart the mouth speaks; what the mouth
ordinarily speaks, speaks with relish and delight,
generally agrees with what is innermost and upper-
most in the heart; He that speaks of the earth, is
eartly, John 3. 31. Not but that a good man may
possibly drop a bad word, and a wicked man make
use of a good word to serve a bad turn: but, for the
most part, the heart is as the words are, vain or serious;
if it therefore concerns us to get our hearts filled,
not only with good, but with abundance of it.

8. It is not enough to hear the sayings of Christ,
but we must do them; not enough to profess relation
to him, as his servants, but we must make con-
science of obeying him.

(1.) It is putting an affront upon him, to call him,
Lord, Lord, as if we were wholly at his command,
and had devoted ourselves to his service, if we do
not make conscience of conforming to his will, and
serving the interests of his kingdom. We do not
mock Christ, as they that in scorn said, Hail, King
of the Jews, if we call him ever so often, Lord, Lord,
and yet walk in the way of our own hearts, and in
the sight of our own eyes. Why do we call him
Lord, Lord, in prayer, (compare Matth. 7. 21, 22.)
if we do not obey his commands. He that turns
away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall
be an abomination.

(2.) It is putting a cheat upon ourselves, if we
think that a bare profession of religion will save us,
that hearing the sayings of Christ will bring us to
heaven, without doing them. This he illustrates by
a similitude, (v. 47—49.) which shows,

[1.] Those only make sure work for their souls
by the eternal, and to the eternal, will they be
had in trying time, who do not only come to
Christ as his scholars, and hear his sayings, but
do them; who think, and speak, and act, in every
thing, according to the established rules of his holy
religion. They are like a house built on a rock;
these are they that take pains in religion, as they do, that
build on a rock, that begin low, as they do, that
dig deep; that found their hope upon Christ, who is
the Rock of ages; for not foundation can stand upon
lay; these are they who prepare for hereafter, who
get ready for the worst, who lay up in store a good
foundation for the time to come, for the eternity to
come, 1 Tim. 6. 19. They who do thus, do well for
themselves; for, First, They shall keep their in-
tegrity, in times of temptation and persecution;
when others fall from their own steadfastness, as the

seed on the stony ground, they shall stand fast in the
Lord. Secondly, They shall keep their comfort,
and peace, and hope, and joy, in the midst of the
greatest distresses. The storms and streams of
affliction shall not shock them, for their fact are set
upon a rock, a rock higher than they. Thirdly,
Their everlasting warfare is secured. In death and
judgment they are safe. Obedient believers are
kept by the power of Christ, through faith, unto sal-
vation, and shall never perish.

[2.] Those who rest in a bare hearing of the say-
ings of Christ, and do not live up to them, are but
preparing for a fatal disappointment; he that heareth,
and doeth not, (that knows his duty, but lives in the
neglect of it,) he is like a man that built a house
without a foundation. He pleases himself with hopes
that he has no ground for, and his hopes will
fail him, when he most needs the comfort of them,
and when he expects the crowning of them; when
the stream beats vehemently upon his house, it is
gone, the sand it is built upon is washed away, and
immediately it falls. Such is the hope of the hy-
jocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away
his soul; it is as the spider’s web, and the giving up
of the ghost.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter we have, 1. Christ confirming of the doctrine
he had preached in the former chapter, with two glorious
miracles—the curing of one at a distance, and that was
the centurion’s servant, (v. 1. 10.) and the raising of one to
life, that was asleep, (v. 22.) the year of our Lord Nain, v. 11. 18. II. Christ confirming the faith of John who was in
prison, and of some of his disciples, by sending him a short
account of the miracles he wrought, in answer to a question
he received from him; (v. 19. 25.) to which he adds an
honourable testimonies concerning John, and a just repro
to the men of that generation, for the contempt they put
upon him and his doctrine, v. 24. 35. III. Christ com-
forting a poor penitent that applied herself to him, all in
 tears of godly sorrow for sin; assuring her that her sin
were pardoned, and justifying himself in the favour he
showed her, against the cavils of a proud Pharisee, v. 36. 50.

1. NOW when he had ended all his say-
ings in the audience of the people,
he entered into Capernaum. 2. And a cer-
tain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto
him, was sick, and ready to die. 3. And
when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the
elders of the Jews, beseeching him that
he would come and heal his servant. 4.
And when they came to Jesus, they be-
sought him instantly, saying, That he was
worthy for whom he should do this: 5. For
he loved our nation, and he hath built us
a synagogue. 6. Then Jesus went with
them. And when he was now not far from
the house, the centurion sent friends to him,
saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself;
for I am not worthy that thou shouldest
enter under my roof: 7. Wherefore neither
thought I myself worthy to come unto thee:
but say in a word, and my servant shall
be healed. 8. For I also am a man set under
authority, having under me soldiers: and
I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to
another, Come, and he cometh; and to my
servant, Do this, and he doeth it. 9. When
Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at
him, and turned him about, and said unto
the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 10 And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.

Some difference there is between this story of the cure of the centurion's servant, as it is related here, and as we have it, Matth. 8. 5, &c. For there it was said, that the centurion came to Christ; here it is said, that he sent to him first some of the elders of the Jews, (v. 2.) and afterward some other friends, v. 3. It is added, which we do by another—Quod facimus pro aulam, id ipsum facere judaeorum. The centurion might be said to do that which he did by his proxies; as a man takes possession by his attorney. But it is probable that the centurion himself came at last, when Christ said to him, (Matth. 8. 13.) As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee.

This miracle is here said to have been wrought by our Lord Jesus, when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, v. 1. What Christ said, he said publicly; whoever would, might come, and hear him; In secret have I said nothing, John 18. 20. Now to give an undeniable proof of the authority of his preaching word, he here gives an incontestable proof of the power and efficacy of his healing word. He had such a commanding empire in the kingdom of grace, as to enjoin duties dispensing with flesh and blood, and bind, under the highest penalties, to the observance of them. This miracle was wrought in Capernaum, where most of Christ's mighty works were done, Matth. 11. 23. Now observe, 1. The centurion's servant that was sick, was dear to his master, v. 2. It was the praise of the servant, that by his diligence and faithfulness, and a manifest concern for his master and his interest, as for himself and for his own, he recommended himself to his master's esteem and love. Servants should study to endear themselves to their masters. It was likewise the praise of the master, that, when he had a good servant, he knew how to value him. Many masters, that are haughty and imperious, think it their glory to be the best servants they have, not to rate them, but buy them, and be cruel to them, whereas they ought to be kind to them, and tender of them, and solicitous for their welfare and comfort.

2. The master, when he heard of Jesus, was desirous to see him, v. 3. Masters ought to take particular care of their servants when they are sick, and not to neglect them then. This centurion begged that Christ would come and heal his servant. We may now, by faithful and fervent prayer, apply ourselves to Christ in heaven, and ought to do so, when sickness is in our families; for Christ is still the great Physician.

3. He sent some of the elders of the Jews to Christ, to represent the case, and solicit for him, thinking that a greater piece of respect to Christ, than if he had come himself, because he was an uncircumcised Gentile, whom he thought Christ, being a people, would not care for conversing with. For that reason, he sent Jews, whom he acknowledged to be favourites of Heaven, and not ordinary Jews neither, but elders of the Jews, persons in authority, that the dignity of the messengers might give honour to him to whom they were sent; Balak sent princes to Balaam.

4. The elders of the Jews were hearty intercessors for the centurion; they besought him instantly, (v. 4.) were very urgent with him, pleading for the centurion, that he which never had pleaded for himself, That he was worthy for whom he should do this. If any Gentile was qualified to receive such a favour, surely he was. The centurion said, I am not so much as worthy of a dog to lie under the feet of my Lord; much less that the elders of the Jews thought him worthy of the cure; thus honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Let another man praise thee, and not thy own mouth. But that which they insisted upon in particular, was, that though he was a Gentile yet he was a hearty well-wisher to the Jewish nation and religion, v. 5. They thought there needed as much with Christ as there did with them, to remove the prejudices against him as a Gentile, a Roman, and an infidel, as against the army, and therefore mention this; (1.) That he was well affected to the people of the Jews; He loved our nation; which few of the Gentiles did. Probably, he had read the Old Testament, whence it was easy to advance to a very high esteem of the Jewish nation, as favoured by Heaven above all people. Note, Even conquerors, and those in power, ought to keep up an affection for the conquered, and those they have power over. (2.) That he was well affected to their worship; He built them a new synagogue at Capernaum, finding that what they had was either gone to decay, or not large enough to contain the people; and that the inhabitants were not of ability to build one for themselves. Hereby, he testified his veneration for the God of Israel, his belief of his being the one only living and true God, and his desire, like the elders of God's Israel, Ezra 6. 10. This centurion built a synagogue at his own proper costs and charges, and, probably, employed his soldiers that were in garrison there, in the building, to keep them from idleness. Note, Building places of meeting for religious worship, is a very good work, is an instance of love to God and his people; and those who do good works of that kind, are worthy of double honour.

5. Jesus Christ was very ready to show kindness to the centurion. He presently went with them, (v. 6.) though he was a Gentile; for, is he the Servant of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, Rom. 11. 29. The centurion did not think himself worthy to visit Christ; (v. 7.) yet Christ thought him worthy to be visited by him; for those that humble themselves shall be exalted among them. 6. The centurion, when he heard that Christ was doing him the honour to come to his house, gave further proofs both of his humility and of his faith. Thus the graces of the saints are quickened by Christ's approaches toward them; When he was now not far from the house, and the centurion had notice of it, instead of setting his house in order for his reception, he sends friends; the meet him with fresh expressions, (1.) Of his humility: "Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am unworthy of such an honour, because I am a Gentile." This bespeaks not only his low thoughts of himself, notwithstanding the greatness of his figure, but his high thoughts of Christ, notwithstanding the meanness of his figure in the world. He knew how to honour a Prophet of God, though he was despised and rejected of men. (2.) Of his faith; Lord, the servant worshipeth, for I know there is no occasion, thou canst cure my servant without coming under my roof, by that almighty power from which no thought can be withheld. Saw in a word, and my servant shall be healed." So far was this centurion from Naaman's fancy, that he should come to him, and stand, and strike his hand over the patient, and so recover him, 2 Kings 5. 11. He illustrates this faith of his by a comparison taken from the art of painting, and is confident that Christ can as easily command away the distemper as he can command any of his soldiers; can as easily send an angel with commission to cure this servant of his
as he can send a soldier on errand, v. 8. Christ has a sovereign power over all the creatures and all their actions, and can change the course of nature as he pleases, and rectify its disorders, and repair its decay in human bodies, for all power is given to him.

7. Our Lord Jesus was wonderfully well pleased with the faith of the centurion, and the more surprised at it, because he was a Gentile; and the centurion's faith having thus honoured Christ, see how he honoured it; (v. 9.) He turned him about, as one amazed, and said to the people that followed him, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Note, Christ will have those that follow him, to observe and take notice of the great examples of faith, that are sometimes set before them, especially when any such are found among those that do not follow Christ so closely as they do, in profession; that we may be shamed by the strength of their faith out of the weaknesses and wavering of ours.

8. The cure was presently and perfectly wrought; (v. 10.) They that were sent, knew they had their errand, and therefore went back, and found the servant well, and under no remaines at all of his distemper. Christ will take cognizance of the distressed case of poor servants, and be ready to relieve them, for there is no respect of persons with him. Nor are the Gentiles excluded from the benefit of his grace; nay, this was a specimen of that much greater faith which would be found among the Gentiles, when the gospel would be published, than among the Jews.

11. And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. 12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. 13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. 14. And he came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. 15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. 16. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. 17. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about. 18. And the disciples of John heaved him of all these things.

We have here the story of Christ's raising to life a widow's son at Nain, that was dead, and in the carrying out to be buried; which Matthew and Mark had made no mention of; only in the general, Matthew had recorded it, in Christ's answer to the disciples of John, that the dead were raised up, Matt. 11. 5. Observe,

The time, and when, this miracle was wrought. It was the next day after he had cured the centurion's servant, v. 11. Christ was doing good every day, and never had cause to complain that he had lost a day. It was done at the gate of a small city, or town, called Nain, not far from Capernaum; probably, the same with a city called Nah, which Jerome speaks of.

II. Who were the witnesses of it; it is well attested as can be, for it was done in the sight of two crowds that met in or near the gate of the city. There were a crowd of disciples and other people attending Christ; (v. 11.) and a crowd of relations and neighbours attending the funeral of the young man, v. 12. Thus there were a sufficient number to attest the truth of this miracle, for it was a greater proof of Christ's divine authority than his healing of diseases, for by no power of nature, or any means, can the dead be raised.

III. It was a work wrought by our Lord Jesus.

1. The person raised to life, was a young man, cut off by death in the beginning of his days; a common case; Man comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. That he was really dead, was universally agreed; there could be no collusion in the case, for Christ was entering into the town, and had not seen him till now that he met him upon the bier. He was carried out of the city, for the Jew's burying-places were without their cities, and at some distance from them. This young man was the only son of his mother, and she a widow. She depended upon him to be the staff of her old age, but he proves a broken reed; every man at his best estate is so. How numerous, how various, how calamitous, are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! What a value we set upon human life! How one precious life is exchanged for the world! We may well think how deep the sorrow of this poor mother was for her only son; it is used, to express the greatest grief; (Zech. 12. 10.) it was the deeper in that she was a widow; broken with breach upon breach, and a full end made of her comforts. Much people of the city was with her, by condoling with her loss, to comfort her.

2. Christ showed both his pity and his power, in raising a man to life, that he might give a specimen of both, which shines so bright in man's redemp.

(1.) See how tender his compassions are toward the afflicted; (v. 13.) When the Lord saw the poor widow following her son to the grave, he had compassion on her. Here was no application made to him for her, not so much as that he would speak some words of comfort to her, that or of what she needed. We may well think how deep the sorrow of this poor mother was for her only son; it is used, to express the greatest grief; (Zech. 12. 10.) it was the deeper in that she was a widow; broken with breach upon breach, and a full end made of her comforts. Much people of the city was with her, by condoling with her loss, to comfort her.

(2.) See how triumphant his commands are, even over death itself; (v. 14.) He came and touched the
ier, or coffin, in or upon which the dead body lay; for to him it would be no pollution. Hereby he intimated to the bearers, that they should not proceed; he had something to say to the dead young man; Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job 33. 24. Hereupon, they bare him still, and, probably, on his knees, from their shoulders to the ground, and opened the coffin, if it were closed up; and then with solemnity, as one that had authority, and to whom belonged the issues from death, he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. The young man was dead, and could not arise by any power of his own; (no more can those that are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins;) yet it was no absurdity at all for Christ to bid him arise, when a power went along with that word, to a立 life into him. The gospel-call to all people, to young people particularly, is, "Arise, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light and life." Christ's dominion over death was evidenced by the immediate effect of his word; (v. 15.) He that was dead, stood up, without any help. When Christ put life into him, he made it appear by his sitting up. Have we grace from Christ? Let us show it. Another event was, that he began to speak; for whenever Christ gives us spiritual life, he opens the lips in prayer and praise. And, lastly, he would not oblige this young man to whom he had given a new life, to go along with him, either as his disciple to minister to him, (though he owed him even his own self,) much less as a trophy or show to get honour by him, but delivered him to his mother, to attend her as became a dutiful son; for Christ's miracles were miracles of mercy; and a great act of mercy this was to this widow; now she was comforted, according to the time in which she had been afflicted, and much more; for she could now look upon this son as a particular favourite of heaven, with more pleasure than if he had not died.

IV. What influence it had upon the people; (v. 16.) There came a fear on all; it frightened them all, to see a dead man start up alive out of his coffin in the open street, at the command of a man; they were all struck with wonder at this miracle, and glorified God. The Lord and his goodness, as well as the Lord and his greatness, are to be feared. The inference they drew from it, was, "A great Prophet is risen up among us, the great Prophet that we have been looking for; doubtless, he is one divinely inspired, who can thus breathe life into the dead; and in him God hath visited his people and performed all the predictions of the prophets; as expected," Luke 1. 68. This would be life from the dead indeed to all them that waited for the Consolation of Israel. When dead souls are thus raised to spiritual life by a divine power going along with the gospel, we must glorify God, and look upon it as a gracious visit to his people. The report of this miracle was carried, 1. In general, all the country over; (v. 17.) This rumour of him that he was the great Prophet, went forth upon the world, even through all Judaea, which lay a great way off, and throughout all Galilee, which was the region round about. Most got this notice of him, yet few believed in him, and gave up themselves to him. Many have the rumour of Christ's gospel in their ears, that have not the savour and relish of it in their souls. 2. In particular, it was carefully brought to John Baptist, who was now in prison; (v. 18.) He gave him assurance of all things, that he might know that though he was bound, yet the word of the Lord was not bound; God's work was going on, though he was laid aside.

19. And John calling unto him two of his disciples, sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 20. When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? 21. And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. 22. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. 23. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. 24. And when the messengers of John were departed he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? 25. But what went ye out for to see? A manclothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. 26. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. 27. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. 28. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. 29. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. 30. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him. 31. And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation! and to what are they like? 32. They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. 33. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. 34. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! 35. But Wisdom is justified of all her children.

All this discourse concerning John Baptist, occasioned by his sending to ask whether he was the Messiah or no, we had, much as it is here related, Matth. 11. 2—19.

1. We have here the message John Baptist sent to Christ, and the return he made to it. Observe,

1. The great thing we are to inquire concerning, is, whether he be he that should come to redeem and save sinners, or whether we are to look for another,
2. The faith of John Baptist himself, or at least of his disciples, wanted to be confirmed in this matter; for Christ had not yet publicly declared himself to be indeed the Christ, nay, he would not have had so many of his followers as these are sufficient till the proofs of his being so were completed in his resurrection. The great men of the Jewish church had not owned him, nor had he gained any interest that was like to set him upon the throne of his father David. Nothing of that power and grandeur was to be seen about him, in which it was expected that the Messiah would appear. And therefore it is not strange that they should ask, Art thou the Messiah? not doubting but that if he were not, he would direct them what other to look for.

3. Christ left it to his own works to praise him in the gates, to tell what he was, and to prove it. While John's messengers were with him, he wrought many miraculous cures, in that same hour; which perhaps intimated, that they said but an hour with him; and what a deal of work did Christ do in a little time? But his followers are sufficient; for there were sufficient confirmations of his commission, but explications of it. The Messiah must come to cure a diseased world, to give light and sight to them that sit in darkness, and to restrain and conquer evil spirits; you see that Jesus does this to the bodies of people, and therefore must conclude. This is he that should come to do it to the souls of people; and you are to look for no other. To his miracles in the kingdom of nature he adds this in the kingdom of grace, (v. 22.) To the poor the gospel is preached; which, they knew, was to be done by the Messiah, for he was anointed to preach the gospel to the meek, (Isa. 61. 1.) and to save the souls of the poor and needy, Ps. 72. 13. Judge, therefore, whether you can look for any other that will more fully answer the characters of the Messiah, and the great intentions of his coming.

4. He gave them an intimation of the danger people were in of being prejudiced against him, notwithstanding these evident proofs of his being the Messiah; (v. 23.) Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me, or scandalized at me. We are here in a state of trial and probation; and it is agreed and determined that God has not only raised up arguments, to confirm the truth to those that are honest and impartial in searching after it, and have their minds prepared to receive it, so there should be also objections, to cloud the truth to those that are careless, worldly, and sensual; Christ's education at Nazareth, his residence at Galilee, the meanness of his family and relations, his poverty, and the despisableness of his followers; these and the like were stumbling-blocks to many, which all the miracles he wrought could not help them over. He is blessed, for he is wise, humble, and well disposed, that is not overcome by these prejudices. It is a sign that God has blessed him, for it is by his grace that he is helped over these stumbling stones; and he shall be blessed indeed, blessed in Christ.

II. We have here the high encomium which Christ gave of John Baptist; not while his messengers were present, lest he should seem to flatter them; but when they were departed, (v. 24.) to make the people sensible of the advantages they had enjoyed in John's ministry, and were deprived of by his imprisonment. Let them now consider, what they went out into the wilderness to see: who that was, about whom there had been so much talk, and such a great and general amazement. "Come," said Christ, "I will tell you.

He was a man of unshaken self-consistence; a man of steadfastness and constancy; he was not a reed shaken with the wind, first in one way, and then in another, shifting with every wind, he was firm as a rock, not fickle as a reed; if he could have bowed like a reed to Herod, and have complied with the court, he might have been a favourite there; but none of these things moved him.

He was a man of unparalleled self-denial, a great example of mortification and contempt of the world; he was not a man cloathed in soft raiment, nor did he live delicately; (v. 25.) but, on the contrary, he lived in a wilderness, and was clad and fed accordingly; instead of adorning and pampering the body, he brought it under, and kept it in subjection.

3. He was a prophet, had his commission and instructions immediately from God, and not of man, (v. 26.) but they were no messages, nor any oracles; he had not been under a revelation of any sort and nature to foretell the future, but that he never taken notice of; for his glory, as a prophet, eclipsed the honour of his priesthood; nay, he was more, he was much more than a prophet, (v. 26.) than any of the prophets of the Old Testament, for they spoke of Christ as at a distance, he spoke of him as at the door.

4. He was the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah, and he was himself prophesied of in the Old Testament; (v. 27.) This is he of whom it is written, (Mal. 3. 1.) Behold, I send my messenger before thy face. Before he sent the Master himself, he sent a messenger, to give notice of his coming, and prepare people to receive him. Had the Messiah been to appear as a temporal Prince, under which character the carnal Jews expected him, his messenger, it would have appeared, either in the face of a general, or the society of a herald at arms; but it was a previous indication, plain enough, of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, that the messenger he sent before him to prepare his way, did it by preaching repentance, and reformation of man's hearts and lives; certainly that kingdom was not of this world, which was thus ushered in.

5. He was, upon this account, so great, that really there was not a greater prophet than he. Prophets were the greatest that were born of women, more honourable than kings and princes, and John was the greatest of all the prophets; the country was not sensibly what a valuable, what an invaluable, man it had in it, when John Baptist went about preaching and baptizing. And yet he that is least in the kingdom of God, is greater than he. The least gospel-messenger that John was, or any of his followers, was to be skilful and faithful in his work; or the meanness of the apostles, and first preachers of the gospel, being employed under a more excellent dispensation, are in a more honourable office than John Baptist. The meanness of those that follow the Lamb, far exceed the greatest of those that went before him. Those therefore who live under the gospel-dispensation, have no reason to think that they are not in a more glorious state than those who lived in the days of John Baptist.

III. We have here the just censure of the men of that generation, who were not wrought upon by the ministry either of John Baptist or of Jesus Christ himself.

1. Christ here shows what contempt was put upon John Baptist, while he was preaching and baptizing.
(1) Those who did show him any respect, were but
the common, ordinary sort of people; who, in the eye of the gay part of mankind, were rather a disgrace to him than any credit; (v. 29.) the people indeed, the vulgar herd, of whom it was said, This people wise in their own eyes, and sanity; (John 7. 49.) and the reformers of the Messiah; they had made it to appear that it was the heathen method that could be taken, for it was not in vain to them, whatever it was to others. (2.) The great men of their church and nation, the Pharisees, and the politicians, that would have done him some credit in the eye of the world, did him all the dishonour they could; they heard him indeed, but they were not baptized of him; (v. 30.) the Pharisees, who were most in reputation for religion and devotion, and the lawyers, who were celebrated for their learning, especially their knowledge of the scriptures, they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, they frustrated it, they received the grace of God, by the baptism of John, in vain. God sending that messenger among them, had a kind purpose of good to them, designed their salvation by it, and if they had closed with the counsel of God, it had been for themselves, they had been wise for ever; but they rejected it, would not comply with it, and it was against themselves, it was to their own ruin; they came short of the benefit intended them, and not only so, but forfeited the grace of God, put a bar in their own door, and by refusing that discipline which was to fit them for the kingdom of the Messiah, shut themselves out of it, and they not only excluded themselves, but hindered others from entering in their way.

2. He here shows the strange perverseness of the men of that generation, in their evils both against John and Christ, and the prejudices they conceived against them.

(1.) They made but a jesting matter of the method God took to do them good; (v. 31.) "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? What can I think of, absurd enough to represent them by? They are like children sitting in the marketplace, that mind nothing that is serious, but are full of play as they can hold; as if God were but in jest with them, in all the methods he takes to do them good, as children are with one another in the market-place; (v. 32.) they turn it all off with a banter, and are no more affected with it than with a piece of pagancy." This is the ruin of multitudes, they can never persuade themselves to be serious in the true business of their souls; old men sitting in the sabbath, were made children again, to sit in the market-place, and no more affected with the things that belonged to their everlasting peace than people are with children's play. O the amazing stupidity and vanity of the blind and ungodly world! The Lord awakens them out of their security.

(2.) They still found something or other to carp at.

[1.] John Baptist was a reserved, austere man, lived much in solitude, and ought to have been admired for being such a humble, sober, self-denying man, and hearkened to as a man of thought and contemplation; but this, which was his praise, was turned to his reproach; because he came neither eating nor drinking, so freely, plentifully, and cheerfully, as others did, we say, "He had a devil: he is a melancholy man, he is possessed as the demoniac whose dwelling was among the tombs, though he be not so wild."

[2.] Our Lord Jesus was of a more free and open conversation; he came eating and drinking; (v. 34.) he would go and dine with Pharisees, though he knew they did not care for him; and with publicans, though he knew they were no credit to him; yet, in hopes of doing good, both to the one and the other, he conversed familiarly with them. By this it appears that the ministers of Christ may be of very different tempers and dispositions, very different ways of preaching and living, and yet all good and useful; diversitv of gifts, but each given to profit withal; therefore none must make themselves a standard to all others, nor judge hardly of those that do not do just as they do. John Baptist bore witness to Christ, and Christ applauded John Baptist, though they were the reverse of each other in their way of living. But the common enemies of them both reproached them both. The very same men that had represented John as crazed in his intellects, because he came neither eating nor drinking, represented our Lord Jesus as corrupt in his morals, because he came eating and drinking: he is a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber. Ill will never speaks well. See the malice of wicked people, and how they will the worst construction upon every thing they meet with in the gospel, and in the preachers and professors of it; and hereby they think to diminish them, but really destroy themselves.

Lastly, He shows that, notwithstanding this, God will be glorified in the salvation of a chosen remnant; (v. 35.) Wisdom is justified of all her children. There are those who are given to wash the sins of their children, and they shall be brought, by the grace of God, to submit to wisdom's conduct and government, and thereby to justify wisdom in the ways she takes for bringing them to that submission; for to them they are effectual, and thereby appear well chosen. Wisdom's children are herein unanimous, one and all, they have all a complacency in the methods of grace which divine wisdom takes, and think never the worse of them for being ridiculed by some.

36. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. 37. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38. And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. 39. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. 40. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: 42. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? 43. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.
And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 44. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. 45. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 7. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50. And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

When and where this passage of story happened, does not appear; this evangelist does not observe order of time in his narratives, so much as the other evangelists do; but it comes in here, upon occasion of Christ's being reproached as a Friend of publicans and sinners, to show that it was only for their good, and to bring them to repentance, that he conversed with them; and that those whom he admitted near him, were reformed, or in a hopeful way to be so. Who this woman was, that here testified so great an affection to Christ, does not appear; it is commonly said to be Mary Magdalene, but I find no ground in scripture for it; she is described (ch. 8. 2. and Mark 16. 9.) to be one out of whom Christ had cast seven devils; but that is not mentioned here; and therefore it is probable that it was not she.

Now observe here,
1. The civil entertainment which a Pharisee gave to Christ, and his gracious acceptance of that entertainment; (v. 36.) One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him; either because he thought it would be a reputation to him to have such a guest at his table, or because his company would be an entertainment to him and his family and friends. It appears that this Pharisee did not believe in Christ, for he will not own him to be a Prophet, (v. 39.) and yet can Lord Jesus accepted his invitation, went into his house, and sat down to meat; that they might see he took the same liberty with Pharisees that he did with publicans, in hopes of doing them good. And those may venture further into the society of such as are prejudiced against Christ, and his religion, who have wisdom and grace sufficient to instruct and argue with them, than others may.
2. The great respect which a poor penitent sinner showed him, when he was at meat in the Pharisee's house. It was a woman in the city, that was a sinner, a Gentile, a harlot, I doubt, known to be so, and infamous; she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, and, having been converted from her wicked coarse of life by his preaching, she came to acknowledge her obligations to him, having no opportunity of doing it any other way, than by washing his feet, and anointing them with some sweet ointment that she brought with her for that purpose. The way of sitting at table then was such, that their feet were partly behind them. Now this woman did not look Christ in the face, but came behind him, and did the part of a maid-servant, whose office it was to wash the feet of the guests, 1 Sam. 25. 41. and to prepare the ointments.

Now in what this good woman did, we may observe,
1. Her deep humiliation for sin; she stood behind him weeping; her eyes had been the inlets and outlets of sin, and now she makes them fountains of tears. Her face is now foul with weeping, which perhaps used to be covered with paints. Her hair now made a towel of, which before had been plaited and adorned. We have reason to think that she had before sorrowed for sin; but now that she had an opportunity of coming into the presence of Christ, he wounded lily fresh and her sorrow renewed. Note, It well becomes penitents, upon all their approaches to Christ, to renew their godly sorrow and shame for sin, when he is faceted, Ezek. 16. 63.
2. Her strong affection to the Lord Jesus; this was it that our Lord Jesus took special notice of, that she loved much; (cf. 45. 47.) She washed his feet, in token of her ready submission to the meanest office in which she might do him honour. Now, she washed them with her tears, tears of joy; she was in a transport, to find herself so near her Saviour, whom her soul loved. She kissed his feet, as one unworthy of the kisses of his mouth, which the spouse coveted, Cant. 1. 2. It was a kiss of adoration as well as affection; She worshiped him with her hair, as one entirely devoted to his honour; her eyes shall yield water to wash them, and her hair be a towel to wipe them; and she anointed his feet with the ointment; offering him hereby to be the Messiah, the Anointed; she anointed his feet, in token of her consent to God's design in anointing his head with the oil of gladness.

Note, All true penitents have a dear love to the Lord Jesus.
3. The offence which the Pharisee took at Christ, for admitting the presence of this poor penitent woman, he had not so much knowledge, as to perceive that this woman is a sinner, is a Gentile, is a woman of ill fame; and so much sanctity as therefore to not suffer her to come so near him; for can one of such a character approach a Prophet, and his heart not rise at St? See how apt providence, and narrow souls, do think that others should be as haughty and censorious as themselves. Simon, if she had touched him, would have said, Stand by thyself, come not near me, I am holier than thou; (Isa. 65. 5.) and he thought Christ should say so too.

IV. Christ's justification of the woman in what she did to him, and of himself in admitting it. Christ knew what the Pharisee spoke within himself, and made answer to it: Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; v. 40. Though he was kindly entertained at his table, yet even there he reproved him for what he saw ami in him, and would not suffer sin upon him. Those whom Christ hath something against, he hath something to say to, for his Spirit shall reprove. Simon is willing to give him the hearing; he saith, Master, speak on. Though he could not believe him to be a Prophet, (because he was not so nice and precise as he was,) yet he can compliment him with the title of Master, among those that cry, Lord, Lord, but do not the things which he saith. Now Christ, in his answer to the Pharisee, reasons thus: It is true, this woman has been a sinner, he knows it; but she is a pardoned sinner, which supposes her to be a penitent sinner; she is a woman, she has a heart sorry for sin, and love to her Saviour, by whom her sins were forgiven; if she was pardoned, who had been so great a sinner, it might reasonably be expected that she should love her Saviour more than others, and should give greater proofs of it than others; and if this was the
fruit of her love, and flowing from a sense of the pardon of her sins, it became him to accept of it, and it became the Pharisee to be offended at it.  

Now Christ has a further reach in this; the Pharisee was a Pharisee, and may he did, in effect, deny it; but Christ shows that he was more than a prophet, for he is one that has power on earth to forgive sins, and to whom are owing the afflictions and thankful acknowledgments of penitent, pardoned sinners.  

Now, in his answer,  

1. He doth by a parable force Simon to acknowledge that the greater sinner this woman had been, the greater love she ought to show to Jesus Christ when her sins were pardoned; (v. 41—43.) A man had two debtors that were both insolvent, but one of them owed him ten times more than the other; he very freely forgave them both, and did not take the advantage of the law against them, did not order them and their children to be sold, or deliver them to the tormentors: now they were both sensible of the great kindness they had received; but which of them will love him most? Certainly, saith the Pharisee, he to whom he forgave most; and herein he rightly judged. Now we, being obliged to forgive, as we are, and hope to be, forgiven, may from hence learn the duty between debtor and creditor. (1.) The debtor, if he have any thing to pay, ought to make satisfaction to his creditor. No man can reckon that his own, or have any comfortable enjoyment of mercy which is so when all his debts are paid. (2.) If God in his providence hath disabled the debtor to pay his debt, the creditor ought not to be severe with him, nor to go to the utmost rigour of the law with him, but freely to forgive him. Sumnum jus est summum injuria.—The law stretched into rigour becomes unjust. Let the unmerciful creditor read that parable, Matth. 18. 23, &c. and tremble; for they shall have judgment without mercy, that show no mercy. The debtor that has found his creditors merciful, ought to be very grateful to them; and if he cannot otherwise recompense them, ought to love them. Some insolvent debtors, instead of being grateful, are spiteful, to their creditors that lose by them, and cannot give them a good word, only because they complain, whereas losers may have leave to speak. But this parable speaks of God as the Creditor, (or rather of the Israelites as such,) for he it is that forgives, and that is beloved, by the debtor, (the Pharisee,) and sinners are the debtors: and so we may learn here,  

[1.] That sin is a debt, and sinners are debtors to God Almighty. As creatures, we owe a debt, a debt of obedience to the precept of the law, and for non-payment of that, as sinners, we become liable to the penalty. We have not paid our rent, nay, we have wasted our Lord's goods, and so we become debtors. God has an action against us for the injury we have done him, and the omission of our duty to him.  

[2.] That some are deeper in debt to God, by reason of sin, than others are; One owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. The Pharisee was the less debtor, yet he a debtor too, which was more than he thought himself, but rather that God was his Debtor, Luke 18. 10, 11. This woman, that was in debt, ten times more; the greatest, notorious sinner, was the greater debtor. Some sinners are greater debtors than others, and some sinners, by reason of divers aggravating circumstances, greater debtors; as those that have sinned most openly and scandalously, that have sinned against greater light and knowledge, more convictions and warnings, and more mercies and means.  

[3.] That, whether our debt be more or less, it is more than we are able to pay; They had nothing to pay, nothing at all to make a composition with; for the debt is great, and we have nothing at all to pay it with; silver and gold will not pay our debt, nor will sacrifice and offering, even thousands of rams. The righteousness of our own will not do, no, not our repentance and obedience for the future: for it is what we are already bound to, and it is God that works it within us.  

[4.] That the God of heaven is ready to forgive, frankly to forgive poor sinners, upon gospel-terms, though their debt be ever so great. If we repent, and believe in Christ, our iniquity shall not be our ruin, it shall not be laid to our charge. God has proclaimed his forgiveness to all sinners, and to be ready to forgive sin; and his Son having purchased pardon for penitent believers, his gospel promises it to them, and his Spirit seals it, and gives them the comfort of it.  

[5.] That those who have their sins pardoned, are obliged to love him that pardoned them; and the more is forgiven them, the more they should love him. The greater sinners any have been before their conversion, the greater saints they should be after; the more they should study to do for God, and the more their hearts should be enlarged in obedience. When a persecuting Saul became a preaching Paul, he laboured more abundantly.  

2. He applies this parable to the different temper and conduct of the Pharisee and the sinner toward Christ. Though the Pharisee would not allow Christ to a poor sinner, Christ in a certain state, and that he was one forgiven, though to him less was forgiven. He did indeed show some love to Christ, in inviting him to his house, but nothing to what this poor woman showed. “Observe,” saith Christ to him, “she is one that has much forgiven her, and therefore, according to thine own judgment, it might be expected that she should love much more than thou dost, and so it appears;” (v. 44.) “She loveth much that loveth much.” Thou art not more affectionate to her than she is to thee: she is to me as thou art; should I then accept thy kindness, and refuse hers? (1.) “Thou didst not so much as order a basin of water to be brought, to wash my feet in, when I came in, warr'd and dirtied with my walk, which would have been some refreshment to me; but she has done much more, she has washed my feet with tears, tears of affection to me, tears of affliction for sin, and has kissed them with the hairs of her head, in token of her great love to me.” (2.) “Thou didst not so much as kiss my cheek;” (which was an usual expression of a hearty and affectionate welcome to a friend; “but this woman has not ceased to kiss my feet,” (v. 45.) thereby expressing both a humble and an affectionate love.” (3.) “Thou didst not provide me a little common oil, as usual, to anoint my head with; but she has bestowed a box of precious ointment upon my feet;” (v. 46.) so far has she outdone thee. The reason why some people blame the pains and expense of zealous christians in religion is, because they are not willing themselves to come up to it, but resolve to rest in a cheap and easy religion.  

3. He silenced the Pharisee's cavil; (v. 47.) I say unto thee, Simon, her sins, which are many, are forgiven. He owns that she had been guilty of many sins; yet he shows that there is no way unbecoming me to accept her kindness. They are forgiven, for she loved much.” It should be rendered, therefore she loved much; for it is plain, by the tenor of Christ's discourse, that her loving much was not the cause but the effect of her pardon, and of her comfortable sense of it; for we love God because he first loved us; he did not forgive us because we first loved him. “But to whom little is forgiven, the same is not loved much, as thou dost.” Hereby he intimates to the Pharisee,
40. He silenced her fears, who, probably, was discouraged by the Pharisee's offence, and yet would not contradict him, if she could; and so induced him (1.) Christ said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven, v. 43. Note, The more we express our sorrow for sin, and our love to Christ, the clearer evidence we have of the forgiveness of our sins; for it is by the experience of a work of grace wrought in us, that we obtain the assurance of an act of grace, wrought for us. How well was she paid for her pains and costs, when she was dismissed with this word from Christ, Thy sins are forgiven, and what an effectual prevention would this be of her return to sin again! (2.) Though there were those present, who quarreled with Christ, in their own minds, for presuming to forgive sin, and pronounce sinners absolved, (v. 49.) as those had done, (Matt. 9. 3.) yet he stood to what he had said; for as he had there proved that he had power to forgive sin, by curing the man sick of the palsy, and therefore would not here take notice of the cavil, so he would now show that he had power in forgiving sin, and it was his delight; he loves to speak pardon and peace to penitents; (v. 50.) He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. This would confirm and double her comfort in the forgiveness of her sin, that she was justified by her faith. All these expressions of sorrow for sin, and love to Christ, were the effects and products of faith; and therefore as faith, of all graces, doth most honour God, so Christ doth, of all graces, put most honour upon faith. Note, They who know that their faith hath saved them, may go in peace, may go on their way rejoicing.

**CHAP. VIII.**

Most of this chapter is a repetition of divers passages of Christ's preaching and miracles which we had before in Mark. The barley-loaves, and the five fishes, which he blessed, that they might be sufficient for the people to eat, are worth repeating, and therefore they are repeated, that out of the mouth not only of two, but of three, witnesses every word may be established. Here is, I. A general account of the gathering of the multitude, and the subsistence provided for himself and his numerous family, by the charitable contributions of good people, v. 1. 3. II. The parable of the sower, and the four sorts of ground, with the exposition of it, and some inferences from it, v. 4. 15. III. The preaching by which Christ gave to his obedient disciples, before his nearest relations according to the flesh, v. 19. 21. IV. His stilling of a storm at sea, with a word's speaking, v. 22. 23. V. His casting of a legion of devils out of a man that was possessed by them, v. 26. 30. VI. His healing of the woman that had the bloody issue, and raising of Jairus's daughter to life, v. 41. 50.

1. And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him; 2. And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits, and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered unto him of his substance.

We are here told, 1. What Christ made the constant business of his life— it was preaching; in that work he was indefatigable, and went about doing good; (v. 1. afterward— in παντοποιησας— in the proper time or method, he did it.) 2. How he preached perhaps most acceptable where it was new. He went about through every city, that none might plead ignorance. Hereby he set an example to his disciples; they must traverse the nations of the earth, as he did the cities of Israel. Nor did he confine himself to the cities, but went into the villages, among the plain country-people, to preach to the inhabitants of the villages, free from the weight of religion.

1. Where he preached; He showed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, that it was now to be set up among them. Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings, and those Jesus Christ came to bring; to tell the children of men that God was willing to take all those under his protection, that were willing to return to their allegiance; it was glad tidings to the world, that there was hope of its being reformed and restored.

2. What he preached; He showed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, that it was now to be set up among them. Tidings of the kingdom of God are glad tidings, and those Jesus Christ came to bring; to tell the children of men that God was willing to take all those under his protection, that were willing to return to their allegiance; it was glad tidings to the world, that there was hope of its being reformed and restored.

3. Who were his attendants; The twelve were with him, not to preach if he were present, but to learn from him what and how to preach hereafter, and, if occasion were, to be sent to places where he could not go. Happy were these his servants that heard his wisdom.

11. Where he had the necessary supports of life: He lived upon the kindness of his friends; there were certain women who frequently attended his ministry, that ministered to him of his substance, v. 2. 3. Some of them are named; but there were many others, who were zealously affected to the doctrine of Christ, and thought themselves bound in justice to encourage it, having themselves found benefit, and in charity, hoping that many others might find benefit by it too.

1. They were much, for the most part, as had been Christ's patients, and were the monuments of his power and mercy; they had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities. Some of them had been troubled in mind, had been melancholy, others of them afflicted in body, and he had been to them a powerful Healer. He is the Physician both of body and soul, and those who have been healed by him, ought to study what they shall render to him in return, in interest to attend him, that we may be ready to apply ourselves to him for help in case of a relapse; and we are bound in gratitude to serve him and his gospel, who hath saved us, and saved us by it.

2. One of them was Mary Magdalene, out of whom had been cast seven devils; a certain number for an uncertain. Some think that she was one that had been very invent, and they speculate that it was the woman that was a sinner, mentioned just before, ch. 7. Dr. Lightfoot, finding in some of the Talmudists' writings that Mary Magdalene signified Mary the plaiter of hair, thinks it applicable to her, she having been noted in the days of her iniquity and infamy, for that pining of hair, which is opposed to modest apparel, 1 Tim. 2. 9. But though she had been an immodest woman, upon her repentance and reformation she found mercy, and became a zealous disciple of Christ. Note, The greatest of sinners must not despair of pardon; and the worst any have been before their conversion, the more they should study to do for Christ after. Or rather, she was one that had been very melancholy, and then, probably, it was Mary the sister of Lazarus,
who was a woman of a sorrowful spirit; who might have been originally of Magdala, but removed to Bethany. This Mary Magdalen was attending on Christ's cross and his sepulchre, and if she was not Mary the sister of Lazarus, either that particular friend and favourite of Christ, or the evangelists did not take notice of her, neither of which we can suppose; thus Dr. Lightfoot argues. Yet there is this to be objected against it, that Mary Magdalen is reckoned among the women that followed Jesus from Galilee; (Matt. 27, 55, 56;) whereas Mary the sister of Lazarus had her residence in Bethany.

3. Another of these was Joanna the wife of Chuzu, Herod's steward. She had been his wife, (so some,) but was now a widow, and left in good circumstances; if she was now his wife, we have reason to think that her husband, though preferred in Herod's court, had received the gospel, and was very willing that his wife should be both a hearer of Christ, and a contributor to him.

4. There were many of them that ministered to Christ of their substance. It was an instance of the sweetness of that condition to which our Saviour humbled himself, that he needed it, and his great humility and condescension, that he accepted it. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, and lived upon alms. Let none say that they scorn to be beholden to the charity of their neighbours, when Providence has brought them into straits; but let them ask, and be thankful for it as a favour. Christ would rather be beholden to his known friends for his maintenance for himself and his disciples, than be burdensome to strangers in the cities and villages whither he came to preach. Note, It is the duty of those who are taught in the word, to communicate to them who teach them in all good things; and those who are herein liberal and cheerful, honour the Lord with their substance, and bring a blessing upon it.

5. And when many people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: 5. A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the way-side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. 6. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. 7. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. 8. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred-fold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. 9. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? 10. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

11. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12. Those by the way-side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. 14. And that which fell among thorns are they, which when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. 15. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience. 16. No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light. 17. For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid that shall not be known and come abroad. 18. Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemed to have. 19. Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. 20. And it was told him by certain, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. 21. And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.

The former paragraph began with an account of Christ's industry in preaching; (v. 1.) this begins with an account of the people's industry in hearing, v. 4. He went into every city, to preach; so they, one would think, should have contended themselves to hear him when he came to their own cities; (we know those that would,) but there were those here, that came to him out of every city, would not stay till he came to them, nor think that they had had enough when he left them, but met him when he was coming toward them, and followed him when he was going from them. Nor did he excuse himself from going to the cities, with this, that there were some from the cities, that came to him; for though there were, yet the most had not zeal enough to bring them to him, and therefore such is his wonderful condescension, that he will go to them; for he is found of those that sought him not, Isa. 65. 1.

Here was, it seems, a vast conourse, much people were gathered together, abundance of fish to cast the net among; and he was as ready and willing to teach as they were to be taught. Now in these verses, we have,

I. Necessary and excellent rules and cautions for hearing the word, in the parable of the sower, and the explanation and application of it, all which we had twice before mentioned. When Christ had put forth this parable, 1. The disciples were inquisitive concerning the meaning of it, v. 9. They asked him, What might this parable be? Note, We should strive earnestly to know the true intent, and full extent, of the word we hear, that we may be neither mistaken nor defective in our knowledge. 2. Christ made them sensible of what great advantage it was to them, that they had opportunity of acquainting themselves with the mystery and meaning of his word, which others had not; (v. 10.) Unto you it is
given. Note, Those who would receive instruction from Christ, must know and consider what a privilege it is to be instructed by him, what a distinguishing privilege to be led into the light, such a light, when others are left in darkness, such a darkness. Happy are we, and for ever indebted to free grace, if the same thing that is a <em>parable</em> to others, with which they are only amused, is a plain truth to us, by which we are enlightened and converted, and into the mould of which we are delivered.

Now from the parable itself, and the explication of it, observe,

1. The heart of man is as soil to the seed of God's word; it is capable of receiving it, and bringing forth the fruits of it; but unless that seed be sown in it, it will bring forth nothing valuable; our care therefore must be to bring the seed and the soil together. To sow it, where it is not sown in the scripture, if it be not sown? And to what purpose have we the soil in our own hearts, if it be not sown with that seed?

2. The success of the seed'sness is very much according to the nature and temper of the soil, and as that is, or is not, disposed to receive the seed. The word of God is to us, as we are, a <em>savour of life unto life</em> or of death unto death. (Rom. 8:10.)

3. The devil is a subtle and spiteful enemy, that makes it his business to hinder our profiting by the word of God. He takes the word out of the hearts of careless hearers, (v. 12.) lest they should believe and be saved; that is added here, to teach us, [1.] That we cannot be saved unless we believe. The word of the gospel will not be a saving word to us, unless it be mixed with faith. [2.] That therefore the devil does all he can to keep us from believing, to make us not heed the word when we read and hear it; or, if we heed it for the present, to make us forget it again, and let it slip; (Heb. 2:1.) or, if we remember it, to create prejudices in our minds against it, or direct our minds from it to something else; and all this, lest we should believe and be saved, lest we should believe and rejoice, while he believes and trembles.

4. Where the word of God is heard carelessly, there is commonly a <em>contempt</em> put upon it too. It is added here in the parable, that the seed which fell by the way-side, was <em>trod down down</em>, v. 5. They that wilfully shut their ears against the word, do in effect trample it under their feet; they <em>despise</em> the commandment of the Lord. Hence from the word makes some impressions, but they are not deep and durable ones, will show their hypocrisy in a time of trial; as the seed sown upon the rock, where it gains no root, v. 13. These for a <em>while</em> believe, a little while; their profession promises something, but in time of temptation they fall away from their good beginnings; whether the temptation arise from the smiles, or from the thorns, of the world, they are easily overthrown by it.

5. The pleasures of this life are as dangerous and mischievous thorns to choke the good seed of the word, as any other. That is added here, (v. 14.) which was not in the other evangelists. Those that are not entangled in the cares of this life, nor involved with the deceitful riches of it, but boast themselves elsewhere, be they sent from heaven by an affected indolence, and the love of ease and pleasure. The delights of sense may ruin the s:;1; even lawful delights, indulged, and too much delighted in.

6. It is not enough that the fruit be brought forth, but it must be brought to perfection, it must be fully ripened; if it be not, it is as if there was no fruit at all brought forth; for that which in Matthew and Mark is said to be <em>unfruitful</em>, is the same that here is said to <em>bring forth more to perfection</em>. For,

Fruitam non dietur, quod non perseverat—Perseverance is necessary to the perfection of a work.

8. The good ground, which brings forth good fruit, in an <em>honest</em> and <em>good</em> heart, well disposed to receive instruction and commandment; (v. 19.) a heart free from sinful pollutions, and firmly fixed for God and duty, an upright heart, a tender heart, and a heart that trembles at the word, is an honest and good heart, which having heard the word, understands it, (so it is in Mark,) and keeps it, (so it is here,) as the soil not only receives, but keeps, the seed; and the stomach not only receives, but keeps, the food or physic.

9. Where the word is well kept, there is fruit brought forth with <em>paitence</em>; that also is added here; there must be both bearing patience, and waiting patience; patience to the end, lest, upon receiving it, (so it is in Mark,) and keeping it, (so it is here,) as the soil not only receives, but keeps, the seed; and the mind must continue to the end in well-doing.

10. In consideration of all this, we ought to take heed how we hear; (v. 18.) take heed of those things that will hinder our profiting by the word we hear, watch over our hearts in hearing, and take heed lest we betray us; take heed lest we hear carelessly and slightly. That which we entertain prejudices against the word we hear; and take heed to the frame of our spirits after we have heard the word, lest we lose what we have gained.

II. Needful instructions given to those that are appointed to preach the word, and to those also that have heard it.

1. Those that have received the gift must <em>not</em> <em>赉ment the name</em> of ministers. Ministers that have the dispensing of the gospel committed to them, people that have profited by the word, and are thereby qualified to profit others, must look upon themselves as <em>laid</em> <em>candles</em>: ministers must in solemn authoritative preaching, and people in brotherly familiar discourse, diffuse their light; for a <em>candle</em> must not be covered with a vessel, or put under a bed, v. 16. Ministers and Christians are to be lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; their light must shine before men, they must not only be good, but do good.

2. We must expect that what is now done in secret, and from unseen springs, will shortly be manifested and made known, v. 17. What is committed to you in secret, should be made manifest by you; for your Master did not give you talents to be buried, but to be traded with. Let that which is now hid, be made known; for if it be not manifested by you, it will be manifested against you, will be produced in evidence of your treachery.

4. The gifts we have, will either be continued to us, or taken from us, according as we do, or do not, make use of them for the glory of God, and the edification of our brethren; (v. 18.) <em>Whosoever hath</em>, to him <em>shall be given</em>, he that hath gifts, and doeth good with them, shall have more; where his <em>talent</em> shall not be lost. From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath, so it is in Mark, that which he <em>seemeth</em> to have, so it is in Luke. Note, The grace that is lost, was but <em>seeming</em> grace, was <em>never</em> true. Men do but seem to have what they do not use, and shows of religion will be lost and forfeited; they went out from us, because they were not strong in the Lord, and were not keener than other men, and of other minds, that we have grace in sincerity, the root of the matter found in us; that is a good part, which shall never be taken away from those that have it.

III. Great encouragement given to those that prove themselves faithful hearers of the word, by being <em>doers</em> of the work, in a particular instance of Christ's respect to his disciples, in preferring them even before his nearest relations; (v. 19—21.) which passage of story we had twice before. Observe, 1. What crowding there was after Christ; there...
was no coming near for the throng of people that attended him, who, though they were crowded ever so much, would not be crowded out from his congregation. 2. Some of his nearest kindred were least solicitous to hear him preach. Instead of getting within, as they might easily have done, if they had come in time, desiring to hear him, they stood without, desiring to see him; and, probably, out of a foolish fear, lest he should spend himself with too much speaking, designing nothing but to interrupt him, and oblige him to break off. 3. Jesus Christ would rather be busy at his work than conversing with his friends. He would not leave his preaching, to speak with his mother and his brethren, for it was his meat and drink to be so employed. 4. Christ is pleased to own those as his nearest and dearest relations, that hear the word of God, and do it; they are to him more than his mother and brethren.

22. Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. 23. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. 24. And they came to him, and awaked him, saying, Master, master, we perish! Then he rose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the waters: and they ceased, and there was a calm. 25. And he saith unto them, Where is your faith? And they, being afraid, wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him. 26. And they arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, which is over against Galilee. 27. And when he went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. 28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God, most high? I beseech thee torment me not. 29. (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For often times it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) 30. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. 31. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep. 32. And there was there an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them: and he suffered them. 33. Then went the devils out of the man, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked. 34. When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country. 35. Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. 36. They also which saw it told them by what means he that was possessed of the devils was healed. 37. Then the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought him to depart from them; for they were taken with great fear: and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. 38. Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought him, that he might be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39. Return to thine own house, and publish how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.

We have here two illustrious proofs of the power of our Lord Jesus, which we had before—his power over the winds, and his power over the devils.

1. His power over the winds, those, "flowers of the air" that are so much a terror to men, especially upon sea, and occasion the death of such multitudes. Observe—

1. Christ ordered his disciples to put to sea, that he might show his glory upon the water, in stilling the waves, and might do an act of kindness to a poor possessed man on the other side the water; (v. 22.) He went into a ship with his disciples. They that observe Christ's orders, may assure themselves of his presence. If Christ sends his disciples, he goes with them. A prince may safely go where he will, and venture anywhere, that have Christ accompanying them. He said, Let us go over unto the other side, for he had a piece of good work to do there. He might have gone by land, a little way about; but he chose to go by water, that he might show his wonders in the deep. 2. Those that put to sea in a calm, yea, and at Christ's word, must yet prepare for a storm, and for the utmost peril in that storm; (v. 23.) There came down a storm of wind on the lake, as if it were there, and no where else; and presently their ship was so tossed, that it was filled with water, and they were in jeopardy of their lives. Perhaps the devil, who is the prince of the power of the air, and who raiseth winds by the permission of God, had some suspicion, from some words which Christ might let fall, that he was coming over the lake now on purpose to cast that legion of devils out of the poor man, on the other side, and therefore poured this storm upon the ship he was in, designing, if possible, to have sunk him, and prevented that victory. 3. Christ was asleep in the storm, v. 23. Some bodily refreshment he must have, and he chose to take it then when it would be least a hindrance to him in his work. The disciples of Christ may really have his gracious presence with them at sea, and in a storm, and yet he may seem as if he were asleep; he may not immediately appear for their relief, no, not when things seem to be brought even to the last extremity. Thus he will try their faith
and patience, and quicken them by prayer to awake, and make their deliverance the more welcome when it comes at last.

4. A complaint to Christ of our danger, and the distress his church is in, is enough to engage him to awake, and appear for us, v. 24. They cried Master, master, we perish! The way to have our fears silenced, is to bring them to Christ, and lay them before him. Those that in sincerity call Christ Master, and with faith and fervency call upon him, and say, Master, Master, may be sure that he will not let them perish. There is no relief for poor souls that are under sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, like this, to go to Christ, and call him Master, and say, "I am undone, if thou do not help me."

5. Christ's business is to lay storms, as it is Satan's business to raise them. He can do it, he has done it, he delights to do it; for he came to proclaim peace on earth. He rebuked the wind, and the raging of the water; (v. 24.) and immediately they ceased; not, as at other times, by degrees, but all of a sudden there was a great calm. Thus Christ showed that, though the devil pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, yet even there he has him in a chain.

6. When our dangers are over, it becomes us to take to ourselves the shame of our own fears, and to give Christ the glory of his power. When Christ had turned the storm into a calm, then were they glad because they were quiet, Ps. 107. 30. And then, (1.) Christ gives them a rebuke for their inordinate fear; (v. 25.) Where is your faith? Note, Many that have true faith, have it to seek when they have occasion to use it; they tremble and are discouraged, if second causes frown upon them; a little thing disharts them; and where is their faith then? (2.) They give him the glory of his power; They, being afraid, wondered. Those that had feared the storm, now that the danger was over, with good reason feared he that had still it; and said one to another, What manner of man is this? They might as well have said, Who is a God like unto thee? For it is God's prerogative, to still the noise of the sea, the noise of the waves, Ps. 65. 7. The work was done by the devil, the prince of the power of the air. In the next passage of story he comes into a closer grapple with him than he did when he commanded the winds. Presently after the winds were still, they were brought to their desired haven, and arrived at the country of the Gadarenes, and there went ashore; (v. 26, 27.) and he soon met with that which was his business over, and which he thought it worth his while to go through a storm, to accomplish.

We may learn a great deal out of this story concerning this world of infernal, malignant spirits, which, though not working now ordinarily, in the same way as here, yet we are all concerned at all times to stand upon our guard against.

1. These malignant spirits are very numerous. They that had taken possession of one man, etc. (v. 26, 30.) because many devils were entered into him; he had had devils a long time, v. 27. But perhaps those that had been long in possession of him, upon some foresight of our Saviour's coming to make an attack upon them, and finding they could not prevent it by the storm they had raised, sent for recruits, intending this to be a decisive battle, and hoping now to be too hard for him. They had case out so many unclean spirits, and to give him a defeat; and either were, or at least would be thought to be, a legion of them, formidable as an army with banners; and now, at least, to be, what the twentieth legion of the Roman army, which was long quartered at Chester, was styled, legio victor— a victorious legion.

2. They have an inveterate enmity to man, and all his conveniences and comforts. This man in whom the devils had got possession, and kept it long, being under their influence, wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, (v. 27.) though clothing and a habituation, are two of the necessary supports of this life. Nay, and because man has a natural dread of the habitations of the dead, they forced this man to abide in the tombs, to make him so much the more a terror to himself, and to all about him, that his presence might have as much cause as every man's had, to be weary of his life, and to choose strangling and death rather.

3. They are very strong, fierce, and unruly, and hate and scorn to be restrained; (v. 29.) He was kept bound in chains and in fetters, that he might not be mischievous either to others or to himself, but he brake the bands. Note, Those that are ungovernable by any other, thereby show that they are under Satan's government; this is the language of those that are so, even concerning God and Christ their best friends, that would not neither bind them from, or bind them to, any thing but for their own good. Let us break their bands in sunder. He was driven of the devil; those that are under Christ's government, are sweetly led with the cords of a man, and the bands of love; those that are under the devil, are governed as if driven.

4. They are much enraged against our Lord Jesus, and have a great dread and horror of him; When the man whom they had possession of, and who spake as they would have him, saw Jesus, he roared out as one in an agony, and fell down before him, to deprecate his wrath, and owned him to be the Son of God, most high, that was infinitely above him, and too hard for him; but protested against having his voice or word in his hearing; which might sufficiently have silenced the blasphemous cavils of the scribes and Pharisees. What have I to do with thee? The devils have neither inclination to do service to Christ, nor expectation to receive benefit by him; What have we to do with thee? But they dreaded his power and wrath; I beseech thee, torment me not. They do not say, I beseech thee, save me, but only, I beseech thee; then, what they speak, that have only a dread of hell as a place of torment, but no desire of heaven as a place of holiness and love.

5. They are perfectly at the command, and under the power, of our Lord Jesus; and they knew it, for they besought him that he would not command them to go away, into the deep, the place of their torment, which they acknowledge he could, and did, and justly. O what a comfort is this to the Lord's people, that all the powers of darkness are under the check and control of the Lord Jesus? He has them all in a chain. He can send them to their own place, when he pleaseth.

6. They delight in doing mischief. When they found there was no remedy, but they must quit their hold of this poor man, they begged they might have the command of a great part of his, v. 29. When the devil at first brought man into a miserable state, he brought a curse likewise upon the whole creation, and that became subject to enmity. And here, as an instance of that extensive enmity of his, when he could not destroy the man, he would destroy the swine. If he could not hurt them in their bodies, he would hurt them in their goods, which sometimes proves a great temptation to draw men from Christ. And here, Christ suffered them to enter into the swine, to convince the country what mischief the devil could do in it, if he should suffer him. No sooner had the devils leave, but they entered into the swine; and no sooner had they entered into them, than the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were drowned. For it is a miracle of mercy, if those whom Satan pos
senses, are not brought to destruction and perdition. This, and other instances, show that that roaring lion, the red dragon seeks what and whom he may devour.

7. When the devil's power is broken in any soul, that soul recovers itself; and returns into a right frame; which supposes, that those whom Satan gets possession of, are put out of the possession of themselves; The man out of whom the devils were departed, sat at the feet of Jesus, v. 33. While he was under the devil's power, he was ready to fly in the face of Jesus; but now he sits at his feet, which is a sign that he is come to his right mind. If God have possession of us, he preserves to us the government and enjoyment of ourselves; but if Satan have possession of us, he robs us of both. Let his power therefore in our souls be overturned, and let him come, whose right our hearts are, and let us give them him; for we are never more our own, than when we are his.

Let us see now what was the effect of this miracle, of casting the legion of devils out of this man. (1.) What effect it had upon the people of that country, who had lost their swine by it. The swineherds went, and told it both in city and country, (v. 34.) perhaps with a design to incense the people against Christ; they told by what means he that was possessed of the devils, was healed, (v. 36.) that it was by sending the devils into the swine, which was capable of doing more mischief, as they were roaming in the country, than if Christ could not have delivered the man out of their hands, but by delivering the swine into them. The people came out, to see what was done, and to enquire into it; and they were afraid, (v. 35.) they were taken with great fear, (v. 37.) they were surprised and amazed at it, and knew not what to say to it; they thought more of the destruction of the swine than of the deliverance of their poor afflicted neighbour, and of the country from the terror of his frenzy, which became a public nuisance: and therefore the whole multitude besought Christ to depart from them, for fear he should bring some other judgment upon them; whereas indeed none need to be afraid of Christ, that are willing to forsake their sins, and give up themselves to him. But Christ took them at their word; He went up into the ship, and returned back again. Those lose their Saviour, and their hope of salvation, who will not be with him.

(2.) What effect it had upon the poor man who had recovered himself by it. He desired Christ's company as much as others desired it: he besought Christ that he might be with him, as others were, that had been healed by him of evil spirits and infirmities; (v. 2.) that Christ might be to him a Protector and Teacher, and that he might he to Christ for a name and a praise. He was loth to stay among those rude and brutish Galileans, that desired Christ to depart from them. O gather not my soul with these sinners! But Christ would not take him along with him, but sent him home, to publish among those that knew him, the great things God had done for him, that so he might be a blessing to his country, as he had been a burden to it. We must sometimes deny ourselves the satisfaction even of spiritual benefits and comforts, to gain an opportunity of being serviceable to the souls of others. Peter might have wished then that, when the hearts of the swine were a little over, they would be better disposed to consider the miracle, and therefore left the man among them to be a standing monument, and a monitor to them of it.

40. And it came to pass, that when Jesus was returned, the people gladly received him: for they were all waiting for him. 41. And, behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue: and he fell down at Jesus' feet, and besought him that he would come into his house: 42. For he had one only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she lay a dying. But as he went, the people thronged him. 43. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any. 44. Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. 45. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter, and they that were with him, said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? 46. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me. 47. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48. And he said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace. 49. While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the Master. 50. But when Jesus heard it, he answered them, saying, Fear not: believe only, and she shall be made whole. 51. And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. 52. And all wept, and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. 53. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. 54. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. 55. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. 56. And her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.

Christ was driven away by the Gadarenes, they were weary of him, and willing to be rid of him. But when he had crossed the water, and returned to the Gadarenes, they gladly received him, wished and waited for his return, and received him with all their hearts when he did return, v. 40. If some will not accept the favours Christ offers them, others will. If the Gadarenes be not gathered, yet there are many, among whom Christ shall be glorious. When Christ had done his work on the other side the water, he returned, and found work to do in the place whence he came, fresh work. They that will lay out themselves to do good, shall never want occasion for it. The wanting you have always with you.

We have here two miracles interwoven, as they
were in Matthew and Mark—the raising of Jairus's daughter to life, and the cure of the woman that had an issue of blood, as he was going in a crowd to Jairus's house. We have here,

I. The address made to Christ, by a ruler of the synagogue, whose name was Jairus, on the behalf of a little daughter of his, that was very ill, and, in the apprehension of all about her, lay a dying. This address was very humble and reverent; Jairus, though a ruler, fell down at Jesus' feet, as owning him to be a Ruler above him. It was very important; he besought him that he would come into his house. He knew him an able physician, the centurion, who desired Christ only to speak the healing word at a distance. But Christ complied with his request; he went along with him; strong faith shall be applauded, and yet weak faith shall not be rejected. In the houses where sickness and death are, it is very desirable to have the presence of Christ. When Christ was going, the people thronged him; some out of curiosity to see him, others out of an affection to him. Let us not complain of a crowd, and a throng, and a hurry, as long as we are in the way of our duty, and doing good; but otherwise it is what every wise man will keep himself out of as much as he can.

II. Here is a secret application made to Christ by a woman ill of a bloody issue, which had been the consumption of her body, and the consumption of her purse too, for she had spent all her living on physicians, and was never the better, v. 43. The nature of her disease was such, that she did not care to make a public complaint of it, (it was agreeable to the modesty of her sex to be very shy of speaking of it,) and therefore she took this opportunity of coming to Christ in a crowd; and the more people were present, the more likely she thought it was that she should be concealed. Her faith was very strong, for she doubted not but that by the touch of the hem of his garment she should derive from him healing virtue sufficient for her relief, looking upon him to be such a full Fount of mercies that she should steal a cure, and he not miss it. Thus many a poor soul is healed, and helped, and saved, by Christ, that is lost in a crowd, and that nobody takes notice of. The woman found an immediate change for the better in herself, and that her disease was cured, v. 44. As believers have comfortable communion with Christ, so they have comfortable communications from him inscrutable secretly meat to eat that the world knows not of, and joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with.

III. Here is a discovery of this secret cure, to the glory both of the Physician and the patient.

1. Christ takes notice that there is a cure wrought; Virtue is gone out of me, v. 46. Those that have been healed by virtue derived from Christ, must own it, for he knows it. He speaks of it here, not in a way of complaint, as if he were hereby either weakened or wronged, but in a way of complacency; it was his delight, that virtue was gone out of him to do any good, and he did not grudge it to the men and women who were as welcome to it as to the light and heat of the sun; he did what he could for the good of the people, for the going out of virtue from him, for he is an overflowing Fount.

2. The poor patient owns her case, and the benefit she had received; (v. 47.) When she saw that she was not hid, she came, and fell down before him. Note, The consideration of this, that we cannot be hid from Christ, should engage us to pour out our hearts before him, and to show before him our sin, and all our trouble. She came trembling, not knowing her faith saved her, v. 48. Note, There may be trembling, where yet there is saving faith. She declared before all the people, for what cause she had touched him, because she believed that a touch would cure her, and it did so. Christ's patients should communicate their experiences to one another.

3. The great Physician confirms her cure, and seems here with the companions of the happy. By good comfort, they faith had made them whole. Jacob got the blessing from Isaac clandestinely, and by a wife; but when the fraud was discovered, Isaac ratified it designedly; it was obtained surreptitiously and under-hand, but it was secured and seconded above-board; so was the cure here. He is blessed, and he shall be blessed; so here, She is healed, and she shall be healed.

IV. He gives encouragement to Jairus, not to distrust the power of Christ, though his daughter was now dead, and they that brought him the tidings advised him not to give the Master any further trouble about her; fear not, saith Christ, believe only. Note, Our faith in Christ should be bold and daring, as well as our zeal for him. They that are willing to do any thing for him, may depend upon his doing great things for them above what they are able to ask or think. When the patient is dead, there is no room for prayer, or the use of means; but here, though the child is dead, yet believe, and all shall be well. Post mortem medicus—To call in the physician after death, is an absurdity; but not Post mortem Christus—To call in Christ after death.

V. The preparations for the raising of her to life again. 1. The choice Christ made of who should stand at the head of all her ladies—cleric, v. 48. Internal apprehension that he was most intimate with, designing these three, with the parents, to be the only spectators of the miracle, they being a competent number to attest the truth of it. 2. The check he gave to the mourners; They all wept, and bewailed her: for, it seems, she was a very agreeable, hopeful child, and dear not only to the parents, but to all the neighbours. But Christ bid them not weep; for she is now ready for her voyage into eternity. He knew of the possible, perhaps not of the actual, that she was not dead for good and all, but that she should now shortly be raised to life, so that it would be to her friends, as if she had been but a few hours asleep. But it is applicable to all that die in the Lord; therefore we should not sorrow for them, as those that have no hope, because death is but a sleep to them, not only as it is a rest from the toils of the days of time, but as there will be a resurrection, a waking and rising again to all the glories of the days of eternity. This was a comfortable word which Christ said to these mourners, yet they wickedly ridiculed it, and laughed him to scorn for it; here was a Pearl cast before swine. They were ignorant of the scriptures of the Old Testament, who bantered it as an absurd thing to call death a sleep; yet this good came out of that evil, that hereby the people were made more sensible that for they knew she was dead, they were certain of it, and therefore nothing less than a divine power could restore her to life. We find not any answer that he made them; but he soon explained himself, I hope to their conviction, so that they would never again laugh at any word of his. But he put them all out; (v. 54.) they were unworthy to be the witnesses of this work of wonder, they who in the midst of their mourning (so merrily disposed, as to laugh) at him for what he said, would, it may be, have found something to laugh at in what he did, and therefore are justly shut out.

VI. Her return to life, after a short visit to the
that John was risen from the dead; 8. And of some, That Elias had appeared; and of others, That one of the old prophets was risen again. 9. And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.

We have here,
1. The method Christ took to spread his gospel; to diffuse and enforce the light of it. He had travelled about himself, preaching and healing; but he could be only in one place at a time, and therefore now he sent his twelve disciples abroad, who by this time were pretty well instructed in the nature of the message committed to them, and able to instruct others, and to deliver to them what they had received from the Lord. Let them disperse themselves, some one way, and some another, to preach the kingdom of God, as it was now about to be set up by the Messiah; to bring people acquainted with the spiritual nature and tendency of it, and to persuade them to come into the interests and measures of it. For the confirming of their doctrine, because it was new and surprising, to carry them over difficulties, to comfort them who had been tormented by the scribes and Pharisees, and to cause so much depended upon men’s receiving or not receiving it, he empowered them to confirm it by miracles; (v. 1, 2.) He gave them authority over all devils, to dispossess them, and cast them out, though ever so numerous, so subtle, so fierce, so obstinate. Christ designed a total rout and ruin to the kingdom of darkness, and therefore gave them power over all devils. He authorized and appointed them likewise to cure diseases, and to heal the sick, which would make them welcome wherever they came, and not only convince people’s judgments, but gain their affections.

This was their commission. Now observe,
1. What Christ directed them to do, in prosecution of this commission at this time, when they were not to go far or be out long.
(1.) They must not be solicitous to recommend themselves to people’s esteem by their outward appearance. Now that they begin to set up for themselves, they must have no dress, nor study to make any other figure than what they made while they followed him; they must go as they were, and not change their clothes, or so much as put on a pair of new shoes.

(2.) They must depend upon Providence, and the kindness of their friends, to furnish them with what was convenient for them. They must not take with them either bread or money, and yet believe they should not want. Christ would not have his disciples shy of receiving the kindnesses of their friends, but rather to expect them. Yet St. Paul saw cause not to go by this rule, when he laboured with his hands rather than be burdensome.

(3.) They must not change their lodgings, as suspecting that no one would receive them were weary of them; they have no reason to be so, for the ark is a guest that always pays well for its entertainment; (v. 4.) *Whatever house ye enter into, there abide,* that they may know where to find you; that your friends may know you are not backward to serve them, and your enemies may know you are not ashamed or afraid to face them: there abide, till you depart out of that city; stay with those you are used to.

(4.) They must put on authority, and speak warning to those who refused them, as well as comfort to those that received them; (v. 5.) *If there be any place that will not entertain you, if the magistrates deny you admission, and threaten to treat you as vagrants, leave them, do not force yourselves*
upon them, nor run yourselves into danger among those, but at the same time bind them over the judgment of God for it; shake off the dust of your feet for a testimony against them, that will, as it were, be produced in evidence against them, that the messengers of the gospel had been among them, to make them a fair offer of grace and peace, for this dust they left behind there; so that when they perish at last in their infidelity, this will lay and leave them in a dishonourable way. Shake off the dust of your feet, as much as to say, you aban-
don their city, and will have no more to do with them."

2. What they did, in prosecution of this commission; (v. 6.) They departed from their Master's pre-

1. ce; yet, having still his spiritual presence with them, his eye and his arm going along with them, and his hand working with them, they went through the towns, some or other of the circuit appointed for work, in the circuit appointed them, preaching the gospel, and healing every where. Their work was the same with their Master's, doing good both to souls and bodies.

II. We have here Herod's perplexity and vexation at this. The deriving of Christ's power to those who were sent, both in his name, and activated by his authority from him, was, as usual, a convincing proof of his being the Messiah, above any thing else: that he could not only work miracles himself, but empower others to work miracles too; this spread his fame more than any thing, and made the rays of this Sun of righteousness the stronger, by the reflection of them even from the earth; from such mean illiterate men as the apostles were, who had nothing else to recommend them, or to raise any expectations from them, but that they had been with Jesus, Acts 4. 13. When the country sees such as those healing the sick in the name of Jesus, it gives an alarm. Now observe,

1. The various speculations it raised among the people, who, though they thought not rightly, yet could not but think honourably, of our Lord Jesus, and that he was an extraordinary Person, one come from the other world; that either John Baptist, who was lately persecuted and slain for the cause of God, or one of the old prophets, that had been persecuted and slain long since in that cause, was risen again, to be recompensed for their sufferings by this honour put upon them; or that Elias, who was taken alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, had appeared as an ex-

2. pectation. They made good guesses, but were not right.

2. The great perplexity it created in the mind of Herod; When he had heard of all that was done by Christ, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he was ready to conclude with them that John was risen from the dead. He thought he had got clear of John, and should be never more troubled with him, but, it seems, he is mistaken; either John is come to life again, or here is another in his spirit and power, for God will never leave himself without witnesses. "What shall I do now?" saith Herod. "John have I be-

headed, but who is this? Is he carrying on John's work, or is he come to avenge John's death? John baptized, but he doth not: John did no miracle, but he doth; and therefore appears more formidable than John." Note, Those who oppose God, will find difficulties in it, and are embarrassed. How-

ever, he desired to see him, when he espied one resembling John or no; but he might soon have been put out of his pain, if he would have but informed himself of that which thousands knew, that Jesus preached, and wrought miracles; a great while before John was be-

headed, and therefore could not be John raised from the dead. He desired to see him; and why did he not go and see him? Probably because he thought it below him, either to go to him, or to send for him; he had enough of John Baptist, and cared not for

having to do with any more such reprovers of sin. He desired to see him, but we do not find that ever he did, till he saw him at his last, and then he and his men of war set him at nought, Luke 23. 11. Had he prosecuted his convictions now, and gone to see him, who knows but a happy change might have been wrought in him? But, delaying it now, his heart was hardened, and when he did see him, he was as much prejudiced against him as any other.

10. And the apostles, when they were returned, told him all that they had done. And he took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. 11. And the people, when they knew it, followed him; and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. 12. And when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve, and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and coun-

try round about, and lodge, and get victuals; for we are here in a desert place. 13. But he said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people. 14. (For they were about five thousand men.) And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. 15. And they did so, and made them all sit down. 16. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes; and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. 17. And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of the fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.

We have here,

I. The account which the twelve gave their Mas-

ter of the success of their ministry. "They were not alarmed", but went in the evening to tell him all that they had done, as became servants who were sent on an errand. They told him what they had done, that, if they had done any thing amiss, they might mend it next time.

II. Their retirement, for a little breathing; He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place, that they might have some relaxation from business, and not be always upon the stretch. Note, He that hath appointed our man-servant and maid-

servant to rest, would have his servants to rest too. Those in the most public stations, and that are most publicly useful, must sometimes go aside privately, both for the repose of their bodies, to recruit them, and for the furnishing of their minds by meditation for further public work.

III. The rest of the people to him, and the kind recollection he gave them. They followed him, though it was in a desert place; for that is no desert where Christ is. And though they hereby disturbed the repose he designed here for himself and his disci-

ples, yet he welcomed them, v. 11. Note, Pious zeal may excuse a little rudeness; it did with Christ, and should with us. Though they came unreasonably, yet Christ gave them what they came for. He spake unto them of the kingdom of God, the laws of that kingdom with which they must be bound,
and the privileges of that kingdom with which they might be blessed. 2. He healed them that had need of healing sometimes he sees that we need the healing, but with it, for the soul of our souls, more than the healing, for the soul of our bodies, and then we must be willing for a season, because there is need to be in heavenly but when he sees that we need healing, we shall have it. Death is his servant, to heal the saints of all diseases. He heals spiritual maladies by his graces, by his comforts, and for each what their case calls for; relief for every exigence.

IV. The plentiful provision Christ made for the multitude that attended him: With five loaves of bread, and two fishes, he fed five thousand men. This narrative we had twice before, and shall meet with it again; it is the only miracle of our Saviour's, that is recorded by all the four evangelists.

Let us only observe out of it,
1. Those who diligently attend upon Christ in the way of duty, and therein deny, or expose themselves, or are made to forget themselves, and their outward comforts, by Christ and for Christ's God's house, are taken under his particular care, and may depend upon Jehovah-jireh—The Lord will provide. He will not see those that fear him, and serve him faithfully, want any good thing.

2. Our Lord Jesus was of a free and generous spirit. His disciples said, Send them away, that they may get victuals; but Christ said, 'No, give ye them to eat;' let what we have go as far as it will reach, and therewith we may content them.' Thus he has taught both ministers and Christians to use hospitality without grudging. 1 Pet. 4. 9. Those that have but a little, let them do what they can with that little, and that is the way to make it more. There is that scatters, and yet increases.

3. Jesus Christ has not only physic, but food, for all those that by faith apply themselves to him; he not only heals them that need healing, cures the diseases of them that are sick, feeds them too, that that feeding, supports the spiritual life, relieves the necessities of it, and satisfies the desires of it. Christ has provided not only to save the soul from perishing by its diseases, but to nourish the soul unto life eternal, and strengthen it for all spiritual exercises.

4. All the gifts of Christ are to be received by the church in a regular, orderly manner: Make them sit down by fifties in a company. The number of each company is taken notice of here, (v. 14.) which Christ appointed for the better distribution of the meat, and the easier computation of the number of the guests.

5. When we are receiving our creature-comforts, we must look up to heaven; Christ did so, to teach us to do so. We must acknowledge that we receive from God, and that we are unworthy to receive them; that we owe them all, and all the comfort we have in them, to the mediation of Christ, by whom the curse is removed, and the covenant of peace settled; that we depend upon God's blessing upon them, to make them serviceable to us, and desire that blessing.

6. The blessing of Christ will make a little to go a great way, and the little that the righteous man has, is better than the riches of many wicked, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. Those whom Christ feeds, he fills; to whom he gives, he gives enough; as there is in him enough for all, so there is enough for each. He replenishes every hungry soul, abundantly satisfies it with the goodness of his house. Here were fragments taken, nifi, to assure us that in our Father's house there is bread enough, and to share. We are not straitened, or stinted, in him.

18. And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him; and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? 19. They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, That one of the old prophets is risen again. 20. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God. 21. And he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing; 22. Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be shamed, and be raised the third day. 23. And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. 24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. 25. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? 26. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. 27. But I tell you of a truth, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

In these verses, we have Christ discoursing with his disciples about the great things that pertained to the kingdom of God; and one circumstance of this discourse is taken notice of here, which we had not in the other evangelists—that Christ was alone praying, and his disciples with him, when he entered into this discourse. v. 18. Observe, 1. Though Christ had much public work to do, yet he found some time to be alone in private, for converse with himself, with his Father, and with his disciples. 2. When Christ was alone, he was praying. It is good for us to improve our solitude for devotion, that, when we are alone, we may not be alone, but may have the Father with us. 3. When Christ was alone praying, his disciples were with him, to join with him in his prayer; so that this was a family-prayer. Housekeepers ought to pray with their households, parents with their children, masters with their servants, teachers and tutors with their scholars and pupils. 4. Christ prayed with them before he examined them, that they might be directed and encouraged to answer him, by his prayers for them. Those we give instructions to, we should put up prayers for, and with. He discourses with them.

I. Concerning himself; and enquires,
1. What the people said of him; Who say the people that I am? Christ knew better than they did, but would have his disciples made sensible by the mistakes of others concerning him, how happy they were, that were led into the knowledge of himself, and of the truth concerning him. We should take notice of the ignorance and errors of others, that we may be the more thankful to him who has manifested
himself to us, and not unto the world, and may pity them, and do what we can to help them, and to teach them better.

They tell him what conjectures concerning him they had heard in their converse with the common people. Ministers would know better how to suit their instructions, reproofs, and counsels, to the case of ordinary people, if they did but converse more frequently and familiarly with them; they would then be the better able to say what is proper to rectify their notions, correct their irregularities and remove their prejudices. The more conversant the place is in the matter, the more should they know what to do for him. Some said that he was John Baptist, who was beheaded the other day; others Elias, or one of the old prophets; anything but what he was.

2. What they said of him. “Now see what an advantage you have by your discipleship; you know better.” So we do,” saith Peter, “thanks be to our Master for it; we know that thou art the Christ of God, the Anointed of God, the Messiah promised.” It is matter of unspacious comfort to us, that our Lord Jesus is God’s anointed, for then he has unquestionable authority and ability for his undertaking; for his being Anointed signifies his being both appointed to it, and qualified for it.

Now one would have expected that Christ should have charged his disciples, who were so fully apprized of this truth, to publish it to every one they met with; no, he straitly charged them to tell no man that thing as yet, because there is a time for all things. After his resurrection, which completed the proof of it, Peter made the temple ring of it, that God has made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ; (Acts 2. 36.) but as yet the evidence was not ready to be summed up, and therefore it must be concealed; while it was so, we may conclude that the believing of it was not necessary to salvation.

II. Concerning his own sufferings and death, of which he had yet said little. But now that his disciples were well established in the belief of his being the Christ, and able to bear it, he speaks of them expressly, and with great assurance, v. 23. It comes in as an addition, why they must not yet preach that he was the Christ, because the time is not yet to extend his death and resurrection, would be the most convincing proof of his being the Christ of God. It was by his exaltation to the right hand of the Father, that he was fully declared to be the Christ, and by the sending of the Spirit thereupon; (Acts 2. 33.) and therefore wait till that is done.

III. Concerning their sufferings for him. So far must they be from thinking how to prevent his sufferings, that they must rather prepare for their own.

1. We must accustom ourselves to all instances of self-denial and patience, v. 23. This is the best preparative for martyrdom. We must live a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world; we must not indulge our ease and appetite, for then it will be hard to bear toil, and weariness, and want, for his sake. We must daily submit to affliction, and we must accommodate ourselves, even in love and access in the will of God in it, and must learn to endure hardship. We frequently meet with crosses in the way of duty; and though we must not pull them upon our own heads, yet, when they are laid for us, we must take them up, carry them after Christ, and make the best of them.

2. We must prefer the salvation and happiness of our souls before any secular concern whatsoever. Reckon upon it, (1.) That he, who, to preserve his liberty or estate, his power of preferment, nay, or to save his life, denies Christ and his truths, wilfully wrongs his conscience, and sins against God, will be, not only not a sower, but an unspeakable loser, in the issue, when profit and loss come to be balanced; (2.) that will save his life upon these terms, will lose it, will lose that which is of infinitely more value, his precious soul. (2.) We must firmly believe all that it, if we lose our lives for cleaving to Christ and our religion, we shall save them to our unspeakable advantage; for it shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when we shall have it again a new and eternal life. (3.) That the gain of all the world, if we should forsake Christ and fail in with the interest of the world, would be so far from countervailing the eternal loss and ruin of the soul, that it would amount to a species of preferment to it, v. 25. If we could be supposed to gain all the wealth, honour, and pleasure, in the world, by denying Christ, yet, when by so doing, we lose ourselves to all eternity, and are cast away at last, what good will our worldly gain do us? Observe, In Matthew and Mark the dreadful issue is a man’s losing his own soul, here it is losing himself; which plainly intimates that our souls are ourselves. Animus eguisquiae est quisque—The soul is the man; and it is well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls. If they perish for ever under the weight of their own guilt and corruption, it is certain that we are undone; the body cannot be happy, if the soul be miserable in the other world; but the soul may be happy, though the body be greatly afflicted and oppressed. In the Psalms is this truth more expressed in the Psalms, and to be-ward. *Lamin*—if he be damaged; or if he be punished; si male*et*—if he have a muleet put upon his soul by the righteous sentence of Christ, whose cause and interest he has treacherously deserted; if it be adjudged a forfeiture of all his blessedness, and the forfeiture be taken, where is his gain? What is his hope?

3. We must therefore never be ashamed of Christ and his gospel, nor of any disgrace or reproach that we may undergo for our faithful adherence to him and it. For, (v. 26.) Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed and justly. When the service and honour of Christ called for his testimony and agency, he denied them, because the interest of Christ was a despised interest, and every where spoken against; and therefore he could expect nothing but the greatest discomfiture. What calls for Christ’s appearance on his behalf, Christ will be ashamed to own such a cowardly, worldly, sneaking spirit, and will say, “He is none of mine, he belongs not to me.”

As Christ had, so his cause has, a state of humiliation and exaltation. They, and they only, that are willing to suffer with it, when it suffers, shall reign with it, when it reigns; but those that cannot find in their hearts to share with it in its disgrace, and to say, “If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile, shall certainly have no share with it in its triumphs. Observe here, how Christ, to support himself and his followers under present disgraces, speaks magnificently of the lustre of his second coming, in prospect of which he endured the cross, despising the shame (1.) He shall come in his own glory. This was not mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew and Mark, since the glory of the Mediator, all that glory which the Father restored to him, which he had with God before the worlds were, which he had deposited and put in pledge, as it were, for the accomplishing of his undertaking, and demanded up again, when he had gone through it: Now, O Father, glorify thou me, John 17. 4. 5. He shall come in all that glory which the Father conferred upon him; and he set him at his own right hand, and gave him to be head over all things to the church; in all the glory that is due to him, as the Asserter of the glory of God, and the Author of the glory of all the saints. This is his own glory. (2.) He shall come in his Father’s glory. The Father will judge the world by him, having
committed all judgment to him; and therefore will publicly own him in the judgment, as the Brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his person. (3.) He shall come in the glory of the holy angels. They shall all attend him, and minister to him, and add every thing they can to the lustre of his appearance. What a figure will the blessed Jesus make in that day! Do not be afraid of it, we should never be ashamed of him or his words.

Lastly, To encourage them in suffering for him, he assures them that the kingdom of God would now shortly be set up, notwithstanding the great opposition that was made to it, v. 27. "Though the second coming of the Son of man is at a great distance, the kingdom of God shall come in its power in the present age, while some here present are alive." They saw the kingdom of God, when the Spirit was poured out, when the gospel was preached to all the world, and nations were brought to Christ by it; they saw the kingdom of God triumph over the Gentile nations in their conversion, and over the Jewish nation in its destruction.

28. And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And as he prayed, the fashion of his comeliness was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.

30. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31. Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 34. And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

We have here the narrative of Christ's transfiguration, which was designed for a specimen of that glory of his, in which he will come to judge the world, of which he had lately been speaking, and, consequently, an encouragement to his disciples, to suffer for him, and never to be ashamed of him. We had this account before, in Matthew and Mark, and it is well worthy to be repeated to us, and reconsidered by us, for the confirmation of our faith in the Lord Jesus, as the Brightness of his Father's glory, and the light of the world; for the filling of our minds with high and honourable thoughts of him, notwithstanding his being clothed with a body, and the giving of us some idea of the glory which he entered into at his ascension, and in which he now appears within the veil; and for the raising and encouraging of our hopes and expectations concerning the glory reserved for all believers in the future state.

1. Here is one circumstance of the narrative that seems to differ from the other two evangelists that related it. They said that it was six days after the foregoing sayings, Luke saith that it was about eight days after, that is, it was that day seventh; six whole days of waiting, and then the eighth day. Some think that it was the night that Christ was transfigured, because the disciples were asleep, as in his agony, and in the night his appearance in splendour would be the more illustrious; if in the night, the computation of the time would be the more doubtful and uncertain; probably, in the night, between the seventh and eighth day, and so about eight days.

10. Here are divers circumstances added and explained, which are very material. 1. We are here told that Christ had this honour put upon him when he was praying; He went up into the mountain to pray, as he frequently did; (v. 28.) and as he prayed he was transfigured; when Christ humbled himself to pray, he was thus exalted. He knew before, that this was designed for him at this time, and therefore seeks it by prayer. Christ might have humbled himself at any time, but it was not the hour. He might have been transfigured then, but the hour was not matured. It is not peculiar to him, though he is the favourite that were punished for him, and promised to him; Ask of me and I will give thee, Ps. 2. 8. And thus he intended to put an honour upon the duty of prayer, and to recommend it to us. It is a transfiguring, transforming duty; if our hearts be elevated and enlarged in it, so as to it to behold the glory of the Lord, we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, 2 Cor. 3. 18. By prayer, we fetch in the wisdom, grace, and joy, which make the face to shine.

2. Luke does not use the word transfigured—μεταμορφωσατο, (which Matthew and Mark used,) perhaps because it had been used so much in the Pagan theology, but makes use of a phrase equivalent, του τη τραασης—The fashion of his countenance was another thing from what it had been; his face shone far beyond what Moses's did when he came down from the mount; and his raiment was white and glistening; it was λευκοσαστα, a word used only here; bright like lightning; so that he seemed to be arrayed all with light, to cover himself with light as with a garment.

3. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that Moses and Elias appeared to them, here it is said they appeared in glory; to teach us, that saints departed are in glory, are in a glorious state; they shine in glory; he being in glory, they appeared with him in glory, as all the saints shall shortly do.

4. We are here told what was the subject of the discourse between Christ and the two great prophets of the Old Testament; They spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, ἡ κατανεμησας—his exodus, his departure; that is, his death. (1.) The death of Christ is here called his exodus, his going out, his leaving of the world. Moses and Elias spake of it to him under that notion, to reconcile it to him, and to make the foresight of it the more easy to his human nature. The death of the saints is their exodus, their departure out of the Egypt of this world, their release out of a house of bondage. Some think that the ascension of Christ is included here in his departure, for the departure of Israel out of Egypt was a departure in triumph, so was his when he went from earth to heaven. (2.) This departure of his he must accomplish, for thus it was determined in the matutature time in the counsel of God, and could not be altered. (3.) He must accomplish it at Jerusalem, through his residence was mostly in Galilee; for his most fruitful enemies were at Jerusalem, and there the sanhedrin sat, that took upon them to judge of prophets. (4.) Moses and Elias spake of this, to intimate that the
Lastly, The apostles are here said to have kept this vision private; they told no man in those days, reserving the discovery of it for another opportunity, when the evidences of Christ's being the Son of God were completed in the pouring out of the Spirit, and that doctrine was to be published to all the world. As there is a time to speak, so there is a time to keep silence. Every thing is beautiful and useful in its season.

37. And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. 38. And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son; for he is mine only child: 39. And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and bruising him hardly, departeth from him. 40. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not. 41. And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, and suffer you! Bring thy son hither. 42. And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tore him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

This passage of story in Matthew and Mark follows immediately upon that of Christ's transfiguration, and his discourse with his disciples after it; but here it is said to be on the next day, as they were coming down from the hill; which confirms the conjecture, that Christ was transfigured in the night, and, it should seem, though they did not make tabernacles, as Peter proposed, yet they found some shelter to repose themselves in all night, for it was not till next day, that they came down from the hill; and then he found things in some disorder among his disciples, though not so bad as Moses did when he came down from the mount. When wise and good men are in their beloved retirements they would do well to consider whether they are not wanted in their public stations.

In this narrative here, observe,
1. How the people were to receive Christ at his return to them; though he had been but a little while absent, much people met him, as, at other times, much people followed him, for so it was foretold concerning him, that to him should the gathering of the people be.
2. How importunate the father of the lunatic child was with Christ for help for him; (v. 38.) I beseech thee, look upon my son; this is his request, and it is a very modest one; one compassionate look from Christ is enough to set every thing to rights. Let us bring ourselves and our children to Christ, to be looked upon. His plea is, He is mine only child. They that have many children, may balance their affection in one with their comfort in the rest; yet if it be an only child that is a grief, the affection in that may be balanced with the love of God in giving his only-begotten Son for us.
3. How deplorable the case of the child was, v. 39. He was under the power of an evil spirit, that took him; and diseases of that nature are more frightful than such as arise merely from natural causes: when the fit seized him, without any warning given, he suddenly cried out, and many a time his shrieks had pierced the heart of his tender father. This
526 ous, as if you were reading it naturally.

malicious spirit take him, and bruised him, and defec-ted not from him, but with great difficulty, and a deadly gnare at parting. O the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! And what mischief doth Satan do, where he getts possession! But happy they that have access to Christ!

4. How defective the disciples were in their faith. Though Christ had given them power over unclean spirits, yet they could not cast out this evil spirit, v. 40. Either they distrusted the power they were to fetch it with, or they could not cast it out as they were given to them, or they did not exert themselves in prayer as they ought; for this Christ reproved them.

O faith less and perverse generation. Dr. Clarke understands this as spoken to his disciples: "Will ye be yet so faithless and full of distrust, that ye cannot execute the commission I have given you?"

5. How effectual the cure was, which Christ wrought upon this child, v. 41. Christ took it, for, us, which his disciples cannot; Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, then when he raged most. The devil threw the child down, and tare him, disturbed him, so as if he would have pull'd him to pieces. But one word from Christ healed the child, and made good the damage the devil had done him. And it is here added, that he delivered him again to his father. Note, When our children are recovered from sickness, we must receive them as delivered to us again, receive them as life from the dead, and as when we first received them. It is comfortable to receive them from the hand of Christ, to see him delivering them to us again: "Here, take this child, and be thankful; take it, and bring it up for me, for thou hast it again from me. Take it, and do not set thy heart too much upon it." With such cautions as these, parents should receive their children from Christ's hands, and then with comfort put them again into his hands.

43. And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, 44. Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. 45. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying. 46. Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. 47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, 48. And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be greatest. 49. And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. 50. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

We may observe here,

1. The impression which Christ's miracles made upon all who beheld them; (v. 43.) They were all amazed at the mighty power of God, which they could not but see in all the miracles Christ wrought. Note, The works of God's almighty power are amazing, especially those that are wrought by the hand of the Lord Jesus; for he is the power of God, and his name is, Wonderful. Their wonder was universal; they wondered every one: the causes of it were universal; they wondered at all things which Jesus did; all his actions had something uncommon and surprising in them.

2. The notice Christ gave to his disciples of his approaching sufferings; The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men, wicked men, men of the worst character; they shall be permitted to abuse him, and to do all manner of evil against him, which is expressed by the other evangelists; They shall kill him. But that which is peculiar here, is,

1. The connexion of this with what goes next before, of the admiration with which the people were struck at beholding of Christ's miracles; (v. 43.) While they all wondered at all things which Jesus did, he said this to his disciples. They had a fond conceit of his temporal greatness, and that he should reign, and with him in, in secular pomp and power, and now they thought that this mighty power of his would easily effect the thing, and his interest gained by his miracles in the people would contribute to it; and therefore Christ, who knew what was in their hearts, takes this occasion to tell them again what he had told them before, that he was so far from having men delivered into his hands, that he must be delivered into the hands of men; so far from living in honour, that he must die in disgrace; and, while the people, and his miracles, and the interest he has by them gained in the hearts of the people, will not be able to prevent it.

2. The solemn preface with which it is introduced; "Let these sayings sink down into your ears; take special notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; lest the notions you have of the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, stop your ears against it, nor make you unwilling to believe it. Admit what I say, and submit to it." Let it sink down into your hearts, so the Syriac and Arabic read it. The word of Christ does us no good, unless we let it sink down into our hearts and minds. 3. The unaccountable stupidity of the disciples, with reference to this prediction of Christ's sufferings. It was said in Mark, They understood not that saying, it was plain enough; but they would not understand it in the literal sense, because it agreed not with their notions; and they were not willing to cast it off in any other, and were unwilling to ask him, lest they should be undeceived, and awaked out of their pleasing dream; but it is here added, that it was hid from them, that they perceived it not, through the weakness of faith and the power of prejudice. We cannot think that it was in mercy hid from them, lest they should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow at the prospect of it; but that it was a paradox, because they made it not to themselves. 3. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for their disputing among themselves which should be greatest, v. 46-48. This passage we had before, and, the more is the pity, shall meet with the like again. Observe here,

1. Ambition of honour, and strife for superiority and precedence, are sins that most easily beset the disciples of our Lord Jesus, for which they deserve to be severely rebuked; they flow from corruptions, which they are highly concerned to subdue and mortify; v. 46. This is the state of the world, commonly aim high, and nothing will serve them short of being greatest; this exposes them to a great deal of temptation and trouble, which they are safe from, that are content to be little, to be least, to be less than the least. 2. Jesus Christ is perfectly acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts; (v. 47.) He perceived their thoughts; they are words to him, and whispers are loud cries. It is a good reason why we should keep up a strict government of our thoughts, because Christ takes a strict cognizance of them.
3. Christ will have his disciples to aim at that honour which is to be obtained by a quiet and condescending humility, and not at that which is to be obtained by a restless and aspiring ambition. Christ took a child, and set him by him, (v. 47. for he always expressed a tenderness and kindness for little children;) and he proposed this child to them for an example. (1.) Let them be of the temper of this child, humble and quiet, and easy, and mild, let them find not favour in their superiors, or high titles, but as dear as to them as this child; let them bear no more malice to their rivals and competitors than this child did. Let them be willing to be the least, if that would contribute any thing to their usefulness, to stoop to the meanest office whereby they might do good. (2.) Let them assure themselves that this was the way to preferment; for this would recommend them to the esteem of their brethren: they that loved Christ, would therefore receive them in his name, because they did most resemble him; and they would likewise recommend themselves to his favour, for Christ would take the kindnesses done to them as done to himself; Whosoever shall receive one such child, a preacher of the gospel that is of such a disposition as this, he placeth his respect among, and receiveth me; and whatsoever receive me in such a minister receiveth him that sent me: and what greater honour can any man attain to in this world than to be received by men as a messenger of God and Christ, and to have God and Christ own themselves received and welcomed in him? This honour have all the humble disciples of Jesus Christ, and thus they shall be truly great, that are least among them.

IV. The rebuke Christ gave to his disciples for discourageing one that honoured him and served, but was not of their communion, not only not one of the twelve, or one of the seventy, but not one of those that ever associated with them, or attended on them, but upon occasional hearing of Christ, believed in him, and made use of his name with faith and prayer in a serious manner, for the casting out of devils. Now, 1. This man they rebuked and restrained; they would not let him pray and preach, though it was to the honour of Christ, though it did good to men and weakened Satan's kingdom, because he did not follow Christ with them; he separated from their church, was not ordained as they were, paid them no respect, nor gave them the right hand of fellowship. Now if ever any society of christians in this world will not suffer those who were not in their communion, the twelve disciples at this time had; and yet, 2. Jesus Christ chid them for what they did, and warned them not to do the like again, nor any that profess to be the successors of the apostles; * Forbid him not, (v. 50.) but rather encourage him, for he is carrying on the same design that you are, though, for reasons best known to himself, he doth not follow with you; and he will meet you in the same end, though he do not accompany you in the same way. You do well, to do as you do, but it doth not therefore follow, that he doeth ill, to do as he doeth, and that you do well to put him under an interdict, for he that is not against us, is for us, and therefore ought to be countenaunced by us. We need not lose any of our friends, while we have so far, as to humble enemies, might be brought in faithful followers of Christ, and, as such, may be accepted of him, though they do not follow with us. See Mark 9. 38, 39. * What a great deal of mischief to the church, even from those that boast of relation to Christ, and pretend to envy for his sake, would be prevented, if this passage of story were but duly considered!

51. And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, 52. And sent messengers before his face and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. 53. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. 54. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? 55. But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. 56. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.

This passage of history we have not in any other of the evangelists, and it seems to come in here for the sake of its affinity with that next before, for in this also Christ rebuked his disciples, because they envied for his sake; there, under colour of zeal for Christ, they were for silencing and restraining priests, who, under this fair colour, they were for putting infidels to death, and as for that, so for this also, Christ reprimanded them; for a spirit of bigotry and persecution is directly contrary to the spirit of Christ and christianity.

Observe here,

I. The readiness and resolution of our Lord Jesus, in prosecuting his great undertaking for our redemption and salvation. Of this we have an instance, v. 51. When the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem. Observe, 1. There was a time fixed for the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus, and he knew well enough when it was, and had a clear and certain foresight of it, and yet was so far from keeping out of the way, that then he appeared most publicly of all, and was most busy, knowing that his time was short. 2. When he saw his death and sufferings approaching, he looked through them, and beyond them, to the glory that should follow; he looked upon it as the time when he should be received up into glory, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) received up into the highest heavens, to be enthroned there. Moses and Elias spake of his death as his departure out of this world, which made it the more desirable and worth looking upon it as his translation to a better world, which made it very desirable. All good christians may frame to themselves the same notion of death, and may call it their being received up, to be with Christ where he is; and when the time of their being received up is at hand, let them lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh. 3. On this prospect of the joy set before him, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, the place where he was to suffer and die. He was fully determined to go, and would not be dissuaded; he went directly to Jerusalem, because there now his business lay, and he did not go about to other towns, or fetch a compass, which if he had done, as commonly he did, he might have avoided going through Samaria. He went cheerfully and con- 

rately, though he knew the things which should befall him there. He did not fail, nor was discouraged, but set his face as a flint, knowing that he should be not only justified, but glorified, (Isa. 50. 7.) not only not run down, but received up. How should this shame us for, and shame us out of, our backwardness to do and suffer for Christ; we draw back, and turn our faces another way from his service, who steadfastly set his face against all opposition, to go through with the work of our salvation.
II. The rudeness of the Samaritans in a certain village, (not named, nor deserving to be so,) who would not receive him, nor suffer him to bat in their town, though his way lie through it. Observe here, 1. How civil he was to them; He sent messengers before his face, some of his disciples, that went to take up lodgings, and to know whether he might have leave to accommodate himself and his followers. 2. How patiently he would not give offence, or if they took any umbrage at the number of his followers. He sent some, to make ready for him, not for state, but convenience, and that his coming might be no surprise. 2. How uncertain they were to him; (v. 33.) They did not receive him, would not suffer him to come into their village, but ordered their watch to keep him out. He would have paid for all he desired, and to have left their lodging would have done them good, and preached the gospel to them, as he had done some time ago to another city of the Samaritans, John 4. 41. He would have been, if they pleased, the greatest blessing that ever came to their village, and yet they forbid him entrance. Such treatment his gospel and ministers have often met with. Now the reason was, because his face was as though he would not come to their town; a most observable observation, that he was steering his course that way. The great controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans was about the place of worship—whether Jerusalem or mount Gerizim near Sychar; see John 4. 20. And so hot was the controversy between them, that the Jews would have no dealings with the Samaritans, nor they with them, John 4. 9. Yet we may suppose that they did not deny other people lodging among them, no, not when they went up to the feasts, for if that had been their constant practice, Christ would not have attempted it; and it would have been a great way about for some of the Galileans to go to Jerusalem, any other way than through Samaritan. But they were particularly incensed against Christ, who was a celebrated Teacher, for owning and adhering to the temple at Jerusalem, when the priests of that temple were such bitter enemies to him, which, hoped, he would have driven him to come and worship at their temple, and bring that into reputation: but when they saw that he would go forward to Jerusalem, notwithstanding this, they would not show him the common civility, which, probably, they used formerly to show him in his journey thither.

III. The resentment which James and John expressed of this affront. v. 54. When these we heard this message brought, they were all in a flame presently, and nothing will serve them but Sodom's doom upon this village: "Lord," say they, "give us leave to command fire to come down from heaven, not to frighten them only, but to consume them." Here indeed they showed, 1. A great confidence in the power they had received from Jesus Christ; though this had not been particularly mentioned, yet they could with a word's speaking, fetch fire from heaven, and consume him. But mark how—Wilt thou that we speak the word, and the thing will be done. 2. A great zeal for the honour of their Master; they took it ill, that he who did good wherever he came, and found hearty welcome, should be denied the liberty of the road by a parcel of paltry Samaritans; they could not think of it without indignation, that their Master should be put to this, notwithstanding, to their Master's good-will and peace, they will not offer to do such a thing, unless Christ give leave; Wilt thou that we do it? 4. A regard to the examples of the prophets that were before them; it is doing as Elias did; they would not have thought of such a thing, if Elijah had not done it upon the soldiers that came to take him, once and again, 2 Kings 1. 10, 12. They thought that this precedent would be their warrant; so apt are we to misapply the examples of good men, and to think to justify ourselves by them in the irregular liberties we give ourselves, when the case is not parallel. But though there was something right in what they said, yet the time was not for such a commiss. (1.) It was not the first time, by a great many, that our Lord Jesus had been in the like manner affronted, witness the Nazarenes thrusting him out of their city, and the Gadarenes desiring him to depart out of their coast; and yet he never called for any judgment upon them, but patiently put up with the injury. (2.) These were Samaritans, from whom better was not to be expected; yet we have heard that he had forbidden his disciples to enter into and the cities of the Samaritans, (Matth. 10. 5.) and therefore it was not so bad in them as in others, who knew more of Christ, and had received so many favours from him. (3.) Perhaps it was only some few of the town, that knew any thing of the matter, or that sent that rude message to him, while, for aught they knew, there were many in the town who, if they had known he was coming, would have gone to meet him, and willingly accommodated him; and must the whole town be laid in ashes for the wickedness of a few? Will they have the righteous destroyed with the wicked? (4.) Their Master had never yet upon any occasion called for fire from heaven, nay, he had refused to give the Pharisees any sign from heaven when they demanded it; (Matth. 16. 1, 2.) and why should they think to introduce it? James and John were the two discipies whom Christ had called Boanerges— Sons of thunder; (Mark 3. 17.) and will not that serve them, but they must be sons of lightning too? (5.) The example of Elias did not reach the case. Elijah was sent to display the terrors of the law, and to give proof of that, and to witness as a belated reproof against the idolaters and wickednesses of the court of Ahab, and it was agreeable enough to him to have his commission thus proved; but it is a dispensation of grace that is now to be introduced, to which such a terrible display of divine justice will not be at all agreeable. Archbishop Tillotson suggests, that their being now near Samarita, where Elijah called for fire from heaven, might help to put it in their heads; perhaps at the very place; but though the place was the same, the times were altered.

IV. The rebuke he gave to James and John for their fiery, furious zeal; (v. 55.) He turned with a just displeasure, and rebuked them; for as many as he loves, he rebukes and chastens, particularly for what they do, that is irregular and unbecoming them, under colour of zeal for him.

1. He shows them in particular their mistake; Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; that is, (1.) Ye are not aware what an evil spirit and disposition ye are of; how much you are like to be a prey to passion and revenge, covered under this pretence of zeal for your Master. Note, There may be much corruption lurking, nay, and stirring too, in the hearts of good people, and they themselves not be sensible of it. (2.) Ye do not consider what a good spirit, directly contrary to this, ye should be of. Surely ye are yet to learn, though we have been so long learning, what the spirit of Christ and christianity is. He was not confirmed to curse them that curse you, and to call for grace from heaven, not fire from heaven, upon them. Ye know not how contrary your disposition herein is, to that which it was the design of the gospel you should be delivered into. Ye are not now under the dispensation of bondage, and terror, and death, but under the dispensation of love, and liberty, and grace, which was ushered in
with a proclamation of peace on earth, and goodwill toward men, to which you ought to accommodate yourselves, and not by such imprecatations as these oppose yourselves."

2. He shows them the general design and tendency of his religion; (v. 56.) The Son of man is not himself come, and therefore doth not send you abroad, to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He designed to save men by love and sweetness, and every thing that is inviting and engaging, not by fire and sword, and blood and slaughter; by miracles of healing, not by plagues, and miracles of destruction, as Israel was brought out of Egypt. Christ came to stay all enmities, not to foster them. Those are certainly destitute of the spirit of the gospel, that are for unmercifulizing and rooting out enmity and persecution all that are not of their mind and way, that cannot in conscience say as they say, and do as they do. Christ came not only to save men's souls, but to save their lives too; witness the many miracles he wrought for the healing of diseases that would otherwise have been mortal; by which, and a thousand other instances of beneficence, it appears that Christ would have his disciples to do good to all the utmost of their power, but hurt to none; to draw men into his church with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, but not to drive men into it with a rod of violence, or the scourge of the tongue.

V. His retreat from this village. Christ would not only not punish them for their rudeness, but would not insist upon his right of travelling the road, (which was as free to him as to others his neighbours.) would not attempt to force his way, but quietly and peaceably went to another village, where they were not so stingy and bigoted, and there refreshed himself, and went on his way. Note, When a stream of opposition is strong, it is wisdom to get out of the way of it, rather than to contend with it. If some be very rude, instead of revenging it, we should try whether others will not be more civil.

57. And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. 61. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell which are at home at my house. 62. And Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

We have here an account of three several persons that offered themselves to follow Christ, and the answers that Christ gave to each of them. The two former we had an account of, Matth. 19. 21.

1. Here is one that is extremely forward to follow Christ immediately, but seems to have been too rash, hasty, and inconsiderate, and not to have sitten down, and counted the cost.

2. He makes Christ a very large promise; (v. 57.) As they went in the way, going up to Jerusalem, where it was expected Christ would first appear in his glory, one said to him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. This must be the resolution of all that will be found Christ's disciples indeed; they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, (Rev. 14. 4.) though it be through fire and water, to prisons and deaths.

2. Christ gives him a necessary caution, not to promise himself great things in the world, in following him, but, on the contrary, to count upon poverty and much misery; for the Son of man has not where to lay his head.

We may look upon this, (1.) As setting forth the very low condition that our Lord Jesus was in, in this world. He not only wanted the delights and ornament that great princes have, but even such accommodations for mere necessity as the foxes have, and the birds of the air. See what a depth of poverty and misery a pure soul must be brought to, if they would only increase the worth and merit of his satisfaction. He had to purchase for us a larger allowance of grace, that we through his poverty might be rich, 2 Cor. 8. 9. He that made all, did not make a dwelling-place for himself, not a house of his own to put his head in, but what he was beholden to others for. He here calls himself the Son of man, a Son of Adam, Partner of the creatures, with whom he walked and talked, without the utmost of his power, but hurt to none; to draw men into his church with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, but not to drive men into it with a rod of violence, or the scourge of the tongue.

11. Here is another, that seems resolved to follow Christ, but he begs a day, v. 59. To this man Christ first gave the call, he said to him, Follow me. That proposed the thing of himself, laid off when he heard of the difficulties that attended it; but this man to whom Christ gave a call, though he hesitated at first, yet, as it should seem, afterward yielded; so true was that of Christ. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, John 15. 16. It is not of him that willeth, and of him that runneth, (Isa. 55. 6.) (which Christ first gave the call to him.) the spirit of God that showeth mercy, that giveth the call, and maketh it effectual, as to this man here. Observe, 1. The excuse he made; "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. I have an aged father at home, who cannot live long, and will need me while he does live; let me go, and attend to him, until he is dead, and I have performed my part of the last charge committed to me, and then I will do any thing." We may here see three temptations, by which we are in danger of being drawn and kept from following Christ,
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which therefore we should guard against. (1.) We are tempted to rest in a discipleship at large, in which we may be at a loose end, and not bear fruit, be a comfort to ourselves, and be steady and constant. (2.) We are tempted to defer the doing of that which we know to be our duty, and to put it off to some other time. When we have got clear of such a care and difficulty, when we have despatched such a business, raised an estate to such a pitch, then we will begin to think of being religious; and so we are the nearest of all our time, by being otherwise engaged. We are invited, not to hinder our duty to our relations, but to excuse us from our duty to Christ; it is a plausible excuse indeed, "Let me go, and bury my father; let me take care of my family, and provide for my children, and then I will think of serving Christ," whereas the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof must be sought and minded in the first place.

2. Christ's answer to it; (v. 60.) "Let the dead bury their dead. Suppose (which is not likely) that there were none but the dead to bury their dead, or none but those who are themselves aged and dying, who are as good as dead, and fit for no other service, yet thou hast other work to do; go thou, and preach the kingdom of God." Not that Christ would have his followers or his ministers to be unnatural, our religion teaches us to be kind and good in every relation, to take care of our families and our parents. But we must not make these offices an excuse from our duty to Christ. If the nearest and dearest relation we have in the world, stand in our way to keep us from Christ, it is necessary that we have a zeal that will make us forget father and mother, as Levi did, Deut. 33. 9. This disciple was called to be a minister, and therefore must not entangle himself with the affairs of this world, 2 Tim. 2. 4. And it is a rule, Then, farewell friends, with this, "Be not for any duty, we must not consult with flesh and blood, Gal. 1. 15. 16. No excuses must be admitted against a present obedience to the call of Christ.

III. Here is another that is willing to follow Christ, but he must have a little time to talk with his friends about it.

Observe, The greatest is the least request for a dispensation; (v. 61.) He said, "Lord, I will follow thee; I design no other. I am determined to do it; but let me first go bid them farewell, that are at home." This seemed reasonable; it was what Elisha desired when Elijah called him, Let me kiss my father and my mother; and it was allowed him: but the ministry of the gospel is preferable, and the service of it more urgent than that of the prophets; and therefore here it would not be allowed. Suffer me first to say good-bye to all, and go on in order, let the household affairs, and give direction concerning them; as some understand it. Now that which was amiss in this, is, (1.) That he looked upon his following of Christ as a melancholy, troublesome, dangerous thing; it was to him as if he were going to die; and therefore he must take leave of all his friends, never to see them again, or never with any comfort or advantage. When Christ, he must not be a comfort and blessing to them than if he had continued with them. (2.) That he seemed to have his worldly concerns more upon his heart than he ought to have, and that would consist with a close attendance to his duty as a follower of Christ. He seemed to hanker after his relations and family-concerns, and he could not part easily from them, but they stuck to him. It may be, he had bidden them farewell once, and therefore he must bid them farewell once more. For they are at home at my house. (3.) That he was willing to enter into a temptation from his purpose of following Christ. To go bid them farewell that were at home at his house, would be to expose himself to the strongest solicitations imaginable to allure his resolution, for they would all be against it, and would beg and pray that he would not leave them; now it was presumption in him to thrust himself into such a temptation. Those that resolve to walk with their Maker, and follow their Redeemer, must resolve that they will not so much as parley with their tempter.

The relapse which Christ gave him for this request: (v. 62.) No, telling him, having put his hand to the plough, and designing to make good work of his ploughing, will look back, or look behind him, for then he makes balks with his plough, and the ground he ploughs is not fit to be sown; so then, if thou hast designed to follow me, and to reap the advantages of those that do so, if thou lookest back to a worldly life again, and backerest after that, if thou lookest back, as Lot was led to Sodom, which seems to be alluded to here, thou art not fit for the kingdom of God." (1.) Thou art not fit to receive the good of the kingdom of God, if thou art thus.plotted by the hares, and not gone through with. (2.) Thou art not a sover fit to scatter the good seed of the kingdom, if thou canst hold the plough no better. Ploughing is in order to sowing. As these are not fit to be sown with divine cares and ends, whose first fruit is to be employed in sowing, who know not how to break up the fallow ground, but, when they have laid their hand to the plough, upon every occasion look back, and think of quitting it. Notice, Those who begin with the work of God, must resolve to go on with it, or they will make nothing of it. Looking back inclines to drawing back, and drawing back is to perish. Those are not fit for the heaven who, having set their faces heavenward, look back. But he, and he only, that endureth to the end, shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, we have, I. The ample commission which Christ gave to the seventy disciples, to preach the gospel, and to confirm it by miracles; and the full instructions he gave them, how to manage themselves in the execution of their commission, and the great encouragement he gave them to prosecute it, v. 1. 16. II. The report which the seventy disciples made to their Master of the success of their negotiation, and his discourse thereupon, v. 17. 24. III. Christ's discourse with a lawyer, tending to the way of righteousness, which he recommended to the religious, v. 25. 37. IV. Christ's entertainment at Martha's house, the reproof he gave to Mary for her care about the world, and his commendation of Mary for her care about her soul, v. 38. 42.

1. After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whether he himself would come. 2. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. 3. Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. 4. Carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. 5. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. 6. And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again. 7. And in the same house remain, eating
and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. 8. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: 9. And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 10. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, 11. Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. 12. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city. 13. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. 16. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.

We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples, two and two, into divers parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his entertainment. This is not taken notice of by the other evangelists; but the instructions here given them are much the same with those given to the twelve. Observe,

1. Their number; they were seventy. As in the choice of twelve apostles Christ had an eye to the twelve patriarchs, the twelve tribes, and the twelve princes of those tribes, so here he seems to have an eye to the seventy elders of Israel. So many went up with Moses and Aaron to the mount, and saw the glory of the God of Israel; (Exod. 24. 1, 9.) and so many were afterward chosen to be assisting to Moses in the government, in order to which the Spirit of prophecy came unto them, Numb. 11. 24, 25. The twelve wells of water, and the seventy palm-trees that were at Elim, were a figure of the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, Exod. 15. 27. They were seventy elders of the Jews, that were mentioned, and were commanded by Ptolemyn king of Egypt, when he took the old Testament into Greek, whose translation is thence called the Septuagint. The great Sanhedrim consisted of this number. Now,

1. We are glad to find that Christ had so many followers fit to be sent forth; his labour was not altogether in vain, though he met with much opposition.

Note, Christ's interest is a growing interest, and his followers, like Israel in Egypt, though afflicted, shall multiply. These seventy, though they did not attend him so closely and constantly as the twelve did, yet they were the constant hearers of his doctrine, and witnesses of his miracles, and believed in him. Those three mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter, might have been of these seventy, if they would have applied themselves in good earnest to their business. These seventy were those whom Peter speaks of as the men which confirmed the word of the Lord; that the Lord loveth; in and out among us, and were part of the one hundred and twenty there spoken of, Acts 1. 15, 21. Many of those that were the companions of the apostles, whom we read of in the Acts and the Epistles, we may suppose, were of these seventy disciples.

2. We are glad to find there was a work for so many ministers, hearers for so many preachers: thus growing society, so necessary to the growth of grace, and the savour of the leaven to diffuse itself in the meal, in order to the levenging of the whole.

II. Their work and business: He sent them two and two, that they might strengthen and encourage one another. If one fall, the other will help to raise him up. He sent them, not to all the cities of Israel, as he did the twelve, but only to every city and place where he himself would come, (v. 1.) to his hearers; and we must suppose, though it be not recorded, that Christ did soon after come to all those places whither he now sent them, though he could stay but a little while in a place. Two things they were ordered to do, the same that Christ did wherever he came; 1. They must heal the sick, (v. 9.) heal them in the name of Jesus, which would make people to long to see that Jesus, and ready to entertain him and his words, because they thought that power was in him, and by the establishment of the kingdom of God, its approach to them; "Tell them this, The kingdom of God is come nigh to you, and you now stand fair for an admission into it, if you will but look about you. Now is the day of your visitation, know and understand it." It is good to be made sensible of our advantages and opportunities, that we may lay hold on them. When the kingdom of God comes nigh, it concerns us to go forth to meet it.

III. The instructions he gives them.

1. They must set out with prayer; (v. 2.) and in prayer,

(1.) They must be duly affected with the necessities of the souls of men, which called for their help. They must look about, and see how great the harvest was, what abundance of people there were, that wanted to have the gospel preached to them, and were willing to receive it; nay, that had at this time their expectations raised of the coming of the Messiah and of his kingdom. There was corn ready to shed, and he lost, for want of hands to gather it in. Note, Ministers should apply themselves to their work, under a deep concern for precious souls, looking upon them as the riches of this world, which ought to be secured for Christ. They must be ready to receive the labourers were so few. The Jewish teachers were indeed many, but they were not labourers; they did not gather in souls to God's kingdom, but to their own interest and party. Note, Those that are good ministers themselves, wish that there were more good ministers, for there is work for more. It is common for tradesmen not to care how few there are of their own trade; but Christ's servants must not only be labourers, but must be ready to receive the labourers when they come. It is a matter of complaint when the labourers are few.

(2.) They must earnestly desire to receive their mission from God; that he would send them forth as labourers into his harvest, who is the Lord of the harvest, and that he would send others forth; for if God send them forth, they may hope he will go along with them and give them success. Let them therefore say, as the prophet, (Isa. 6. 8.) Here am I, send me. It is desirable to receive our commission from God, and then we may go on boldly.

2. They must set out with an expectation of trouble and persecution; "Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves; but go your ways, and resolve to make the best of it. Your enemies will be as wolves, bloody and cruel, and ready to pull you to
pieces; in their threatenings and revilings, they will be as howling wolves to terrify you, in their persecutions of you, they will be as ravenous wolves to tear you. But you must be as lambs, meek and patient, though made a easy prey of. It would have been very hard thus to be sent forth as sheep among wolves, if he had not ended them with his spirit and courage. 3. They must not incumber themselves with a load of provision as if they were going a long voyage, but depend upon God and their friends to provide what was convenient for them; "Carry neither a purse for money, nor scrip for provisions, nor shoes on your feet." (as before to the twelve, ch. 9. 3.) and salute no man by the way. This command Elias gave to his servant, when he sent him to see the Shunamite's dead child, 2 Kings 4. 29. Not that Christ would have his ministers to be rude, but ill mannered; but, (1.) They must go as men in haste, that had their particular places assigned them, where they must deliver their message, and in their way directly to those places must not hinder or retard themselves with needless ceremonies or compliments. (2.) They must go as men of business, business that relates to another world, which they must be intent in, and intent upon, and therefore must not concern themselves with secular affairs. Minister verbi et hoc age—You are a minister of the word; attend to your office. (3.) They must go as serious men, and men in sorrow; it was the custom of mourners, in the first seven days of their mourning, not to salute any, John 2. 13. Christ was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and it was fit that by this and other signs his messengers should resemble him, and likewise to them. Peace be to this house, with the calamities of mankind, which they came to relieve, and touch'd with a feeling of them. 4. They must show, not only their good-will, but God's good-will, to all whom they came, and leave the issue and success to him that knows the heart, v. 5, 6. (1.) The charge given them, was, Whatever house they entered into, they must say, Peace be to this house. Here, [1.] They are supposed to enter into private houses; for, being not admitted into the synagogues, they were forced to preach where they could have liberty. And as their public preaching was driven into houses, so thither they carried it. Like their Master, wherever they visited, they preached from house to house, Acts 5. 42.—20. 20. Christ's church was at first very much a church in the house. [2.] They are instructed not to say, "Peace be to this house," to all under this roof, to this family, and to all that belong to it. Peace be to you, was the common form of salutation among the Jews; they must not use it in formality, according to custom, to these they meet on the way, because they must use it with solemnity, to those whose houses they entered into; "Salute no man by the way in compliment, but those into whose house ye enter, say Peace be to you." Peace be to you, in reality; for this is intended to be more than a compliment. Christ's ministers go into all the world, to say, in Christ's name, Peace be to you. First, We are to propose peace to all; to preach peace by Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel of peace, the covenant of peace, peace on earth, and to invite the children of men to come and take the benefit of it. Secondly, We are to pray for peace to all. We must earnestly desire the salvation of the souls of those we preach to, and offer up those desires to God in prayer; and it may be well to let them know that we do thus pray for them, and bless them in the name of the Lord. (2.) The success was different, according to the different disposition of those they preached and prayed for. Accordingly as the inhabitants are sons of peace or not, accordingly our peace will, or will not, rest upon the house. Recipient ad modum recipientis—The quality of the receiver determines the nature of the reception. [1.] You will meet with some that are the sons of peace, that by the operations of the divine grace, pursuant to the designations of the divine counsel, are ready to admit the word of God into their hearts. Let the light from God's heart shine into their hearts, and make them soft wax to receive the impressions of it. Those are qualified to receive the comforts of the gospel, in whom there is a good work of grace wrought. And as to those, your peace shall find them out, and rest upon them, your prayers for them shall be heard, the promises of the gospel shall be confirmed to them, the privileges of it conferred on them, and the fruit of both shall remain and increase, and they shall walk in the light and joy of things as are taken away. [2.] You will meet with others that are no ways disposed to hear or heed your message; whole houses that have not one son of peace in them. Now it is certain that our peace shall not come upon them, they have no part nor lot in the matter; the blessing that rests upon the sons of peace, shall never come upon the sons of Belial, nor can any expect the blessings of the covenant, the promises, the peace, the glory of the church, and the joy of the kingdom, except they are sons of peace. But it shall return to us again; that is, we shall have the comfort of having done our duty to God, and discharged our trust. Our prayers, like David's, shall return into our own bosom; (Ps. 55. 13.) and we shall have commission to go on in the work. Our peace shall return to us again, not only to be enjoyed by ourselves, but to be communicated to others, to the next we meet with, them that are sons of peace. They must receive the kindnesses of those that did entertain them, and bid them welcome; (v. 7, 8.) "Those that receive the gospel, will receive you that preach it, and give you entertainment; you must not think to raise estates, but you may depend upon a subsistence; and," (1.) Be not shu: do not suspect your welcome, not be afraid of being troublesome, but eat and drink heartily such things as they give; for whatsoever kindness they show you, it is but a small return for the kindness you do them in bringing the glad tidings of peace; you will deserve it, for the labourer is worthy of his hire, the labourer in the work of the ministry is so, if he be indeed a labourer; and it is not an act of charity, but of justice, in them who are taught in the word, to communicate to them that teach them." (2.) Be not nice and curious in your diet; eat and drink such things as they give, (v. 7.) such things as are set before you, v. 8. Be thankful for plain food, and do not find fault, though it he not dressed according to art. It ill becomes Christ's disciples to be desirous of dainties. As he has not tied them up to the Pharisees' superstitious fasts, so he has not allowed them the luxurious feasts of the Epicureans. Probably, Christ here refers to the traditions of the elders about their meat, which were so many, that he said, "Who then having observed them, were extremely to criticize; you could hardly set a dish of meat before them, but there was some scruple or other concerning it; but Christ would not have them to regard those things; but eat what was given them, asking no question for conscience sake. 6. They must denounce the judgments of God against those who rejected them and their message; "If you enter into a city, and they do not receive you, if there be none there disposed to hear the doctrine, leave them, v. 10. If they will not give you welcome into their houses, do you give them warning in their streets." He orders them to do as (ch. 9. 5.) he had ordered the apostles to do; Say to them, not with rage, or scorn, or resentment, but with compassion to their poor, perishing souls, and...
a holy dread of the ruin which they are bringing upon themselves, Even the dust of your city, which Christ could not with stand, to wit, against you. v. 11. From them do not receive any kindnesses at all, be not beholden to them; it cost that prophet of the Lord dear, who accepted a meal's meat with a prophet in Bethel, 1 Kings 13, 21, 22. Tell them that you will not carry away with you the dust of their city, let them take it to themselves, for dust they are. It shall be the same for Christ's message and the work that was there according to their Master's order; tender and refusal were a discharge of their trust. But it shall be a witness against the recusants, that they would not give Christ's messengers any entertainment, no, not so much as water to wash their feet with, but they were forced to wipe off the dust. But tell them plainly, and bid them be sure of it, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. v. 17. But not this exception, neither shall they have answer for another day, if we slight these offers: it shall be more tolerable for Sodom, than for that city, v. 12. The Sodomites indeed rejected the warning given them by Lot; but rejecting the gospel is a more heinous crime, and will be punished accordingly in that day; he means the day of judgment, (v. 14.) but calls it, by way of emphasis, that day, because it is the last and great day, the day when we must account for all the days of time, and have our state determined for the days of eternity. Upon this occasion, the evangelist repeats,

1. The particular doom of those cities wherein most of Christ's mighty works were done, which we had, Matth. 11, 20, &c. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, all bordering upon the sea of Galilee, where Christ was most conversant, are the places here mentioned. [1.] They enjoyed greater privileges; Christ's mighty works were done in them, and they were all gracious works, works of mercy. They were hereby exalted to heaven, not only dignified and honoured, but put into a fair way of being happy; they were brought as near heaven as external means could bring them. [2.] God's design in favouring them thus, was to bring them to repentance and condemnation; whether of life and death, both in humiliation for the sins they had committed, and in humility, and a meek submission to God's government. [3.] Their frustrating of this design, and their receiving of the grace of God therein in vain; it is implied, that they rejected not; they were not wrought upon by all the miracles of Christ, to think the better of him, or the worse of sin; for they did not bring forth fruits answerable to the advantages they enjoyed. [4.] There was reason to think, morally speaking, that, if Christ had gone to Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities, and had preached the same doctrine to them, and wrought the same miracles among them, that he did in these cities of Israel, they would have repented long ago, so speedy would their repentance have been, and thus in a special manner exalted to heaven, if they had been. Now, to understand the wisdom of God, in giving of the means of grace to those who would not improve them, and denying of them to these that would, we must wait for the great day of discovery. [5.] The doom of those who thus receive the grace of God in vain, will be very fearful; they that were thus exalted, not making use of their elevation, will be thrust down to hell; thrust down with disgrace and dishonour; they will thrust in, to get into heaven, in the crowd of professors but in vain; they shall be thrust down, to their everlasting grief and disappointment, into the lowest hell, and hell will be hell indeed to them. [6.] In the day of judgment Tyre and Sidon will fare better, and it will be more tolerable for them than for these cities.

2. The general rule which Christ would give by, as to those to whom he sent his ministers; he will reckon himself treated according as they treated his ministers. v. 15. What is otherwise done to the christian religion, do in effect put a slight upon natural religion, which it is perfect of. And they who despise the faithful ministers of Christ, who, though they do not hate and persecute them, yet think meanly of them, look scornfully upon them, and turn their backs upon their ministry, will be reckoned with as despisers of God and Christ.

17. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lighten fall from heaven. 19. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. 22. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. 23. And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. 24. For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Christ sent forth the seventy disciples as he was going up to Jerusalem, to the feast of tabernacles, when he went up not openly, but as it were in secret, (John 7, 10.) having sent abroad so great a part of his church, he could not but give them instructions. Now, before his return from that feast, and while he was yet at Jerusalem or Bethany, which was hard by, for there he was, (v. 38.) that they, or at least some of them, returned to him. Now here we are told,

I. What account they gave him of the success of their expedition: (v. 37.) They returned again with joy; not complaining of the fatigue of their journeys, or of the opposition and discouragement
they met with, but rejoicing in their success, especially in casting out unclean spirits; Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. Though the healing of the sick only was mentioned in their commission, (v. 19.) yet, no doubt, the casting out of devils was included, and in this they had wonderful success. 4. They gave Christ the glory of this: It is through thy name. Note, All our victories over Satan are obtained by power derived from Jesus Christ. We must in his name enter the lists with our spiritual enemies, and, whatever advantages we gain, he must have all the praise; if the work be done in his name, the honour is due to his name. 2. They entertain themselves with the comfort of it; that is, they have the success of it, in mind, and reflect upon the success of the devils, those potent enemies, are subject to us. Note, the saints have no greater joy or satisfaction in any of their triumphs than in those over Satan. If devils are subject to us, what can stand before us? II. What acceptance they found with him, and how he entertained this account.

1. He confirmed what they said, as agreeing with his own observation; (v. 18.) My heart and eye were with you; I took note of the success you had, and I saw Satan fall as lightning from heaven. Note, Satan and his kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel. "I see how it is," saith Christ, "as you get ground, the devil loseth ground. He falls as lightning falls from heaven, so suddenly, so irrecoverably, so visibly, that all may perceive it, and say, See how Satan's kingdom totters, see how it tumbles." They triumphed in casting out devils out of the bodies of people; but Christ sees and rejoices in the fall of the devil from the interest he has in the souls of men; which is called his power in high places, Eph. 6. 12. He foresees this to be but an earnest of what should now be shortly done and was already begun—the destroying of Satan's kingdom in the world, by the extirpating of idolatry, and the turning of the nations to the faith of Christ. Satan falls from heaven when he falls from the throne in men's hearts, Acts 26. 18. And Christ foresaw that the preaching of the gospel, which would fly like lightning through the world, would, wherever it went, pull down Satan's kingdom. Now is the prince of this world cast out. Some have given another sense of this, as looking back to the fall of the angels, and designed for a caution to these disciples, lest their success should puff them up with proud thoughts of exaltation; Even devils by pride; (that was the sin for which Satan was cast down from heaven, where he had been an angel of light;) I saw it, and give you an intimation of it, lest you, being lifted up with pride, should fall into that condemnation of the devil, who fell by pride. 1 Tim. 3. 6.

2. He repeated, ratified, and enlarged, their commission; (v. 19.) Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, devils, malignant spirits, the old serpent; You shall bruise their heads in my name, according to the first promise, Gen. 3. 15. Come, set your feet on the necks of these enemies; you shall tread upon them with a show of contempt; because you shall trample them under foot. Ps. 91. 13. You shall tread upon all the power of the enemy, and the kingdom of the Messiah shall be everywhere set up upon the reins of the devil's kingdom; as the devils have now been subject to you, so they shall still be. (2.) A defensive power; Nothing shall by any means hurt you; not serpents or scorpions, if you should be chastised with them, or thrown into prisons and dungeons among them; you shall be unhurt by the most venomous creatures," as St. Paul was, (Acts 28. 5.) and as is promised, Mark 16. 18. "If wicked men be as serpents to you, and you dwell among those scorpions, (as Ezek. 6. 5.) you may despise their rage, and tread upon it; it will not live to hurt you, but will turn upon you against you but what is given them from above; they may hiss, but they cannot hurt. You may play upon the hole of the asp, for death itself shall not hurt or destroy," Isa. 11. 8, 19—25. 8.

3. He directed them to turn their joy into the right channel; (v. 20.) Note, in this rejoicing, not, that the spirits are subject unto you; that they have been so, and shall be still so. Do not rejoice in this, this only of your own power, and confirmation of your mission, and as it sets you a degree above other good people; do not rejoice in this only, or in this chiefly, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven, because you are chosen of God to eternal life, and are the children of God through faith. Christ, who knew the counsels of God, could tell them, that their names were written in heaven, for it is the Lamb's book of life that they are written in. All believers are, through grace, entitled to the inheritance of sons, and have received the adoption of sons, and the Spirit of adoption, which is the earnest of that inheritance, and so are enrolled among his family; now this is matter of joy, greater joy than casting out devils. Note, Power to become the children of God, is to be valued more than a power to work miracles: for we read of those who did in Christ's name cast out devils, were crucified by God, Judas did, and yet will be disowned by Christ in the great day; but they whose names are written in heaven, shall never perish; they are Christ's sheep, to whom he will give eternal life. Saving graces are more to be rejoiced in than spiritual gifts; holy love is a more excellent way than speaking with tongues. 4. He offered up a solemn thanksgiving to his Father, for employing such mean people as his disciples were, in such high services; (v. 21, 22.) this we had before, (Matt. 11. 25—27.) only here it is prefixed, that in that hour Jesus rejoiced; it was fit that particular notice should be taken of that hour, because there were so few such, for he was a Man of sorrows; in that hour in which he saw Satan fall, and heard of the good success of his ministers, in that hour he rejoiced. Note, Nothing rejoices the heart of the Lord Jesus most, as the progress of his kingdom, and laying ground of Satan, by the conversion of souls to Christ. Christ's joy was a solid, substantial joy, an inward joy, he rejoiced in spirit; but his joy, like deep waters, made no noise; it was joy that a stranger did not intermeddle with; before he applied himself to thank his Father, he stirred up himself to rejoice; for as thankful praise is the genuine language of holy joy, so holy joy is the root and spring of thankful praise. To this he gives his thanks:

(1.) For what was revealed by the Father through the Son; (v. 21.) I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth. In all our adorations of God, we must have an eye to him, both as the Maker of heaven and earth, and as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father. Now that which he gives thanks for, is, [1.] That the counsels of God concerning man's salvation are revealed to the children of men, who might fit also to teach others, and it is God that by his Son has spoken these things to us, and by his Spirit has revealed them in us; he has revealed that which had been kept secret from the beginning of the world. [2.] That they were revealed to babes, to those who were of mean parts and capacities, whose extraction and education had nothing in it to qualify them, who were but children in understanding, to God by his Spirit elevated their faculties, and fin-
nished them with this knowledge, and an ability to communicate it. We have reason to thank God, not so much for the honour he has hereby put upon the babes, as for the honour he has hereby done himself in perfecting strength out of weakness. [3.] That at the same time when he revealed them unto the babes, he hid them from the wise and prudent, the Gentile philosophers, the Jewish rabbins. He did not reveal the things of the gospel to them, nor employ them in preaching up his kingdom; thanks be to God that the apostles were not fetched from their schools. For, First, They would have been apt to mingle their notions with the doctrine of Christ, which would have corrupted it, as afterward it was corrupted by vanity; much corrupted by the Platonists' philosophy in the first century, and by the Peripatetic in its latter ages, and by the Judaizing teachers at the first planting of it. Secondly, If rabbins and philosophers had been made apostles, the success of the gospel would have been ascribed to their learning and wit, and the force of their reasonings and eloquence; and therefore they must not be employed, lest they should have taken too much to themselves, and others should have run too much to them: they were passed by for the same reason that Gideon's army was reduced; The people are yet too many, Judges 7. 4. Paul indeed was bred a scholar among the wise and prudent; but he became a babe when he became an apostle, and hid aside the enticing words of man's wisdom, forgot all the artifice, and made neither show nor use of any other knowledge than that of Christ and his crucif-

25. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, What shall I do to inherit eternal life? 26. He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? 27. And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. 29. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Je-
sus, And who is my neighbour? 30. And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raim-

ent, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. 33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34. And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee. 36. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell...
among the thieves? 37. And he said, He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

We have here Christ's discourse with a lawyer about some points of conscience, which we are all concerned to be rightly informed in, and are so here, from Christ, though the questions were proposed with no good intention.

I. We are concerned to know what that good is, which we should do in this life, in order to our attaining of eternal life. A question to this purport was proposed to Christ by a Scribe, only with a design to try him; not with a desire to be instructed by him, v. 25. The lawyer stood up, and asked him, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? If Christ had any thing peculiar to prescribe, by this question he would get it out of him, and perhaps expose him for it; if not, he would expose his doctrine as needless, since it would give no other direction for obtaining happiness than what they had already received; or, perhaps, he had no malicious design against Christ, as some of the Scribes had, only he was willing to have a little talk with him, just as people go to church, to hear what the minister will say. This was a good question. What shall I do to inherit eternal life? But it lost all its goodness, when it was proposed with an ill design, or a very mean one. Note, It is not enough for us to consider the words of God, and to enquire after them, but we must do it with an agreeable concern. If we speak of eternal life, and the way to it, in a careless manner, merely as a matter of discourse, especially as a matter of dispute, we do but take the name of God in vain, as the lawyer here did.

Now, this question being started, observe,

1. How Christ turned him over to the divine law, and bid him follow the direction of that. Though he saw the thoughts and intents of his heart, he doth not answer him according to the folly of that, out according to the wisdom and goodness of the question he asked. He answered him with a question, What is written in the law? How readest thou? v. 26. He came to catechize Christ, and to know him; but Christ will catechize him, and make him know himself. He talks to him as a lawyer, as one conversant in the law, and he will make him know that he doth not understand it. Let him practice according to his knowledge, and he should not come short of eternal life. Note, It will be of great use to us, in our way to heaven, to consider what is written in the law, and what we read there. We must have recourse to our Bibles, to the law, as it is now in the hand of Christ, and walk in the way that is shown us there. It is a great mercy that we have the law written; that we have it thereby reduced to certainty, and that thereby it is capable of spreading the farther, and lasting the longer. Having it written, it is our duty to read it, to read it with understanding, and to treasure up what we read, so that, when there is occasion, we may be able to tell what is written in the law, and how we read. To this we must appeal, by this we must try doctrines, and end disputes; this must be our oracle, our touchstone, our rule, our guide. We speak of the first and greatest commandments of the law, as those which he thought must be most strictly observed in order to the obtaining of eternal life, and which included all the rest. v. 27. (1.) We must (love God with all our hearts, must look upon him as the best of beings, in himself most amiable, and infinitely perfect and excellent; and as one whom we lie under the greatest obligations to, both in gratitude and interest. We must prize him, and value ourselves by our relation to him, and devote ourselves in him, and devote ourselves entirely to him. Our love to him must be sincere, hearty, and fervent; it must be a superlatively perfect love, a love that is as strong as death, but an intelligent love, and such as we can give a good account of the grounds and reasons of. It must be an entire love; he must have our whole souls, and must be served with all that is in us. We must love him more than anything beside him, but what we love for him, and in subjection to him. (2.) We must love our neighbours as ourselves, which we shall easily do, if we, as we ought to do, love God better than ourselves. We must wish well to all, and ill to none; must do all the good we can in the world, and no hurt, and must fix it as a rule to ourselves, to do to others as we would they should do to us; and this is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

3. Christ's approbation of what he said, v. 28. Though he came to tempt him, yet what he said that was good, Christ commended; Thou hast answered right. Christ himself fastened upon these as the two great commandments of the law; (Matth. 22. 37.) both sides agreed in this. Those who do well, shall have praise of the same, and so should love the commandments of the law. It was the hardest part of this work yet remains: This do, and thou shalt live; thou shalt inherit eternal life.

4. His care to avoid the conviction which was now ready to fasten upon him. When Christ said, This do, and thou shalt live, he began to be aware that Christ intended to draw from him an acknowledgment that he had not done this, and therefore an enquiry what he should do, which way he should look to get it. But this he could not do, he could not do this perfectly for the future by any strength of his own, and therefore an enquiry which way he might fetch in strength to enable him to do it; but he was willing to justify himself, and therefore cared not for carrying on that discourse, but saith, in effect, as another did, (Math. 19. 20.) All these things have I kept from my youth. Note, Many ask good questions with a design rather to justify themselves, and to shew that they are entitled to the mercy of God, than to avoid their own conviction, and to be convinced of their guilt. As to loving God, he was willing to say no more of it, but as to his neighbour, he was sure that there he had come up to the rule; for he had always been very kind and respectful to all about him. Now observe,

1. What was the corrupt notion of the Jewish teachers in this matter. Dr. Lightfoot quotes their own words on this purport, where he saith, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, but thou shalt not love thyself, as if they were not our neighbours, but those only that are of our own nation and religion. They would not put an Israelite to death for killing a Gentile, for he was not his neighbour: indeed they say that they ought not to kill a Gentile whom they were not at war with; but that if they saw a Gentile in danger of death, they thought themselves under no obligation to help save his life. Such wicked inference! did they thus draw from what they had been taught? For if God had distinguished them by, and by abusing it thus they had forfeited it; God justly took the forfeiture, and transferred covenant-favours to the
Gentile world, to whom they briskly denied common favors.

2. How Christ corrected this inhuman notion, and said it was not a parable, that whomsoever we have need to receive kindness from, and find ready to show as the kindness we need, we cannot but look upon as our neighbour; and therefore ought to look upon all those as such, who need our kindness, and to show them kindness accordingly, though they be not of our own nation and religion. Now observe,

(1.) The parable itself, which represents to us a parable thereof, that we should ever so much the better remember the occasion of Providence would yield us many good instructions, if we would carefully observe and improve them, and would be equivalent to parables framed on purpose for instruction, and be more affecting. This poor man fell among thieves. Whether they were Arabians, plunderers, that lived by spoil, or some profligate wretches of his own nation, or some of the Romans, soldiers, whose wanton cruelty and murder, as the discipline of their army, did this villainy, doth not appear; but they were very barbarous; they not only took his money, but stripped him of his clothes, and, that he might not be able to pursue them, or only to gratify a cruel disposition, (for otherwise what profit was there in his blood?) they wounded him, and left him half dead, ready to die of his wounds.

May we here conceive a just indignation at highwaymen, who have devastated themselves of all humanity, and are as natural brute beasts, beasts of prey, made to be taken and destroyed; and at the same time we cannot but think with compassion on them that fall into the hands of such wicked and unreasonable men, and be ready, when it is in our power, to help them. What reason have we to thank God for our preservation from perils by robbers?

(2.) How he was slighted by those who should have been his friends, who were not only men of his own nation and religion, but one a priest, and the other a Levite, men of a public character and station; nay, they were men of professed sanctity, whose offices obliged them to tenderness and compassion, (Heb. 5. 2.) who ought to have taught others their duty in such a case as this, which was to divide the spoils, that were drawn unto death; yet they would not themselves do it. Dr. Lightfoot tells us that many of the courses of the priests had their residence in Jericho, and from thence came up to Jerusalem, when it was their turn to officiate there, and so back again, which occasioned abundance of passing and repassing of priests that way, and Levites their attendants; they came this way, and saw the man lying, who they were sensible that they heard his groans, and could not but pity his condition; if he were not helped, he must quickly perish. The Levite not only saw him, but came, and looked on him; (v. 32.) but they passed by on the other side; when they saw his case, they got as far off as ever they could, as if they would have had a pretence to say, Behold, we knew it not. It is said when these men, those examples of charity, are prodigies of cruelty, and whatever they do, to those who, by displaying the mercies of God, open the bounds of compassion in others, shut up their own.

(3.) How he was succoured and relieved by a stranger, a certain Samaritan, of that nation which of all others the Jews most despised and detested, and would have no dealings with; this man had some humanity in him, v. 33. The priest had his heart hardened against one of his own people, but the Samaritan had his opened towards one of another people; when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and stood over him, and cared for him. He was first a Jew, and a man in misery, and he has learned to honour all men; he knows not how soon this poor man's case may be his own, and therefore pities him, as he himself would desire and expect to be pitied in the like case. That so great love should be found in a Samaritan, was perhaps thought as great as that father who, with a child in his arms, meeting a woman of Canaan; but really it was not so, for pity is the work of a man, but faith is the work of divine grace.

The compassion of this Samaritan was not an idle compassion; he did not think it enough to say, "Be healed, be helped." (Jam. 2. 16.) but when he drew out his soul, he reached forth his hand also to this poor needy creature, Isa. 58. 7. 10. Prov. 31. 20. See how friendly this good Samaritan was. First, He went to the poor man, whom the priest and Levite kept at a distance from; he inquired, no doubt, how he came into this deplorable condition, and condescended with him. Secondly, He did the surgeon's part, for want of a better; He bound up his wounds, putting on his own linen, it is likely, for that was the manner of using linen in those parts, which he had with him; wine to wash the wound, and oil to mollify it, and close it up; he did all he could to ease the pain, and prevent the peril, of his wounds, as one whose heart bled with them. Thirdly, He set him on his own beast, and went on foot himself, and brought him to an inn. A great mercy it is to have inns upon the road, where we may be furnished for our money with all conveniences for food and rest. Perhaps the Samaritan, if he had not met with this hinderance, would have got that night to his journey's end; but, in compassion to that poor man, he takes up short at an inn. Some think that the priest and Levite pretended they could not stay to help the poor man, because they were in haste, to go and attend the temple-service at Jerusalem. We suppose this Samaritan went upon business; but he understood that both his own business and God's sacrifice too must give place to such an act of mercy as this. Fourthly, He took care of him in the inn, got him to bed, had food for him that was proper, and due attendance, and, it may be, praised with him. Nay, Fifthly, As if he had been his own child, or one he was obliged to look after, when he left him next morning, he left money with the landlord, to defray for his use, and passed his work. Two pence of their money were about fifteen pence of ours, which, according to the rate of things then, would go a great way; however, here it was an earnest of content, to the full of all demands. All this was kind and generous, and as much as one could have expected from a friend or a brother; and yet here it is done by a stranger and for a stranger. Now this parable is applicable to another purpose than that for which it was intended; and doth excellently set forth the kindness and love of God our Saviour, toward sinful, miserable man. We are like this poor distressed traveller. Satan, our enemy, had robbed us, stripped us, wounded us; such is the mischief that sin hath done us; we are by nature more than half dead, twice dead, in tares and weeds; and, like others, we have no strength. The law of Moses, like the priest and Levite, the ministers of the law, looks upon us, but has no compassion on us, gives us no relief; it passes by on the other side, as having neither pity nor power to help us; but then comes the blessed Jesus, that good Samaritan, (and they said of him by way of reproach, He is a Samaritan,) he has con-
Christ and his disciples at her house, v. 38. Observe,
1. Christ's coming to the village where Martha lived; "As they went, (Christ and his disciples together) he and they with him entered into a certain village.

2. Wherever Christ went, his disciples went along with him. (3.) Christ honoured the country-villages with His presence and favour, and not the great and populous cities; for, as he chose privacy, so he countenanced poverty.

3. His reception at Martha's house; A certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house, and bid him welcome, for she was the housekeeper.

4. They were some who were Christ's particular friends, whom he loved more than his other friends, and them he visited most frequently. He loved this family, (John 11. 5.) and often invited himself to them. Christ's visits are the token of his love, John 14. 23. (3.)

5. There were some who kindly received Christ into their houses, when he was here upon earth. It is called Mary, (John 12. 8.) for, by her, was she anointing, and was the housekeeper. Though it was chargeable to entertain Christ, for he did not come alone, but brought his disciples with him, yet she would not regard the expense of it. (How can we spend what we have better than in Christ's service! Nay, though at this time it was grown dangerous to entertain him, especially so near Jerusalem, yet she cared not what hazard she ran for his name's sake; though there were many that might not entertain him, yet there was one that bid him welcome. Though Christ is everywhere spoken against, yet there is a remnant to whom he is dear, and who are dear to him.

II. The attendance which Mary, the sister of Martha, gave upon the word of Christ, v. 20. She heard his word. It seems, our Lord Jesus, as soon as he came into the house, even before entertainment was got for him, had determined that work of preaching the gospel; he presently took the chair with solemnity, for Mary sat to hear him, which intimates that it was a continued discourse.

Note, A good sermon is never the worse for being preached in a house; and the visits of our friends should be so managed, as to make them turn to a spiritual advantage. Mary, having this prize put into her hands, set herself to improve it, not knowing when she should have such another. Since Christ is forward to speak, we should be swift to hear. 2. She sat to hear, which denotes a close attention; her mind was composed, and she resolved to abide by it; not to catch a word now and then, but to receive all that Christ delivered. She sat at his feet, as scholars at the feet of their tutors when they read their lectures; hence Paul is said to be brought up at the feet of the apostles. 3. Sitting at Christ's feet, when we hear his word, shew a readiness to receive his word, and a submission and entire resignation of ourselves to the guidance of it. We must either sit at Christ's feet, or he made his footstool; but if we sit with him at his feet now, we shall sit with him on his throne shortly.

III. The care of Martha about her domestic affairs. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, v. 40. and that was the reason why she sat not where Mary was—sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was providing for the entertainment

passion on us, he binds up our bleeding wounds, (Ps. 147. 3. Isa. 61. 1.) pours in, not oil and wine, but that which is infinitely more precious, his own blood; he takes care of us, and bids us put all the expenses of our cure upon his account; and all this though he was no more of us, till he was pleased by his voluntary condescension to take himself so, but infinitely above us. This magnifies the riches of his love, and obliges us all to say, How much are we indebted, and what shall we render?

2. The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own mouth. Now tell me, with Christ, which of these three was neighbour to him that fell among thieves, (v. 36,) the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan? Which of those did the neighbour's part? To this the lawyer would not answer, as he ought to have done; Doubtless, the Samaritan was; but, He that showed mercy on him; doubtless, he was a good neighbour to him, and very neighbourly, and I cannot but say that it was a good work thus to save an honest Jew from perishing.

2. The duty inferred from it is pressed home upon the lawyer's own mouth. Go, and do thou likewise. The duty of relations is mutual and reciprocal; the titles of friends, brethren, neighbours, are, as Grotius here speaks, ταίρεται;—equally binding on both sides; if one side be bound, the other cannot be bound as is agreed in all contracts. If a Samaritan do well, that he may have a distressed Jew, certainly a Jew does not well, if he do not in like manner help a distressed Samaritan. Petimusque damascus vicissim—These kind offices are to be reciprocated. "And therefore go thou, and do as the Samaritan did, when ever occasion offers; shew mercy to those that need thy help, and do it freely, and with concern and compassion, though they be not of thy own nation and thy own profession, or of thine own opinion and communion in religion. Let the charity be thus extensive, before thou boastest of having conferred thyself to that great commandment, of loving thy neighbour." This lawyer valued himself much upon his learning, and his knowledge of the laws, and in that he thought he had puzzled Christ himself; but Christ sends him to school to a Samaritan, to learn his duty; Go, and do as he did, the Samaritan; and let every one of us, in our places, and according to our ability, to succour, help, and relieve all that are in distress and necessity, and of lawyers particularly; and hereinafter we must study to excel many that are proud of their being priests and Levites.

38. Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. 39. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. 40. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. 41. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: 42. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

We may observe in this story,
1. The entertainment which Martha gave to Vol. v.-3 Y
of Christ and those that came with him. Perhaps she had no notice before of his coming, and she was unprovided, but was in care to have every thing handsome upon this occasion; she had not such guests every day. Housekeepers know what care and bustle there must be, when a great entertainment is to be made.

Observe how recomendable it is not to be overlooked, (1.) Here was a commendable respect to our Lord Jesus; for we have reason to think that it was not for ostentation, but purely to testify her good will to him, that she made this entertainment. Note, Those who truly love Christ, will think that which was in this case, is that is best bestowed, that is laid out for his honour. (2.) Here was a commendable care of her household. fast, and for her household. The respect showed to this family among the Jews, (John 11. 19.) that they were persons of some quality and distinction; and yet Martha herself did not think it a disparagement to her, to lay her hand even to the service of the family, when there was occasion for it. Note, It is the duty of those who have the charge of families, to look well to the ways of their household. The affectation of state and the love of ease make many families negligent.

2. Here was something culpable; which we must take notice of too. (1.) She was for much serving; her heart was upon it, to have a very sumptuous and splendid entertainment; great plenty, great variety, and great exactness, according to the fashion of the place. She was in care, and 

(2.) She was troubled about it; she was distracted with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be distracted with them; much be disdained and perhaps not become the disciples of Christ to affect much serving, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities, in eating and drinking. What need was there of much serving, when much less will serve? (2.) She was troubled about it; she was distracted with it. Note, Whatever cares the providence of God casts upon us, we must not be distracted with them; much be disdained and perhaps not become the disciples of Christ to affect much serving, to affect varieties, dainties, and superfluities, in eating and drinking. What need was there of much serving, when much less will serve?

3. That which he reproved her for, was, her being too solicitous and careful about many things. He was not pleased that she should think to phrase him with a rich and splendid entertainment, and with perplexing herself to prepare it for him; whereas he would teach us, as not to be sensual in using such things, so not to be selfish in being willing that others should be troubled, no matter who or how many, so we may be gratified. Christ reproves her, both for the intercessions of her care, "thou art careful and troubled, divided and disturbed by the care; and for the extravagance of it, "about many things, thou dost groan at many enjoyments, and so art troubled at many disappointments. Poor Martha, thou hast many things to fret at, and that puts thee out of humour, whereas less ado would serve.

Note, Inordinate care and trouble about many things in this world are a common fault among Christ's disciples; they are very dispasion to Christ, and that for which they often come under the rebukes of Providence. If they fret for no just cause, it is just with him to order something to fret at.

4. That which aggravated the sin and folly of her care was, that but one thing is needful. It is a low construction which some put upon this, that, whereas as Martha was in care to provide many dishes of meat, as her great entertainment, so Mary provided but one dish of meat, to ha'
of one, Prov. 23. 1—3. It is a forced construction which some of the ancients put upon it. But oneness is needful, in opposition to distractions. There is need of one heart, to attend upon the word, not divided and hurried to and fro, as Martha's was at this time. The one thing needful is certainly meant of that Mary which made her choice-sitting at Christ's feet, to hear his word. She was troubled and kept herself busy; she shewed that she should have applied herself to one; godliness makes the heart, which the world had divided. The many things she was troubled about, were needless, while the one thing she neglected, was needful. Martha's care and work were good in their proper season and place; but now she had something else to do, which was un-speakably more needful, and therefore should be done first, and most minded. She expected Christ the world into his heart, than Martha did; but he blamed her for not doing as Mary did; and we are sure the judgment of Christ is according to truth. The day will come, when Martha will wish she had sitten where Mary did.

VI. Christ's approbation and commendation of Mary for her serious piety; Mary hath chosen the good part. Mary said nothing in her own defence; but when Martha had opened to the Master, to him she is wishing to refer it, and will abide by his award; and here we have it. 1. She had justly given the preference to that which best deserved it; For one thing is needful; this one thing that she has done, to give up herself to the guidance of Christ, and receive the law from his mouth. Note, Serious godliness is a needful thing, it is the one thing needful; for nothing without this will do us any real good in this world, and nothing but this will go with us into another world. 2. She had herein wisely done well for herself; Christ justified Mary against her sister's clamours. However we may be censured and condemned by men for our piety and zeal, our Lord Jesus will take our part; But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. Let not us then condemn the pious zeal of any, lest we set Christ against us; and let us never be discouraged if we be censured for our piety and zeal, for we have Christ for us. Note, Sooner or later, Mary's choice will be justified, and all those who make that choice, and abide by it. But this was not all; he applauded her for her wisdom; She hath chosen the good part; for she chose to be with Christ, to take her part with him; she chose the better business, and the better happiness, and took the better way of honouring Christ and of pleasing him, by receiving his word into her heart, than Martha did, by providing for his entertainment in her house. Note, (1.) A part with Christ is a good part; it is a part for the soul and eternity, the part Christ gives to his favourites, (John 13. 8.) who are partakers of Christ, (Heb. 3. 14.) and partakers with Christ, Rom. 8. 17. (2.) It is a part that shall never be taken away from those that have it. A portion in this life will certainly be taken away from us, at the utmost, when we shall be taken away from it; but not parted; for the love of Christ, and our part in that love. Men and devils cannot take it away from us, and God and Christ will not. (3.) It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us to choose this good part, to choose the service of God for our business, and the favour of God for our happiness, and an interest in Christ, in order to both. In particular cases we must choose that which has a tendency to reveal and perfect our love, and quicken and strengthen our souls. Mary was at her choice, whether she would partake with Martha in her care, and get the reputation of a fine housekeeper, or sit at the feet of Christ, and approve herself a zealous disciple; and by her choice in this particular, Christ judges of her general choice. (4.) Those who choose this good part, shall not only have what they choose, but shall have their choice commended in the great day.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, I. Christ teaches his disciples to pray, and quickens and encourages them to be frequent, instant, and importunate in prayer, v. 1—13. II. He fully answers the blasphemous impeachment of the Pharisees, who charged him with casting out devils by virtue of a compact and confederacy with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, and shows the absurdity and wickedness of it, v. 14—25. III. He shows the honour of obedient disciples to be greater than that of his own mother, v. 27, 28. IV. He upbraids the men of that generation for their indifference and obstinacy, notwithstanding the many means of conviction offered to them, v. 29—36. V. He severely reproved the Pharisees and lawyers for their hypocrisy, their pride, and their opposing of the consciences of those that submitted to them, and their talking and praising of those that witnessed against their wickedness, v. 37—54.

1. And it came to pass, that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. 2. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name: Thy kingdom come: Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. 3. Give us day by day our daily bread: 4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us: And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. 5. And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; 6. For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? 7. And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. 8. I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. 9. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12. Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Prayer is one of the great laws of natural religion. That man is a brute, is a monster, that never prays; that never gives glory to his Maker, nor feels his favour, nor owns his dependence upon him. One great design therefore of Christianity, is, to make us in prayer; to confer the duty upon us, to instruct us.
in it, and encourage us to expect advantage by it. Now here.

1. We find Christ himself praying in a certain place, probably where he used to pray, v. 1. As God, he was prayed to; as Man, he prayed; and though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience. This evangelist has taken particular notice of Christ's praying often, more than any other of the evangelists. Thus he is mentioned (ch. 1. 21.) he was praying; he withdrew into the wilderness: then he prayed (ch. 4. 1.) he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer; he was alone praying; (ch. 9. 18.) soon after, he went up into a mountain to pray, and as he prayed, he was transfigured; (ch. 9. 28. 29.) and here he was praying in a certain place. Thus, like a genuine Son of David, he gave himself to prayer. Psa. 109. 4. Perhaps Christ was now alone praying, and the disciples only knew that he was so, or whether he prayed with them, is uncertain; it is most probable that they were joining with him.

II. His disciples applied themselves to him for direction in prayer; when he was praying, they asked, Lord, teach us to pray. Note, The gifts and graces of prayer are such as men are to apply themselves earnestly to. Their zeal should provoke them to holy imitation and emulation: why should not we do as well as they? Observe, they came to him with this request, when he ceased; for they would not disturb him when he was at prayer, nor, not with this good motion. Every thing is beautiful in its season. One of his disciples, in the name of the rest; and perhaps by their appointment, said, Lord teach us. Note, Though Christ is apt to teach, yet will he for this inquire of, and his disciples must attend him for instruction.

Now, 1. Their request is, "Lord teach us to pray; give us a rule or model by which to go in praying, and put words into our mouths." Note, It becomes the disciples of Christ to apply themselves to him for instruction in prayer. Lord, teach us to pray, is itself a good prayer, and a very needful one, for it is a hard thing to pray well; and it is Jesus Christ only that can teach us, by his word and Spirit, how to pray. "Lord, teach me what it is to pray; Lord, excite and quicken me to the duty; Lord, direct me what to pray for; Lord, give me praying graces, that I may serve God acceptably in prayer; Lord, teach me to pray in proper words; give me a mouth and tongue, that I may speak as I ought; teach me what I shall say."

2. Their plea is, "As John also taught his disciples. He took care to instruct his disciples in this necessary duty, and we would be taught as they were, for we have a better Master than they had."—Dr. Lightfoot's notion of this, is, That, whereas the Jewish prayers were generally adorations, and praises of God, and doxologies, John taught his disciples such prayers as were more filled with petitions and requests; for it is said of them that they did Jesus[185:09]—make prayers, Luke 5. 33. The word signifies such prayers as are properly petitionary. "Now, Lord, teach us those, to be added to those benedictions of the name of God, which we have been accustomed to from our childhood." According to this, John did not only use or consisting wholly of petitions, and even omitting the doxology which had been affixed; and the Amen, which was usually said in the giving of thanks, (1 Cor. 14. 16.) and in the Psalms, is added to doxologies only. This discourse needed not to have urged John Baptist's example: Christ was more ready to teach than ever John Baptist was, and particularly taught to pray better than John did, or could, teach his disciples.

III. Christ gave them direction; much the same that he had given them before in his sermon upon the mount, Matth. 6. 9. &c. We cannot think that they had forgotten it, but they thought to have had further and fuller instructions, and he did not, as yet, think fit to give them any; when the Spirit should be poured out upon them from on high, they would find all their requests couched in these few words, and would be able, in words of their own, to expatiate and enlarge upon them. In Matthew he had directed them to pray after this manner; here, in John, he adds some such intimations that the Lord's prayer was intended to be used both as a form of prayer and a directory.

1. There are some differences between the Lord's prayer in Matthew and in Luke, by which it appears that it was not the design of Christ that we should be tied up to these very words, for then there would have been no variation. Here is one difference in the translation only, which ought not to alter the sense when there is none in the original, and that is in the third petition; as in heaven, so on earth; whereas the words are the very same, and in the same order as in Matthew; but there is a difference in the fourth petition; in Matthew we pray, "Give us daily bread this day;" here "Give us this day bread." Some would explain the latter by the broad place, some by the days require, as they call for it; not, "Give us this day bread for many days to come;" but as the Israelites had manna, "Let us have bread to-day for to-day, and to-morrow for to-morrow;" for thus we may be kept in a continual dependence upon God, as children upon their parents, and may have our mercies fresh from his hand daily, and may find ourselves under fresh obligations to do the work of every day, according as the duty of the day requires, because we have from God the supplies of every day in the day, according as the necessity of the day requires.

Here is likewise some difference in the fifth petition. In Matthew it is, Forgive us our debts, as we forgive; here it is, Forgive us our sins; which proves that our sins are our debts; for we forgive, not that our forgiving of those that have offended us, can merit pardon from God, or be an inducement to him to forgive us; (he forgives for his own name's sake, and his Son's sake;) but this is a very necessary qualification for forgiveness; and if God have wrought it in us, we may plead that work of his grace, for the enforcing of our petitions for the pardon of our sins; "Lord, forgive us, for thou hast both the understanding of it, and the power to forgive."

Here is another addition here; we plead not only in general, We forgive our debtors, but in particular, "We profess to forgive every one that is indebted to us, without exception. We do forgive our debtors, as not to bear malice or ill-will to any, but true love to all, without any exception whatsoever."

Here also the doxology in the close of this prayer is wholly omitted here; and the Amen; for Christ would have left them at liberty to use that, or any other doxology fetched out of David's psalms; or rather, he left a vacuum here, to be filled up by a doxology more peculiar to the christian institutes, ascribing glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. Yet it is, for substance, the same; and we shall therefore here only gather up some general lessons from it.

(1.) That in prayer we ought to come to God as children to a Father, a common Father to us and all mankind, but in a peculiar manner a Father to all the disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore in our requests, both for others and for ourselves, come to him with a humble boldness, confiding in his power and goodness.

(2.) That in the same time, and in the same petitions wherein we address to God for ourselves, we should take in with us all the children of men, as God's creatures and our fellow-creatures. A rooted
principle of catholic charity, and of christian sanctified humanity, should go along with us, and dictate to us throughout this prayer, which is so worded as to be accommodated to that noble principle.

(2.) That in order to the continuing the habit of prayer to God, which ought to act and govern us in the whole course of our conversation, we should, in all our devotions, with an eye of faith look heavenward, and view the God we pray to as our Father in heaven, that we may make the upper world more familiar to us, and may ourselves become better prepared for the future state.

(4.) That in prayer, as well as in the tenor of our lives, we must seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, by ascribing honour to his name, his holy name, and power to his government, both that of his providence in the world, and that of his grace in the church. O that both the one and the other may be more manifested, and we and others more manifestly brought into subjection to both!

(5.) That the principles and practices of the upper world, the unseen world, (which therefore by faith only we are apprehended of,) are the great original—"the αἰώνιοι, to which we should desire the principles and practices of this lower world, both in others and in ourselves, may be more conformable. These words, *As in heaven, so on earth*, refer to all the three first petitions; "Father, let thy name be sanctified and glorified, and thy kingdom prevail, and thy will be done on this earth that is now alienated from this world, and brought under heaven that is entirely devoted to thy service."

(6.) That those who faithfully and sincerely mind the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, may humbly hope that all other things, as far as to Infinite Wisdom seems good, shall be added to them, and they may in faith pray for them. If our first chief desire and care be, that God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom come, and his will be done, we may then come boldly to the throne of grace for our daily bread, which will then be sanctified to us, when we are sanctified to God, and God is sanctified by us.

(7.) That in our prayers for temporal blessings we must moderate our desires, and confine them to a competency. The expression here used of day by day, is the very same with our daily bread; and therefore some think that we must look for another spiritual unction of the next kingdom, than that of daily, which we give it, and that it means our necessary bread; that bread that is suited to the cravings of our nature; the fruit that is brought out of the earth for our bodies that are made of the earth, and are earthly, Ps. 104. 14.

(8.) That sins are debts which we are daily contracting, and which therefore we should every day pray for the forgiveness of. We are not only going before, but must seek the day of God, day and in duty, but are daily incurring the penalty of the law, as well as the forfeit of our bond, by our omissions; every day adds to the score of our guilt, and it is a miracle of mercy, that we have so much encouragement given us to come every day to the throne of grace, to pray for the pardon of our sins of daily infirmity. God multiplies to pardon beyond some expectations.

(9.) That we have no reason to expect, nor can with any confidence pray, that God would forgive our sins against him, if we do not sincerely, and from a truly christian principle of charity, forgive those that have at any time affronted us, or been injurious to us. Though the words of our mouth be even this prayer to God, if the mediation of our heart at the same time be, as often as it is, malevolent and revenge to our brethren, we are not accepted, nor can we expect an answer of peace.

(10.) That temptations to sin should be as much dreaded and deprecated by us as ruin by sin; and it should be as much our care and prayer to get the power of sin broken in us, as to get the guilt of sin removed from us, and though temptation may be a sling and a staff, staggering thing, we must at earnest with God, that we may not be led into that, as that we may not be led by that to sin, and by sin to ruin.

Lastly, That God is to be depended upon, and sought unto, for our deliverance from all evil; and we should pray, not only that we may not be left to ourselves to run into evil, but that we may not be left to Satan, to bring evil upon us. Dr. Lightfoot understands it of being delivered from the evil one, that is, the devil, and suggests that we should pray particularly against the apparitions of the devil and his possessed, the disciples were employed to cast out devils, and therefore were concerned to pray that they might be guarded against the particular spite he would always be sure to have against them.

IV. He stirs up and encourages importunity, fervency, and constancy, in prayer: by showing,

1. That importunity will go far in our dealings with men, v. 5—8. Suppose a man, upon a sudden emergency, goes to borrow a loan or two of bread of a neighbour, at an unseasonable time of night, not for himself, but for his friend that came unexpectedly to him. His neighbour will be loath to accommodate him, for he has weakened him with his knockings, and has chagrin'd his heart; but after a great deal of saying in his excuse; the door is shut and locked, his children are asleep, in bed, in the same room with him, and, if he makes a noise, he shall disturb them; his servants are asleep, and he cannot make them hear; and for his own part, he shall catch cold, if he rise to give him; but his neighbour will have no nav, and therefore he continues knocking still, and tells him he will do so till he has what he comes for; so that he must give it to him, or he will rise, and give him as many as he needs, because of his importunity. He speaks this parable with the same intent that he speaks that, ch. 18. 1. That men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Not that God can be wrought upon by importunity, we cannot be troublesome to him, nor by being so change his counsels. We prevail with men by importunity, because they are dispossessed with it, but God is not so possessed with it. Now this similitude may be of use to us,

(1.) To direct us in prayer. [1.] We must come to God with boldness and confidence for what we need, as a man does to the house of his neighbour or friend, who, he knows, loves him, and is inclined to be kind to him. [2.] We must come for bread, for that which is needful, and which we cannot be without. [3.] We must come to him by prayer for others as well as for ourselves. This man did not come for bread for himself, but for his friend. The Lord accepted Job, when he prayed for his friends, Job 42. 10. We cannot come to God upon a more pleasing errand than when we come to him for grace to enable us to do good, to feed many with our hire, to entertain and edify those that come to us. [4.] We may come with the more boldness to God in a strait, if it be a strait they have not thought of, and God sends his into them as a way full of carelessness, but Providence has led us into it. This man would not have wanted bread, if his friend had not come in unexpectedly. The care which Providence casts upon us, we may with cheerfulness cast back upon Providence. [5.] We ought to continue instant in prayer, and watch in the same with all perseverance.

(2.) To encourage us in prayer. If importunity could prevail thus with a man, who was angry at it much more with a God, who is infinitely more kind.
and ready to do good to us than we are to one an-
other, and is not angry at our importunity, but ac-
cepts it, especially when it is for spiritual mer-
cies that we are importunate. If he does not answer our
prayers presently, yet he will in due time, if we con-
stantly pray.

2. That God has promised to give us what we
ask of him. We have not only the goodness of na-
ture to take comfort from, but the word which he has
spoken; (v. 9, 10.) "Ask, and it shall be given
you: either the thing itself you shall ask, or that
which is equivalent; either the horn in the flesh
must be consumed, or grace sufficient out given." We had this
before, Matt. 7. 7, 8. "I say unto you, If you have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's
mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen.
We must not only ask, but we must seek, in the use
of means, must second our prayers with our endeav-
ours; and in asking and seeking, we must continue
pressing, still knocking at the same door, and we
shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in
concert, but by our particular prayers: Every one
that asketh, receiveth, even the meanest saint that
asketh in faith. This poor man cried, and the Lord
heard him, Ps. 34. 6. When we ask of God those
things which Christ has here directed us to ask, that
his name may be sanctified, that his kingdom may
come, and his will be done, in these requests we must
be importunate, must never hold our peace
day or night; we must not keep silence, nor give
God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jeru-
salem a praise in the earth, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

V. He gives us both instruction and encourage-
ment in prayer, from the consideration of our rela-
tion to God as a Father. Here is,

1. An appeal to the benefits of earthly fathers;
"Ask, and it shall be given you: either the thing itself you shall ask, or that
which is equivalent; either the horn in the flesh
must be consumed, or grace sufficient out given." We had this
before, Matt. 7. 7, 8. "I say unto you, If you have it from Christ's own mouth, who knows his Father's
mind, and in whom all promises are yea and amen.
We must not only ask, but we must seek, in the use
of means, must second our prayers with our endeav-
ours; and in asking and seeking, we must continue
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shall at length prevail, not only by our prayers in
concert, but by our particular prayers: Every one
that asketh, receiveth, even the meanest saint that
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be importunate, must never hold our peace
day or night; we must not keep silence, nor give
God any rest, until he establish, until he make Jeru-
salem a praise in the earth, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

2. An application of this to the blessings of our
heavenly Father; (v. 13.) If ye then, being evil,
give, and know how to give, good gifts to your
children, much more shall God give you the Spirit.
He shall give good things; so it is in Matthew. Ob-
serve,

(1.) The direction he gives us what to pray for;
we must ask for the Holy Spirit, not only as neces-
sary in order to our praying well, but as inclusive of
all the good things we are to pray for; we need no
make more to us happy, for the Spirit is the
Worker of spiritual life, and the Earnest of eternal
life. Note, The gift of the Holy Ghost is a gift we
are every one of us concerned earnestly and con-
stantly to pray for.

The encouragement he gives us to hope that
we shall speed in this prayer; Your heavenly Fa-
er will give. It is in his power to give the Spirit;
he has all good things to bestow, wrapped up in that
one; but that is not all, it is in his promise, the gift
of the Holy Ghost is in the covenant, Acts 2. 33, 38.
And it is here inferred from parents' readiness to
supply their children's needs, and gratify their de-
sires, that what are natural and proper, If the
child ask for a serpent, whether of a scorpion, the father, in
kindness, denies him, but not if he has asked for what is
needful, and will be nourishing. When God's chil-
dren ask for the Spirit, they do, in effect, ask for
bread, for the Spirit is the Staff of life; nay, he is
the Author of the soul's life. If our earthly parents,
tough 'will, be yet so kind, if they, though weak,
be yet so knowing, that they not only give, but give
with discretion, give what is best, in the best man-
ner and time, much more shall your heavenly Fa-
er, who infinitely excels the fathers of our flesh
both in wisdom and goodness, give you his Holy
Spirit, so far as you are willing to lay out for the
education of your children, to whom they design
leaving their estates, much more will your heavenly
Father give the spirit of sons to all those whom he
has predestinated to the inheritance of sons.

14. And he was casting out a devil, and
it was dumb. And it came to pass, when
the devil was gone out, the dumb spake;
and the people wondered. 15. But some
of them said, He casteth out devils through
Beelzebub the chief of the devils. 16. And
others, tempting him, sought of him a sign
from heaven. 17. But he, knowing their
thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom
divided against itself is brought to desola-
tion: and a house divided against a house, fal-
th. 18. If Satan also be divided among
himself, how shall his kingdom stand? beca-
use ye say that I cast out devils
through Beelzebub. 19. And if I by Beel-
zebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be
your judges. 20. But if I with the finger of
God cast out devils, no doubt the king-
dom of God is come upon you. 21. When
a strong man armed keepeth his palace,
his goods are in peace; 22. But when a
stronger than he shall come upon him, and
overcome him, he taketh from him all his ar-
mour wherein he trusted, and divideth his
spoils. 23. He that is not with me is
against me; and he that gathereth not with
me, scattereth. 24. When the unclean spirit
is gone out of a man, he walketh through
dry places, seeking rest; and finding none,
he saith, I will return unto my house
whence I came out. 25. And when he
cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished
26. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven
other spirits more wicked than himself; and
they enter in, and dwell there: and the last
state of that man is worse than the first.

The substance of these verses we had, Matth. 12. 22, &c. Christ is here giving a general proof of his
divine mission, by a particular proof of his power
over Satan, his conquest of whom was an indication
of his great design in coming into the world, which
was, to destroy the works of the devil; here too he
gives an earnest of the success of that undertaking.
He is here casting out a devil that made the poor
possessed man dumb; in Matthew we are told that
he was blind and dumb. When the devil was forced
d out by the word of Christ, the dumb spake im-
mediately, echoed to Christ's word, and the lips were
opened to show forth his praise. Now

1. Some were affected with this miracle. The
people wondered; they admired the power of God,
and especially that it should be exerted by the hand
of one who made so small a figure, that one who
did the work of the Messiah, should have so little of that pomp of the Messiah, which they expected.

II. Others were offended at it, and to justify their infidelity, suggested that it was by virtue of a league which Beelzebub the devil had with them against Christ in this his work. It seems, in the devil's kingdom there are chiefs, which supposes that there are subalterns. Now they would have it thought, or said at least, that there was a correspondence settled between Christ and the devil, that the devil should have the advantage in the main, and be victorious at last, but that, in order hereto, in particular instances, he should yield Christ the advantage, and retire by consent. Some, to corroborate this suggestion, and confront the evidence of Christ's miraculous power, challenged him to give them a sign from heaven, (v. 16.) to confirm his doctrine by some appearance in the clouds, such as was upon mount Sinai when the law was given; as if a sign from heaven, not disprovable by any sagacity of theirs, could not have been given as well by a compact and collusion with the prince of the power of the air, who works with power and lying wonders, as the casting out of a devil; nay, that would not have been any present prejudice to his interest, which this manifestly was.

Note. Obstinate infidelity will never be at a loss for something to say in its own excuse, though ever so frivolous and absurd.

Now Christ here returns a full and direct answer to this calumny of theirs; in which he shows,

1. That it can by no means be conceived that such a subtle prince as Satan should give in to measures that had such a tendency to his own overthrow, and the undermining of his own kingdom, v. 17, 18. What they objected they kept to themselves, afraid to speak it, lest it should be answered and baffled; but Jesus knew their thoughts, even when they industriously thought to conceal them; and he said, "You yourselves cannot but see the groundlessness, and, consequently, the falseness, of this charge; for it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by every day's experience that no interest can stand, that is divided against itself; not the more public interest of a kingdom; nor the private interest of a house or family; if either the one or the other be divided against itself, it cannot stand. Satan would herein act against himself; not only by the miracle which turned him out of possession of the bodies of people, but much more by the proof which the miracle was wrought for the explication and confirmation of, which had a direct tendency to the ruin of Satan's interest in the minds of men, by mortifying sin, and turning men to the service of God. Now, if Satan should thus be divided against himself, he would hasten his own overthrow, which you cannot suppose an enemy to do, that acts so subtilely for his own establishment, and is so solicitous to have his kingdom stand."

2. That it was a gross hypocrisy to think for them to impute that in him to a compact with Satan, which yet they applauded and admired in others that were of their own nation; (v. 19.) "By whom do your own cast them out? Some of your own kindred, as Jews, nay and some of your own followers, as Pharisees, have undertaken, in the name of the God of Israel, to cast out devils, and they were never charged with such a hellish combination as I am charged with; and yet you are too well acquainted with the generality of the world, and the various hypocrisies to condemn that in those who referre us, which yet we allow of in those that flatter us."

3. That, in opposing the confession of this miracle, they were enemies to themselves, stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, for they thrust from them the kingdom of God; (v. 20.) "If I with the finger of God cast out devils, as you may assure yourselves I do, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you; the kingdom of the Messiah offers itself and all its advantages to you, and if you receive it not, it is at your peril." In Matthew it is by the Spirit of God, here by the finger of God; the Spirit is the arm of the Lord, Isa. 53. 1. His greatest and most mighty works were wrought by his Spirit; but in this he suggests the fallacy of their objection, and that the finger of God in this work is to be the finger of the Lord, it may perhaps intimate how easily Christ did, and could conquer Satan, even with the finger of God, the exerciting of the divine power in a less and lower degree than in many other instances. He needed not make bare his everlasting arm; that roaring lion, when he pleases, is crushed, like a moth, with a touch of a finger. Perhaps here is an allusion to the acknowledgment of Pharaoh's might, when they were run around; (Exod. 8. 19.) This is the finger of God. "Now if the kingdom of God be herein come to you, and you will be found by those cavils and blasphemies fighting against it, it will come upon you as a victorious force which you cannot stand before."

4. That his casting out devils was really the destroying of them and their power, for it confirmed a doctrine which had a direct tendency to the ruin of his kingdom, v. 21, 22. Perhaps there had been some who had cast out the inferior devils by compact with Beelzebub their chief; but that was without any real damage or prejudice to Satan and his kingdom; what he lost one way he gained another. The devil and such exorcists played booty, as we say, and while the forlorn hope of his army gave ground, the main body thereby gained ground; then the interest both of Satan and of Christ was not weakened by it in the least. But when Christ cast out devils, he needed not do it by any compact with them, for he was stronger than they, and could do it by force, and did it so as to ruin Satan's power, and blast his great design by that doctrine and that grace which break the power of sin, and so rout Satan's main body, take from him all his armour, and divide his spoils, which no one devil ever did to another, or ever will. Now this is applicable to Christ's victories over Satan, both in the world and in the hearts of particular persons, by that power which went along with the preaching of his gospel, and doth still. And so we may observe here,

(1.) The miserable condition of an unconverted sinner. In his heart, which was fitted to be a habitation of God, the devil has his palace; and all the powers and faculties of the soul, being employed by him in the service of Satan, the devil is his palace. The heart of every unconverted sinner is the devil's palace, where he resides, and where he rules; he works in the children of disobedience. The heart is a palace, a noble dwelling; but the unsanctified heart is the devil's palace. His lusts are done, his interests are served, and the Militia is in his hands; he usurps the throne in the soul. (2.) The devil, as a strong man armed, keeps this palace, does all he can to maintain it for himself, and to fortify it against Christ. All the powers which with which he hardens men's hearts against truth and holiness, are the strong holds which he erects for the keeping of his palace; this palace is his garrison. (3.) There is a kind of peace in the palace of an unconverted soul, while the devil, as a strong man armed, keeps it. The sinner has a good opinion of himself, is very secure and merry, has no doubt concerning the goodness of his state, of the safety of his soul, of the strength of his faith, of the sureness of his hope, of the reality of his love, of the happiness of his estate; he flatters himself in his own eyes, and cries peace to himself. Before Christ appeared, all was quiet, because all went one way; but the preaching of the gospel disturbed the peace of the devil's palace. (2.) The wonderful change that is made in conversion, which is Christ's victory over this usurper. Satan is a strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he, as God, as Mediator. If we speak of strength, he is strong: more are with us than against us.
Observe, [1.] The manner of this victory. He comes upon him by surprise, when his goods are in peace, and the devil thinks it is all his own for ever, and overcomes him. Note, The conversion of a soul to God is Christ's victory over the devil and his power in that soul, restoring the soul to its liberty, and recovering his own interest in it, and dominion over it. [2.] The evidences of this victory. First, He takes from him all his armour wherein he trusted. The devil is a confident adversary, he trusts to his armour, as Pharaoh to his rivers; (Ezek. 29. 3.) but Christ disarms him. When the power of sin and corruption in the soul is broken, when the mistakes are rectified, the eyes opened, the heart humbled and persuaded, and the soul taught of the truth, Satan's armour is taken away. Secondly, He divides the spoil; he takes possession of them for himself; all the endowments of mind or body, the estate, power, interest, which before were made use of in the service of sin and Satan, are now converted to Christ's service, and employed for him; yet that is not all, he makes a distribution of them among his followers, and, having conquered Satan, gives to all believers the benefit of that victory.

Now from hence he infers, that, seeing the whole drift of his doctrine and miracles was to break the power of the devil, that great enemy of mankind, it was the duty of all to join with him, and to follow his guidance, to receive his gospel, and come heartily into the interests of it, for otherwise they would justly be charged with siding with the enemy; (v. 23.) He that is not with me is against me. Therefore who rejected the doctrine of Christ, and slighted his miracles, were looked upon as adversaries to him, and in the devil's interest.

5. That there was a vast difference between the devil's going out by compact and his being cast out by compulsion. Those out of whom Christ cast him, he never entered into again, for so was Christ's charge; (Mark 9. 25.) whereas, if he had gone out whenever he saw fit, he would have made a re-entry, for that is the way of the unclean spirit, when he voluntarily and with design goes out of a man, v. 24—26. The prince of the devils may give leave, nay, may give order to his forces to retreat, or make a feint, to draw the poor deluded soul into an ambush; but Christ, as he gives a total, so he gives a final, dismissal to the enemy.

In this part of the argument he has a further reach, which is, to represent the state of those who have had fair offers made them, among whom, and in whom, God has begun to break the devil's power, and overthrow his kingdom, but they reject his counsel against themselves, and relapse into a state of subjection to Satan. Here we have,

1. The condition of a formal hypocrite, his bright side, and his dark side; his heart still full of the devil's house, he calls it his own, and he retains his interest in it; and yet, [1.] The unclean spirit is gone out. He was not driven out by the power of converting grace, there was none of that violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers; but he went out, withdrew for a time, so that the man seemed not to be under the power of Satan as formerly, nor so perverted as he was before; his dark side is past temptation.

2. The house is swept from common pollutions, by a forced confession of sin, as Pharaoh's; a feigned contrition for it, as Ahab's; and a partial reformation, as Herod's. There are those that have escaped the pollutions of the world, and yet are still under the power of the god of this world, 2 Pet. 2. 20. The house must be washed or it is none of his. Sweeping takes off only the loose dirt, while the sin that beets the sinner, the beloved sin, is untouched. It

is swept from the filth that lies open to the eye of the world, but it is not searched and ransacked for secret filthiness, Matt. 23. 25. It is swept, but the leprosy is in the wall, and will be till something more be done. [3.] The house is garnished with common gifts and graces. It is not furnished with any true grace, but garnished with the pictures of all graces. Simon Magus was garnished with faith; Balaam with good desires; Herod with a respect for John; the Pharisees with many external performances. It is garnished, but it is like a potsherd covered with silver dress, it is all paint and varnish, not real, not lasting. The house is garnished, but the property is not altered; it was never surrendered unto Christ.

3. He is rejected by this SPIRIT. Let us therefore take heed of resting in that which a man may have, and yet come short.

(2.) Here is the condition of a final apostate, into whom the devil returns after he had gone out; (v. 26.) Then goes he, and takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself; a certain number for an uncertain, as seven devils are said to be cast out of Mary Magdalene seven wicked spirits are opposed to the seven spirits of God; (Rev. 3. 1.) these are said to be more wicked than himself. It seems, even devils are not all alike wicked; probably, the degrees of their wickedness, now that they are fallen, are as the degrees of their holiness, while they stood. When the devil would do mischief most effectually, he employs those that are more mischievous than himself. These enter in without any effectual conviction, and are often soonaries to Satan.

Here the devil engages them in work against themselves, and God provokes them to do so, to manifest the new state of his people, whose sins are forgiven them, and made as white as snow; they dwell there, where they work, there they rule; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Note, [1.] Hypocrisy is the high road to apostasy. If the heart remains in the interest of sin and Satan, the shows and shadows will come to nothing; these that have not set that right, will not long be steadfast; where secret haunts of sin are kept up under the cloak of the visible profession, conscience is discaused; God is provoked to withdraw his restraining grace, and the close hypocrite commonly proves an open apostate. [2.] The last state of such is worse than the first, in respect both of sin and punishment. Apostates are usually the worst of men, the most vain and prefigurate, the most bold and daring; their consciences are seared, and their sins of all others, are the most aggravating, evidence the marks of his displeasure upon them in this world, and in the other world they will receive the greater damnation. Let us therefore bear, and fear, and hold fast our integrity.

27. And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. 28. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

We had not this passage in the other evangelists, nor can we tack it, as Dr. Hammond doth, to that of Christ's mother and brethren desiring to speak to him, chap. 8. 19. But his saying it at this time, though some time ago, ch. 8. 19.) but it contains an interruption much like that, and, like that, occasion is taken from it for an instruction.

1. The applause which an affectionate, honest, well-meaning woman gave to our Lord Jesus, upon hearing his excellent discourses. While the Scribes and Pharisees despised and blasphemed them, this good woman (and probably she was a person of quality) admired them, and the wisdom and power with which he spake; (v. 27.) As he spake these things, with a convincing force and eloquence, a cer
tum women of the company was so pleased to hear now he had confounded the Pharisees, and conquer-
ed them, and put them to shame, and cleared him-
self from their vile insinuations, that she could not
forbear crying out, "Blessed is the mouth that bare
thee." What an admirable, what an excellent man
is this! Surely never was there a greater or better
born of a woman: happy the woman that hath him
for her son. I should have thought myself very
happy to be the mother of one that speaks as never
man spake; that has so much of the grace of heaven
in him, and is so great a blessing to this earth.
This was well said, as it expressed her high esteem
of Christ, and that for the sake of his doctrine and
it was not amiss that it reflected honour upon the
virgin Mary his mother, for it agreed with what she
herself had said; (ch. 1. 48.) All generations shall
call me blessed; some even of this generation, but
as it was. Note, To all that believe the word of
Christ the person of Christ is precious, and he is an
Honour; 1 Pet. 2. 7. Yet we must be careful, lest,
as this good woman, we too much magnify the ho-
 nour of his natural kindred, and so know him after
the flesh, whereas we must now henceforth know
him so no more.

2. The occasion which Christ took from thence
to pronounce them more happy, who are his faith-
ful and obedient followers, than she was, who bare
and nursed him. He does not deny what this wo-
man said, nor refuse her respect to him and his mo-
ther; but leads her from this to that which was of
a higher consideration, and which more concerned
her, Ye, rather blessed are they that hear the word
of God, and keep it, v. 28. He thinks them so;
and his saying that they are so, makes them so, and
should make us of his mind. This is intended partly
as a check to her, for doing so much upon his bo-
dily presence, and his human nature, partly as an
encouragement to her to hope that she might be as
happy as his own mother, whose happiness she was
ready to envy, if she would hear the word of God,
and keep it. Note, Though it is a great privilege
to hear the word of God, yet these only are truly
blessed, that is, blessed of the Lord, that hear it,
and keep it; that keep it in memory, and keep to it
as their way and rule.

29. And when the people were gathered
thick together, he began to say, This is an evil
generation: they seek a sign; and there
shall no sign be given it but the sign of
Jonas the prophet. 30. For as Jonas was a
sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the
Son of man be to this generation. 31. The
queen of the south shall rise up in the judg-
ment with the men of this generation, and
condemn them; for she came from the ut-
most parts of the earth to hear the wis-
dom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than
Solomon is here. 32. The men of Nine-
veh shall rise up in the judgment with this
generation, and shall condemn it: for they
repented at the preaching of Jonas: and,
behold, a greater than Jonas is here. 33.
No man, when he hath lighted a candle,
putteth it in a secret place, neither under a
bushel, but on a candlestick, that they
which come in may see the light. 34. The
light of the body is the eye: therefore when
thine eye is single, thy whole body also is
full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy
body also is full of darkness. 35. Take
heed therefore that the light which is in
thee be not darkness. 36. If thy whole
body therefore be full of light, having no
part dark, the whole shall be full of light,
as when the bright shining of a candle doth
give thee light.

Christ's discourse in these verses shows two things.
1. What is the sign we may expect from God, for
the confirmation of our faith. The great and most
convincing proof of Christ's being sent of God, and
which they were yet to wait for, after the many
signs that had been given them, was, the resurrec-
tion of Christ from the dead. Here is,
1. A reproof to the people for demanding other
signs than what had already been given them in
great plenty; (v. 29.) The people were gathered thick
together, a vast crowd of them, expecting not so
much to have their consciences informed by the
doctrine of Christ, as to have their curiosity gratified
by his miracles. Christ knew what brought such a
multitude together; they came seeking a sign, they
came to gaze, to have something to talk of when
they came home; and it is an evil generation which
nothing will awaken and convince, but the sensible
demonstrations of divine power and good-
ness.

2. A promise that yet there, should be one sign
more given them, different from any that had yet
been given them, even the sign of Jonas the prophet,
which in Matthew is explained, as meaning the re-
stitution of Christ. As Jonas being cast into the
sea, and lying there three days, and then coming up
alive, and preaching repentance to the Ninevites,
was a sign to them, upon which they turned from
their evil way, so shall the death and resurrection
of Christ, and the preaching of his gospel immediately
after to the Gentile world, be the last warning to the
Jewish nation; if they be provoked to a holy jealousy
by that, well and good: but if that do not work upon
them, let them look for nothing but utter ruin. The
Son of man shall be a Sign to this generation; (v.
30.) A sign speaking to them, though a Sign spoken
against by them.

3. A warning to them to improve this Sign, for it
was at their peril if they did not.
(1.) The queen of Sheba would rise up in judg-
ment against them, and condemn their unbelief; v.
31. She was a stranger to the commonwealth of
Israel, and yet so readily gave credit to the report
she heard of the glories of a king of Israel, that,
withstanding the prejudices we are apt to conceive
against foreigners, she came from the uttermost
parts of the earth, to hear his wisdom, not only to
satisfy her curiosity, but to inform her mind, es-
specially in the knowledge of the true God and his
worpship, which is upon record, to her honour; and
behold, a greater than Solomon is here, even
Solomon—more than a Solomon is here; that is, saith
Dr. Hammond, more of wisdom and more heavenly
divine doctrine than ever was in all Solomon's books
or writings; and yet these wretched Jews will give
no manner of regard to what Christ saith to them,
though he be in the midst of them.

(2.) The Ninevites would rise up in judgment
against them, and condemn their impertinency; (v.
32.) They repented at the preaching of Jonas; but
here is preaching which far exceeds that of Jonas,
is more powerful and awakening, and threatens a much
sorer ruin than that of Nineveh, and yet none are
started by it, to turn from their evil way, as the
Ninevites did.

II. He shows what is the sign that God expects

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from us, for the evidencing of our faith; and that is, the serious practice of that religion which we profess to believe, and a readiness to entertain all divine truths, when brought to us in their proper evidence. Now observe,

1. They had the light with all the advantage they could desire. For God, having lighted the candle of the gospel, did not put it in a secret place, or under a bushel; Christ did not preach in corners. The apostles were ordered to preach the gospel to every creature; and both Christ and his ministers, wisdom and her maidens, cry in the chief places of concourse, v. 33. It is a great privilege that the light of the gospel is put on a candlestick, so that all that come in may see it by it where they are, and whither they are going, and what is the true and sure and only way to happiness.

2. Having the light, their concern was, to have the sight; or else to what purpose had they the light? Be the object ever so clear, if the organ be not right, we are never the better; (v. 34.) The light of the body is the eye, which receives the light of the candle, when it is brought into the room. So the light of the soul is the understanding and judgment, and its power of discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Now, according as this is, accordingly the light of divine revelation is to us, and our benefit by it; accordingly it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

(1.) If this eye of the soul be single, if it see clear, see things as they are, and judge impartially concerning them, as the truth only, and seek it for its own sake, and have not any sinister bylocks and intentions, the whole body, that is, the whole soul, is full of light, it receives and entertains the gospel, which will bring along with it into the soul both knowledge and joy; this denotes the same thing with that of the good ground, receiving the word, and understanding it. If our understanding admit the gospel and its light, it fills the soul, and it has enough to fill it. And if the soul be thus filled with the light of the gospel, having no part dark; if all its powers and faculties be subjected to the government and influence of the gospel, and none left unsacrificed, then the whole soul shall be full of light, full of holiness and comfort; it was darkness itself, but is now light in the Lord, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give light to you, v. 35. Note, The gospel is as sweet as honey, and when the windows are thrown open to receive it; and where it comes, it will bring light with it. But,

(2.) If the eye of the soul be evil, if the judgment be bribed and biased by the corrupt and vicious dispositions of the mind, by pride and envy, by the love of the world and sensual pleasures; if the understanding be prejudiced against divine truths, and resolved not to admit them, though brought with ever so convincing an evidence, it is no wonder that the whole body, the whole soul is full of darkness, v. 34. How can they have instruction, information, direction, or comfort, from the gospel, that willfully shut their eyes against it; and what hope is there of such, what remedy for them? The inference from hence therefore is, (v. 33.) Take heed that the light which is in thee, be not darkness. Take heed that the eye of this thing be not blinded by partiality and prejudice, and sinful aims. Be sincere in your inquiries after truth, and ready to receive it in the light and love and power of it; and not as the men of this generation whom Christ preached to, who never sincerely desired to know God's will, or designed to do it, and therefore no wonder that they walked on in darkness, wandered endlessly and perished eternally.

37. And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down at meat. 38. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that he had not first washed before dinner. 39. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter: but your inward part is full of railing and wickedness. 40. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? 41. But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you. 42. But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 43. Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets. 44. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. 45. Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying, thou reproachest us also. 46. And he said, Woe unto you also ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers. 47. Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. 48. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. 49. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; 50. That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51. From the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: Verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation. 52. Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. 53. And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; 54. Laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.

Christ here saith many of those things to a Pharisee and his guests in a private conversation at table, which he afterward said in a public discourse in the temple; (Math. 23.) for what he said in public and private, was of a piece. He would not say that in a corner, which he durst not repeat and stand to in the great congregation; nor would he give those reproofs
to any sort of sinners in general, which he durst not apply to them in particular as he met with them; for he was, and is, the faithful Witness. Here is,

1. Christ's going to dine with a Pharisee that very civilly invited him to his house; (v. 57.) As he spake, even while he was speaking, a certain Pharisee interrupted him, as if he had not a mind to have the conversation, or to come forthwith, for it was dinner-time. We are willing to hope that the Pharisee was so well pleased with his discourse, that he was willing to show him respect, and desire him to have more of his company, and therefore gave him this invitation, and bid him truly welcome; and yet we have some cause to suspect that it was with an ill design, to break off his discourse with the people, and to have the part of a day to have made the outside of the cup clean from the more gross and scandals

ous sins of whoredom and drunkenness. (2.) A particular instance of the absurdity of it; (v. 40.) Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? Did not that God who in the law of Moses appointed divers ceremonial washings with which you justify yourselves in Christ, give also that which should else have been thought also that ye should cleanse and purify your hearts? He who made laws for that which is without, did not he even in those laws further intend something within, and by other laws show how little he regarded the purifying of the flesh, and the putting away of the filth of that, if the heart be not made clean? Or, it may have regard to God, not only as a Lawgiver, but, (which the words seem rather to intimate,) as a Creator. Did not God, who made us these bodies, (and they are fearfully and wonderfully made,) make us these souls also, which are more fearfully and wonderfully made; now if he made both, he justly expects we should take care of both; and therefore not only was the body, which he is the Former of, and made the hands clean in honour of his work, but wash the spirit, which is the Father of, and get the leprosy in the heart cleansed.

To this he subjoins a rule for making of our creature-comforts clean to us; (v. 41.) Instead of washing your hands before ye go to meat, give alms of such things as ye have; (2 Cor. xii. 18; of such things as are set before you, and present with you,) let the poor have their share out of them, and then all things are clean to you, and you may use them comfortably. Here is a plain allusion to the law of Moses, by which it was provided that certain portions of the increase of their land should be given to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow; and when that was done, what was reserved for their own use, was clean to them, and they could in faith pray for a blessing upon it, Deut. 26. 12-15. Then we can with comfort enjoy the gifts of God's bounty ourselves, when we send portions to them for whom nothing is due to us. Nor is it to be considered alone, but the fatherless ate thereof, and so it was clean to him, (Job 31. 17.) clean, that is, permitted and allowed to be used, and then only it can be used comfortably. Note, What we have, is not our own, unless God has his dues out of it; and it is by liberality to the poor that we clear up to ourselves our liberty to make use of our creature-comforts.

2. He reproves them for laying stress upon trifles, and neglecting the weighty matters of the law, v. 42. (1.) Those laws which related only to the means of religion they were very exact in the observance of, as particularly those concerning the maintenance of the priests; Ye pay tithe of mint and rue, pay it in kind and to the full, and will not put off the priests with a modus decimandi or compound for it. By this they would gain a reputation with the people as strict observers of the law of Moses, by which it was many a time to do them a kindness, and no wonder if the priests and the Pharisees con

trived how to strengthen one another's hands. Now Christ does not condemn them for being so exact in paying tithes, (These things ought ye to have done,) but for thinking that that would atone for the neglect of their greater duties; for (2.) Those laws which relate to the essentials of religion they made
thing of; Ye pass over judgment and the love of God, you make no conscience of giving men their due and God your hearts.

3. He reprouses them for their pride and vanity, and affectation of preceendcy and praise of men; (v. 43.) ‘Ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues,’ (or consistory where the elders met for government;) ‘If ye have not those seats, ye are ambitious of them; if ye have, ye are proud of them; and the things of God, the pure sentiments of God, are contemned by the people, and to have their cap and knee.’ It is not sitting uppermost, or being greeted, that is reproved, but loving it.

4. He reprouses them for their hypocrisy, and their colouring over the wickedness of their hearts and lives with specious pretences; (v. 44.) ‘Ye are as graves overgrown with grass, which therefore appear not, and the men that walk over them are aware of them, and so they contract the corruption which by the law arose from the touch of a grave.’ These Pharisees were within full of abominations, as a grave of putrefaction, full of covetousness, envy, and malice; and yet they concealed it so artfully with a profession of devotion, that it did not appear, so that they who conversed with them, and followed their doctrine, were defiled with sin, infected with their corruptions and errors; and the men which they maked as good and pure, expected no danger by them. The contagion insinuated itself, and was insensibly caught, and those that caught it, thought themselves never the worse.

IV. The testimony which he bore also against the lawyers or scribes, who made it their business to expound the law according to the tradition of the elders, as the Pharisees did to observe the law according to that tradition.

1. There was one of that profession, who resented what he said against the Pharisees; (v. 45.) ‘Master, thus saying, thou reprocest us also, for we are scribes; and are therefore hypocrites?’ Note, It is a common thing for unhumbled sinners to call and count reproves reproaches. It is the wisdom of those who desire to have their sin mortified, to make a good use of reproves that come from ill will, and to turn them into reproves; if we can that way hear of our faults, and amend them, it is well; but it is the folly of those who are wedded to their sins, and resolved not to part with them, to make an ill use of the faithful and friendly admonitions given them, which come from love, and to have their passions provoked by them as if they were intended for reproaches, and therefore fly in the face of their reproves, and justify themselves in rejecting the reproof. Thus the prophet complained, (Jer. 6. 10.) ‘The word of the Lord is to them a reproach, they have no delight in it.’ This lawyer espoused the Pharisees’ cause, and so made himself partaker of his sins.

2. Our Lord Jesus thereupon took them to task; (v. 46.) ‘Woe unto you also, ye lawyers; and again, (v. 47.) ‘Woe unto you, scribes!’ They blessed themselves in the reputation they had of being people, who thought them happy men, because they studied the law, and were always conversant with that, and had the honour of instructing people in the knowledge of that; but Christ denounced wages against them, for he sees not as men see. This was just upon him for taking the Pharisees’ part, and quarelling with Christ because he reproved them. Note, Those who quarrel with the reproves of others, and suspect them to be reproves to them, do but get woes of their own by so doing.

(1.) The lawyers are reproved for making the services of religion more burdensome to others, but more easy to themselves, than God had made them; (v. 46.) ‘Ye make men to labor with burdens grievous to be borne, by your traditions, which bind them out from many liberties God has allowed them, and aind them up to many slaveries which God never enjoined them, to show your authority, and to keep people in awe; but ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers; that is, [1.] ‘Ye will not burden yourselves with them, nor lay yourselves bound by these restraints with which you hamper others.’ They would seem, by the hedges they pretended to make about the law, to be very strict for the observance of the law, but if you could see their practices you would find not only that they make nothing of those hedges themselves, but make nothing of the law itself neither; thus the confessors of the Reformed church are said to do with their penitents. [2.] ‘Ye will not lighten them to these ye have power over; ye will not touch them, that is, either to repeal them, or to dispense with them, when ye have a power of dispensing the law to the people.’ They would come in with both bands, to dispense with a command of God, but not with a finger, to mitigate the rigour of any of the traditions of the elders.

(2.) They are reproved for pretending a veneration for the memory of the prophets when their fathers killed, when yet they hated and persecuted those in their own day, who were sent to them on the business of repentance and reproof, and did not receive them, but persecuted, and directed them to Christ, v. 47—49.

[1.] These hypocrites, among other pretences of piety, built the sepulchres of the prophets; that is, they erected monuments over their graves, in honour of them, probably with large inscriptions containing high encomiums of them. They were not so superstitious as to enshrine their relics, or to think devotions the moreacceptable to God for their being paid at the tombs of the martyrs; they did not burn incense, or pray to them, or plead their merits with God; they did not add that iniquity to their hypocrisy; but, as if they owned themselves the children of the prophets, their heirs and executors, they rehiered and beautified the monuments sacred to their pious memory.

[2.] Notwithstanding this, they had an inordinate enmity to those in their own day, that came to them in the name of Christ, in the power of those prophets; and, though they had not yet had an opportunity of carrying it far, yet they would soon do it, for the Wisdom of God said, that is, Christ himself would so order it, and did now foretell it, that they would slay and persecute the prophets and apostles that should he sent them. The Wisdom of God would thus make trial of them, and discover their odious hypocrisy, by sending them prophets, to prove them to the sinns, and warn them of the judgments of God. These prophets should prove themselves apostles, or messengers sent from heaven, by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost. Or, ‘I will send them prophets under the style and title of apostles, who yet shall produce as good an authority as any of the old prophets did; and these they shall not only contradict and oppose, but slay and persecute;’ and not otherwise than as became the Wisdom of God in sending them, for he knew how to bring glory to himself in the issue, by the recompences reserved both for the persecutors and the persecuted in the future state.

[3.] That therefore God will justly put another construction upon their building of the tombs of the prophets than what they could be brought to intend, and it shall be interpreted their allowing of the deeds of their fathers; (v. 45.) for since by their present actions it appeared that they had no true value of their prophets, their building of their sepulchres shall have this sense put upon it, that they resolved to keep them in their graves, when their fathers had hurried thicker. Josiah, who had a real
value for prophets, thought it enough not to disturb the grave of the man of God at Bethel; Let no man move his bones, 2 Kings 23. 17. 18. If the lawyers will catch them in a better snare, it is such a piece of over-doing as gives cause to suspect an ill-design in it, and that it is meant as a cover for some design against prophecy itself, like the kiss of a traitor; as he that blessed his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him, Prov. 27. 14. 

[4.] That they must expect no other than to be reckoned with, as the fillers up of the measure of persecution, v. 50, 51. They keep up the trade as it were in succession, and therefore are responsible for the debts of the company, even those it has been contracting all along from the blood of Abel, when the world began, to that of Zacharias, and so forward to the end of the Jewish state; it shall all be required of this generation, this last generation of the Jews, whose sin in persecuting Christ's apostles would exceedingly of the sins of that kind that their fathers were guilty of, and so would bring wrath upon them to the uttermost. 1 Thess. 2. 15, 16. Their destruction by the Romans was so terrible, that it might well be reckoned the completing of God's vengeance upon that persecuting nation.

[5.] They are reproved for opposing the gospel of Christ, and doing all they could to obstruct the progress and success of it, v. 52. [1.] They were not, according to the duty of their place, faithfully copies to the people those scriptures of the Old Testament, which pointed at the Messiah, which if they had been led into the right understanding of by the lawyers, they would readily have embraced him and his doctrine; but, instead of that, they had perverted these texts, and had cast a mist before the eyes of the people, by their corrupt glosses upon them, and this is called taking away the key of knowledge from blind leaden; and did not prove, and helping them to use it might, they hid it from them; this is called, in Matthew, shutting up the kingdom of God against men, Matt. 23. 13. Note, Those who take away the key of knowledge, shut up the kingdom of heaven. [2.] They themselves did not embrace the gospel of Christ, though by their acquaintance with the Old Testament they could not but know that the Messiah was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God come at hand; they saw the prophecies accomplished in that kingdom which our Lord Jesus was about to set up, and yet would not themselves enter into it. Nay, [3.] Them that without any conduct or assistance of theirs were entering in, they did all they could to hinder and discourage, by threatening to cast them out of the synagogue, and otherwise terrify them. It is bad for people to be averse to revelation, but much worse for them to shut it out.

Lastly, In the close of the chapter, we are told how spitefully and maliciously the scribes and Pharisees contrived to draw him into a snare, v. 53, 54. They could not bear these cutting reproves which they must own to be just; but since what he had said against them in particular, would not bear an action, nor could they ground upon it any criminal accusation, and therefore as if because his reproves were warm, they hoped in some degree to temperate heat and passion, so as to put him off his guard; they began to urge him vehemently, to be very fierce upon him, and to provoke him to speak of many things, to propose dangerous questions to him, laying wait for something which might serve the design they had of making him either odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government, or both. Thus did they seek occasion against him, like David's enemies that did every day wrest his words, Ps. 56. 5. Evil men dig up mischief. Note, Faithful reprovers of sin must expect to have many enemies, and have need to set a watch before the door of their lips; as well to guard against the snares of their observers that watch for their halting. The prophet comprises those in his time, who make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that rejoiceth in the gate, Isa. 29. 21. That we may bear trials of this kind with patience, and get through them with prudence, let us consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have divers excellent discourses of our Saviour's upon various occasions; many of which are to the same purpose with what he said in chap. xi; but other the like occasions; for we may suppose that our Lord Jesus preached the same doctrines, and pressed the same duties, at several times, in several companies, and that one of the evangelists took them as he delivered them at one time, and another at another time; and we need thus to have precept upon precept, line upon line. Here, 1. Christ warns his disciples to take heed of hypocrisy, and of cowardice in professing Christianity and preaching the gospel, v. 1. 12. II. He gives a caution against covetousness, upon occasion of a covetous motion made to him, and illustrates that caution by a parable of a rich man, v. 13. 24. He begins to unfold to his disciples something of his heavenly projects and hopes, v. 13. 21. III. He encourages his disciples to cast all their care upon God, and to live easy in a dependence upon his providence, and engages them to make religion their main business, v. 22. 34. IV. He sets before them a watchfulness for their Master's coming, from the consideration of the reward of those who are then found faithful, and the punishment of those who are found unfaithful, v. 35. 48. He bids them expect trouble and persecution, v. 39. 43. V. He warns the people to observe and improve the day of their opportunities, and to make their peace with God in time, v. 51. 59.

1. In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear, in closets, shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. 4. And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. 6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God? 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. 8. Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God. 10. And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto
him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven. 11. And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: 12. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

We find here,

I. A vast auditory that was got together to hear Christ preach. The Scribes and Pharisees sought to accuse him, and do him mischief; but the people, who were the best of them, envied not the Pharisees’ jealousies, still admired him, attended on him, and did him honour; (v. 1.) In the mean while, while he was in the Pharisees’ house, contending with them that sought to ensnare him, the people got together for an afternoon-sermon, a sermon after dinner, after dinner with a Pharisee; and he would not disappoint them. Though in the morning-sermon (v. 12.) he went to them, as to an auditory, in private, to reprove, and to come within hearing. It is a good sight to see people thus forward to hear the word, and venture upon inconvenience and danger rather than miss an opportunity for their souls. Who are these that thus fly like the doves to their windows? Isa. 60. 8. When the net is cast where there is such a multitude of fish, it may be hoped that some will be included.

II. The instructions which he gave his followers in the hearing of this auditory.

1. He began with a caution against hypocrisy. This he said to his disciples first of all; either to the twelve, or to the seventy. These were his more peculiar charge, his family, his school, and therefore he particularly warned them as his beloved sons; they made more profession of religion than others, and hypocrisy in them was the sin they were most in danger of. They were to preach to others; and if they forevarice, corrupt the word, and deal deceitfully, hypocrisy would be worse in them than in others. And besides, there was a Judas among them, that was a hypocrite, and Christ knew it, and would hereby startle him, or leave him inexcusable. Christ’s disciples were, for aught we know, the best men then in the world, yet needed to be cautioned against hypocrisy. Christ said this to the disciples, in the hearing of this great multitude, rather than privately when he had them by themselves, to add the greater weight to the caution, and to let the world know that he would not countenance hypocrisy, no, not in his own disciples.

Now observe,

(1.) The description of that sin which he warns them against, it is the leaven of the Pharisees. [1.] It is leaven, it is spreading as leaven, assimilates itself into the whole man, and all that he does; it is swelling and souring as leaven, for it puffs men up with pride, imbibits them with malice, and makes their service unacceptable to God. [2.] It is the leaven of the Pharisees; “It is the sin they are most of them found in. Take heed of imitating them; be not you of their spirit; do not you, dissemble in Christianity as they do in Judaism; make not your religion a cloak of maliciousness, as they do theirs.”

(2.) A good reason against it; (v. 2, 3.) “For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed. It is no purpose to disseme, for, sooner or later, truth will come out; and a lying tongue is but for a moment. If you speak in darkness that which is unbecoming you, and is inconsistent with your public professions, it shall be heard in the light; some way or other it shall be discovered, a bird of the air shall carry the wind. (Ex. 23. 1.)” The iniquity that is concealed with a show of piety, will be discovered, perhaps in this world, as Judas’s was, and Simon Magus’s, at first, in the great day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, (Ex. 23. 14.) Rom. 2. 16. If men’s religion prevail not to conquer and cure the wickedness of their offices, it will be discovered by the world, and a clocb. The day is coming, when hypocrites will strip off their fig-leaves.

2. To this he added a charge to them, to be faithful to the trust reposed in them, and not to betray it, through cowardice or base fear. Some make v. 2, 3. to be a caution to them not to reveal these things which they had been instructed in, and were employed about, to the world; “Be not afraid; you shall not be taken; you shall not be discovered; you shall not be found out; you shall not be revealed; to hear, or whether they will believe, tell them the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; what has been spoken to you, and you have talked of among yourselves, privately, and in corners, that do you preach publicly, whoever is offended; for if you please men, you are not Christ’s servants, nor can you please him.” Gal. 1. 10. But this v. 2, 3. not to reveal it; it was likely to be a suffering cause, though never a sinking one, let them therefore arm themselves with courage; and divers arguments are furnished here, to steel them with a holy resolution in their work. Consider,

(1.) “The power of your enemies is a limited power, v. 4. I say unto you, my friends.” (Christ’s disciples are his friends, he calls them friends, and gives them this friendly advice,) “Be not afraid; do not disquiet yourselves with tormenting fears of the power and rage of men.” Note, These whom Christ owns for his friends, need not be afraid of any enemies. “Be not afraid, no, not of them that kill the body; let it not be in the power, not only of scoffers, but even of murderers, to drive you off from your work, for you that have learned to triumph over death, may say, even of them, Let them do the worst that they can; after this there is no more they can do; the immortal soul lives, and is happy, and enjoys itself and its God, and sets them all at defiance.” Note, These can do Christ’s disciples no real harm, and therefore ought not to be dreaded, who can but kill the body; for they only send that to its rest, and the soul to its joy, the seener.

(2.) God is to be feared more than the most powerful men; (v. 5.) “I will forewarn you whom ye fear and dread; that you may fear less, fear God more. Moses conquers his fear of the wrath of the king, by having an eye to him that is invisible. By owning Christ you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put you to death; (and without God’s permission they cannot do that;) but by denouncing Christ, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to hell; that you may fear more, fear God and men more. Moses conquers his fear of the wrath of the king, by having an eye to him that is invisible. By owning Christ you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put you to death; (and without God’s permission they cannot do that;) but by denouncing Christ, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to hell; that you may fear more, fear God and men more. Moses conquers his fear of the wrath of the king, by having an eye to him that is invisible. By owning Christ you may incur the wrath of men, which can reach no further than to put you to death; (and without God’s permission they cannot do that;) but by denouncing Christ, and disowning him, you will incur the wrath of God, which has power to send you to hell; that you may fear more, fear God and men more.

(3.) The lives of good christians and good ministers are the particular care of the Divine Providence. To encourage us in it, we have three reasons assigned, to encourage us in Christ’s work, though it be full of difficulty and danger, we must have recourse to our first principles, and build upon them; now a firm belief of the doctrine of God’s universal providence, and
the extent of it, would be satisfying to us, when at any time we are in peril, and would encourage us to trust to God in the way of duty. [1.] Providence takes cognizance of the meanest creatures; even of the sparrows. "Though they are of such small account, that five of them are sold for two farthings, yet not one of them is forgotten of God, but is provided for, and notice is taken of its death. Now, ye are of more value than many sparrows; fear not therefore, though imprisoned, though banished, though forgotten by your friends; much more precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of saints than the death of sparrows." [2.] Providence takes cognizance of the meanest interest of the disciples of Christ; (v. 7.) "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered; much more are your sighs and tears numbered, and the drops of your blood, which ye shed for Christ's name's sake. An account is kept of all your losses, that they may be, and without doubt they shall be, recompensed unspeakably to your advantage."

(4.) You will be owned or disowned by Christ in the great day, according as you now own or disown him, v. 8, 9. [1.] To engage us to confess Christ before men, whatever we may lose or suffer for our confessing him, we shall in all places and in every age be defended. [2.] To deter us from denying Christ, and, in profession, confessing him. By the same stress here laid upon their being confessed or denied before the angels of God, it should seem to be a considerable part of the happiness of glorified saints, that they will not only stand right, but stand high, in the esteem of the holy angels; they will love them, and honour them, and own them, if they be Christ's servants; they are their fellow-servants, and they will take them for their companions. On the contrary, a considerable part of the miseries of damned sinners will be, that the holy angels will abandon them, and will be the plensed witnesses, not only of their disgrace, as here, but of their misery, for they shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, (Rev. 14. 10.) who will give them no relief.

(5.) The errand they were shortly to be sent out upon, was of the highest and last importance to the children of men, to whom they were sent, v. 10. Let them be bold in preaching the gospel, for a sorcer and heavier deed would attend those that rejected them, (after the Spirit was poured out upon them, which was to be the last method of conviction,) than those that now rejected Christ himself, and opposed him: "Greater works than these shall ye do, and, consequently, greater will be the punishment of those that blaspheme the gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost in you. Whosoever shall or shall not drink of this cup of mine, shall stumble at the meanness of his appearance, and speak slightingly and spitefully of him, it is capable of some excuse: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. But unto him that blasphemeth the Holy Ghost, that blasphemeth the christian doctrine, and maliciously opposeth it, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and his attestation of Christ's being glorified, (Acts 2. 33.-5. 32.) the privilege of the forgiveness of sins shall be denied, he shall have no benefit by Christ and his gospel; you may shake off the dust of your feet against those that do so, and give them over as incurable; they have forfeited that reference and that remission which Christ was exalted to give, and which you are enabled to preach." The sin, no doubt, was the more daring, and, consequently, the case the more desperate, during the continuance of the extraordinary gifts and operations of the Spirit in the church, which were intended for a sign to them who believed not, 1 Cor. 14. 22. Those, who, though they were not convinced by them at first, yet admired them, there were hopes of, but those who blasphemed them, were given over.

(6.) Whatever trials they should be called out to, they should be sufficiently furnished for them, and honourably brought through them, v. 11, 12. The faithful martyr for Christ has not only sufferings to undergo, but a testimony to bear, a good confession to witness, and is concerned to do that well, so that the case of Christ may not suffer, though he suffer for him. If this be so, let him cast it upon God; "When they bring you into the synagogues, or into the sect of the elders, or into the synagogues, and before church rulers, before the Jewish courts, or before magistrates and powers, Gentle rulers, rulers in the state, to be examined about your doctrine, what it is, and what the proof of it; take no thought what ye shall answer," [1.] "That ye may serve yourselves. Do not study by what art or rhetoric to mollify your judges, or by what tricks in law to bring yourselves off; if it be the will of God that you should come off, and your time is not yet come, he will bring it about effectually." [2.] "That ye may serve your Master; aim at this, but do not perplex yourselves about it, for the Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of wisdom, shall teach you what you ought to say, and how to say it, so as it may be for the honour of God and his cause.

13. And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. 14. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? 15. And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich towards God. We have, in these verses,
I. The application that was made to Christ, very unreasonably, by one of his hearers, desiring him to interpose between him and his brother, in a matter that concerned the estate of the latter, and not as one as the Jews called Ben-haneners, a son of violence, that took not only his own part of the estate, but his brother's too, and forcibly detained it from him. Such brethren there are in the world, who have no sense at all of either natural equity or natural affection, who make a prey of those whom they ought to patronize and protect. They are so enraged, have a God to go to, who will examine judgment and justice for those that are oppressed.

2. Others think that he had a mind to do his brother wrong, and would have Christ to assist him; but, whereas the law gave the elder brother a double portion of the estate, and the father himself could not dispose of what he had but by that rule, (Deut. 21. 16, 17.) he would have Christ to alter that. His purpose was, no doubt, that he might be a follower of Christ at large, to divide the inheritance equally with him, in gavel-kind, share and share alike, and to allot him as much as his elder brother. I suspect that this was the case, because Christ takes occasion from it to warn against covetousness, excessive—a desire of having more, more than God in his providence has allotted us. It was not a lawful desire of getting his own, but a sinful desire of getting more than his own.

II. Christ's refusal to interpose in this matter; (v. 14.) Man, who made me a Judge, or Divider over you? In matters of this nature, Christ would not assume either a legislative power to alter the settled rule of inheritances, or a judicial power to determine controversies concerning them; he could have done the judge's part, and the lawyer's, as well as he did the physician's, and have ended suits at law as happily as he did diseases; but he would not, for it was not in his commission: Who made me a Judge? Probably, he refers to the indignity done to Moses by his brethren in Egypt, which Stephen upbraided the Jews with, Acts 7. 27, 32. "If I should offer to do this, would you cast me as you did Moses, Who made thee a Judge, or a Divider?" He corrects the man's mistake, will not admit his appeal, (it was coram non judice— not before the proper judge,) and so dismisses his bill. If he had come to him to desire him to assist his pursuits of the heavenly inheritance, Christ would have given him his best help; but as to this matter he has nothing to do: Who made me a Judge? Note, Jesus Christ was no Usurper, he took no honour, no power, to himself, but what was given him, Heb. 5. 5. And he had not, he had not by any authority he did it, and who gave him that authority.

Now this shows us what is the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom; it is a spiritual kingdom, and not of this world. 1. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power. 2. It does not interfere with civil powers, nor take the authority of princes out of their hands. Christianity leaves the matter as it found it, as to civil power. 3. It does not impose any new duties, but is consistent with civil power, and improves it, according to the settled rules of equity, but dominion is not to be founded in grace. 4. It does not encourage our expectations of worldly advantages by our religion. If this man will be a disciple of Christ, and expects that, in consideration of that, Christ should give him his brother's estate, he is mistaken; the rewards of Christ's disciples are of another nature.

III. The necessary caution which Christ took occasion from this to give to his hearers. Though he heard, and gave no answer, from his own part, it does not allow the ministers to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life, (2 Tim. 4. 4.) to leave the word of God, to serve tables. There are those whose business it is, let it be left to them, Tractates fabulae fabri—Each workman to his proper craft.

1. The caution itself; (v. 15.) Take heed and beware of covetousness; speak— "Observe yourselves, keep a jealous eye upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles steal into them, and carry with them to preserve yourselves, keep a strict hand upon your own hearts, lest covetous principles rule and give law in them." Covetousness is a sin which we have need constantly to watch against, and therefore frequently to be warned against.

2. The reason of it, or an argument to enforce this caution; For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, but in the enjoyment of them alone. "Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world." (1.) The life of the soul, undoubtedly, doth not depend upon it, and the soul is the man. The things of the world will not suit the nature of a soul, nor supply its needs, nor satisfy its desires, nor last long as it will last. Nay, (2.) Even the life of the body and the happiness of that do not consist in an abundance of the things which we possess, but in the enjoyment of them. "Our happiness and comfort do not depend upon our having a great deal of the wealth of this world; they possess abundance, and yet have no comfort of it; they bereave their souls of great abundance. Many who have abundance, are discontented and fretting, as Ahab and Haman; and then what good doth their abundance do them."

3. The illustration of this by a parable; the sum of which is to show the folly of carnal worldlings while they live, and their misery when they die, which is intended not only for a check to that man who came to Christ with an address about his estate, while he was in no care about his soul, but for the enforcing of that necessary caution to us all, to take heed of covetousness. The parable gives us the life and death of a rich man, and leaves us to judge whether he was a happy man.

(1.) Here is an account of his worldly wealth and abundance; (v. 16.) The ground of a certain rich man was plenteous. He was great in the country. He had wealth and power to do what he pleased. He was lordship of his own; he was a little prince. Observe, His wealth lay much in the fruits of the earth, for the king himself is served of the field, Ex. 5. 9. He had a great deal of ground, and his ground was fruitful; much would have more, and he had more. Note, The fruitfulness of the earth is a great blessing, but it is a blessing which God often gives plenteously to wicked men. It is a charm that we may not think to judge of his love or hatred by what is before us.

(2.) Here are the workings of his heart, in the midst of this abundance. We are here told what he thought within himself, v. 17. Note, The God of heaven knows and observes whatever we think within ourselves, and we are accountable to him for
it. He is both a Discerner and Judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are hid, and thoughts are free.

I. What his cares and concerns were. When he saw an extraordinary crop upon his ground, instead of thanking God for it, or rejoicing in the opportunity it would give him of doing the more good, he afflicts himself with this thought, What shall I do because I have no room where tobestow my fruits? He speaks as one at a loss, and full of perplexity. What shall I do now? The prospect of this new harvest makes him think, I do not know where to have my meal's meat, could not have said a more anxious word. Disquieting care is the common fruit of an abundance of this world, and the common fault of those that have abundance. The more men have, the more perplexity they have with it, and the more solicitous they are to keep what they have, and to add to it, how to spare, and how to spend; so that even the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep, for thinking what they shall do with what they have, and how they shall dispose of it. The rich man seems to speak with a sigh, What shall I do? And if you ask, Why, what is the matter? Truly he has abundance of wealth, and wants a place to put it in, that is all.

II. What his projects and purposes were, which were the result of his cares, and were indeed absurd and foolish, yet may be so considered of those that think it is the wisest course I can take; I will pull down my barns, for they are too little, and I will build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods, and then I shall be at rest. Now here, first, It was folly for him to call the fruits of the ground his fruits and his goods. He seems to lay a pleasing emphasis upon that, my fruits and my goods; whereas what we have, is but lent us for our use, the property is still in God; we are but stewards of our Lord's goods, tenants at will of our Lord's land. It is my corn, (saith God) and my wine, Hos. 2. 8. 9. Secondly, It was folly for him to hoard up what he had, and then to think it well-besown: There will I bestow it all; as if none must be bestowed upon the poor, none upon his family, none upon the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, but all in the great barn, no one should do more for them than God himself has done for him, that he might let his mind rise with his condition; when his ground brought forth more plentifully than usual, then to talk of bigger barns, as if the next year must needs be as fruitful as this, and much more abundant, whereas the barn might be as much too big the next year as it was too little this. Years of famine commonly follow years of plenty, as they did in Egypt; and therefore he had better to have stacked some of his corn this once. Fourthly, It was folly for him to think to erase his cares by building new barns, for the building of them would but increase his care; those know that, who know any thing of the spirit of building. The way that God prescribes for the cure of inordinate care, is certainly successful, but the way of the world does but increase it. And besides, when he had done this, there were other cares that still attend him, the greater the barns, still the greater the cares. God 1. 20. 21. He was only for him to contrive and resolve all this absolutely and absolutely, This I will do, I will pull down my barns, and I will build greater, yea that I will; without so much as that necessary proviso, If the Lord will, I shall live, Jam. 4. 13. 14. Peremptory projects are foolish projects; for our times are in God's hand, and not in our own, and we do not so much as know what shall be on the morrow.

S. What his pleasing hopes and expectations were, when he made good those projects; "Then I will say to my soul, upon the credit of this security, whether God say it or no, Soul, mark what I say, thou hast much goods laid up for many years in these barns; now take thine ease, eat thy bread, and drink thy wine, and be merry. But he appears his folly, as much in the enjoyment of his wealth as in the pursuit of it. First, It was folly for him to put off his comfort in his abundance, till he had compassed his projects concerning it. When he has built bigger barns, and filled them, (which will be a work of time,) then he will take his ease; and might he not as well have done that now? Groth here a man that has an opportunity of making himself master of Sicily, Africa, and other places in the prosecution of his victories; Well, saith his friend, Cynesus, and what must we do then? Postea vitandus, saith he, Then we will live; At hoc jam fitet, saith Cynesus, We may live now if we please. Secondly, It was folly for him to be confident that his goods were laid up for many years, as if his bigger barns would be safer than those he had; whereas in an hour's time they might be burnt to the ground, perhaps by lightning, which there is no defence against, and all that was laid up in them. A few years may make a great change; moth and rust may corrupt or thieves break through and steal. Thirdly, It was folly for him to count upon certain case, when he had laid up abundance of the wealth of this world, whereas there are many things that may make people uneasy in the midst of plenty. It is an evil to be full, and to increase, to take a whole pot of precious ointment: and one then a whole bed of down. Pain and sickness of body, disagreeableness of relations, and especially a guilty conscience, may rob a man of his ease, who has ever so much of the wealth of this world. Fourthly, It was folly for him to think of making no other use of his plenty than to eat and drink and to be merry; to indulge the flesh, and gratify the sensual appetite, without any thought of doing good to others, or spiritual benefit put thereby into a better capacity of serving God and his generation; as if we lived to eat, and did not eat to live, and the happiness of man consisted in nothing else but in having all the gratifications of sense wound up to the height of pleasures. Fifthly, It was the greatest folly of all to say all this to his soul. If he had said, Body, take thine ease; for thou hast goods laid up for many years, there had been something of spiritual comfort in his words. But hevoxeth the spirit, separable from the body, was no wax interest-ed in a barn full of corn, or a bag full of gold. If he had had the soul of a sow, he might have blessed it with the satisfaction of eating and drinking; but what is this to the soul of a man, that has exigences and desires which these things will be no way suited to? It is the great absurdity which the children of this world are guilty of, that they portion their souls in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense.

S. Here is God's sentence upon all this; and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth: He said to himself, said to his soul, Take thine ease; if God hath said so too, the man had been happy, as his Spirit witnesses with the spirit of believers, to make them easy; but God said quite otherwise; and by his judgment of us we must stand or fall, not by ours of ourselves, 1 Cor. 4. 3. 4. His neighbours that had been left behind had blasphemed him, as doing well for himself; (Ps. 49. 18.) God rejoiced for himself, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee. v. 20. God said to him, that is, de- creed this concerning him, and let him know it either by his conscience or by some awakening providence, or rather by both together. This was said when he was in the fulness of his sufficiency, Job 20. 22.) when his eyes were held waking upon his bed with his cares and contrivances about enlarging his barns, not by adding a bay or two more of building to them, which might serve to enclose the end, but by
pulling them down, and building greater, which was requisite to please his fancy. When he was forecasting this, and had brought this to an issue, and then lay up himself asleep again, with a recurring dream of many years' enjoyment of his present improvements, then God said this to him. Thus Belshazzar was struck with terror by the hand-writing on the wall, in the midst of his jollity. Now observe what God said, [1.] The character he gave him, Thou fool, thou Nabal, (alluding to the story of Nabal,) that fool; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. He is a man to sleep again with a dream, when he was regaling himself in his abundance of his provision for his sheep-shearers. Note, Carnal worldlings are fools, and the day is coming when God will call them by their own name, Thou fool, and they will call themselves so. [2.] The sentence he passed upon him, a sentence of death; This night thy soul shall be required of thee; they shall require thy soul, (so the words are,) and then whether those things be which thou hast provided? He thought he had goods that should be his many years, but he must part from them this night; he thought he should enjoy them himself, but he must leave them to he knows not who. Note, The death of carnal worldlings is miserable in itself and terrible to them.

It is a force, an arrest, it is the requiring of the soul, that soul that thou art making such a fool of; what hast thou to do with a soul, who cannot use it no better? Thy soul shall be required; that intimates that he is loath to part with it. A good man, who has taken his heart off from this world, cheerfully resigns his soul at death, and gives it up; but a worldly man has torn from him with violence, it is a terror to him, to think of leaving this world. They shall require thy soul; God shall require it, he shall require an account of it; Man, woman, what hast thou done with thy soul? Give an account of that stewardship. They shall, that is, evil angels, as the messenger of God's justice. As good angels receive gracious souls to carry them to their joy, so evil angels receive wicked souls to carry them to the place of torment; they shall require it as a guilty soul to be punished. The devil requires the soul as his own, for it did, in effect, give itself to him.

Secondly, It is a surprise, an unexpected force. It is in the night, and terrors in the night are most terrible. The time of death is day-time to a good man, it is his morning; but it is night to a worldly; a dark night, he lies down in sorrow. It is this sight, this present night, without delay, there is no giving ball, or begging day; this pleasant night, when thou art promising thyself many years to come, now thou must die, and go to judgment; thou art entertaining thyself with the fancy of many a merry day, and merry night, and merry feast, but in the midst of all, here is an end of all, Isa. 21. 4.

Thirdly, It is the leaving of all those things behind. This is a most dreadful one to them, more than they have laboured for, and prepared for hereafter, with abundance of toil and care. All that which they have placed their happiness in, and built their hope upon, and raised their expectations from, they must leave behind. Their pomp shall not descend after them, (Ps. 49. 17,) but they shall go as naked out of the world as they came into it, and they shall have no body but their body, and that body, they have handed over, when in death, in judgment, or in their everlasting state.

Fourthly, It is leaving them to they know not who. Then whose shall those things be? Not thing to be sure, and thou knowest not what they will prove, for whom thou didst design them, thy children and relations, whether they will be wise or fools, (Ecc. 2. 18, 19,) whether such as will bless thy memory or curse it, be a credit to thy family or a blemish, do good or hurt with what thou leavest them, keep it or spend it; nay, thou knowest not but those for whom thou dost design it, may be prevented from the enjoyment of it, and it may turn out to some body else thou little thinkest of; nay, though thou knowest to whom thou leavest it, thou knowest not to whom they will leave it, or into whose hand it will come at last. If many a man could have foreseen to whom his house would have come after his death, he would rather have burned it than beautified it.

Lastly, Here is the application of this parable; (v. 21.) So is he, such a fool, a fool in God's judgment, a fool upon record, that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. This way and this is the end of such a man. Observe here

1. The description of a worldly man; He layeth up treasures for himself, for the body, for the world, for himself in opposition to God, for that self that is to depart hence, and leave these things behind. It is in his leaving, that he counts his flesh himself, as if the body were the man. If self be rightly stated and understood, it is only the true Christian that layeth up treasure for himself, and is wise for himself, Prov. 9. 12. (2.) It is his error, that he makes it his business to lay up for the flesh, which he calls laying up for himself. All his labour is for his mouth, (Ecc. 6. 7.) making provision for the flesh. (3.) It is his error, that he counts those things the riches of this world which have not life, and the body, and the life that now is; they are the wealth he trusts to, and spends upon, and lets out his affections toward. (4.) The greatest error of all, is, that he is in no case to be rich toward God, rich in the account of God, whose accounting of us rich makes us so, (Rev. 2. 8,) rich in the things of God, rich in faith, (Jam. 2. 5.) rich in good works, in the fruits of righteousness, (1. Tim. 6. 18,) rich in graces, and comforts, and spiritual gifts. Many who have abundance of this world, are wholly destitute of that which will enrich their souls, which will make them rich toward God, rich for eternity. The folly and misery of a worldly man; So is he. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who knows what the end of things will be, has here told us what his end will be. Note, It is the unspakable folly of the most eminent men to mind and pursue the wealth of this world more than the wealth of the other world, that which is for the body only, and for time, more than that which is for the soul and eternity.

22. And he said unto his disciples. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. 23. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. 24. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls? 25. And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? 26. If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? 27. Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not: and
yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 25. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29. And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that fadeth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36. And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: verily I say unto you, That he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. 40. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Our Lord Jesus is here inculcating some needful, useful lessons upon his disciples, which he had before taught them, and had occasion afterward to press upon them; for they need to have precept upon precept, and line upon line; "Therefore, because there are so many that are ruined by covetousness, and an inordinate affection to the wealth of this world, I say unto you, my disciples, take heed of it." Thou, O man of God, flee these things, as well as thou, O man of the world, 1 Tim. 6. 11.

1. He charges them not to afflict themselves with disquieting, perplexing cares about the necessary supports of life, (v. 22.) Take no thought for your life. In the foregoing parable he had given us warning against that branch of covetousness which rich people are most in danger of; and that is, a sensual complacency in the abundance of this world's goods. Now his disciples might think they were in no danger of that, for they had no plenty or variety to glory in; and therefore he here warns them against another branch of covetousness, which they are most in temptation to, that have but a little of this world, which was the case of the disciples at best, and much more now that they had left all, to follow Christ; and that was, an anxious solicitude about the necessary supports of life. "Take no thought for your life, either for the preservation of it, or if it be in danger, or for the provision that is to be made for it, either of food or clothing, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall put on." This is the caution he had largely insisted upon, Matth. 6. 25, &c. And the argument which he had laid arch was that which stood in our encouragement to cast all our care upon God, which is the right way to ease ourselves of it. Consider then,

1. God, who has done the greater for us, may be depended upon to do the lesser. He has, without any care or forecast of our own, given us life and a body, and therefore we may cheerfully leave it to him to provide for the body, and for the life, of that life, and remain in the defence of that body.

2. God, who provides for the inferior creatures, may be depended upon to provide for good christians. "Trust God for meat, for he feeds the ravens; (v. 24.) they neither sow nor reap, they take neither care nor pains beforehand to provide for themselves, and yet they are fed, and never perish for want. Now consider how much better ye are than the fowls of the air: for the angels of God are ministering spirits, to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (v. 26. 27.) They make no preparation for their own clothing, they toil not, they spin not, the root in the ground is a naked thing, and without ornament, and yet, as the flower grows up, it appears wonderfully beautified. Now, if God has so clothed the flowers, which are fading perishings things, shall he not much more clothe you with such clothing as is fit for you, and with clothing of clothing, for he clothes the fowls; (v. 27, 28.) they they provided that those they had should not wax old upon them, Deut. 8. 4. Thus will he clothe his spiritual Israel; but then let not them be of little faith. Note, Our inordinate cares are owing to the weakness of our faith; for a powerful practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, his covenant-relation to us as a Father, and especially his precious promises, relating both to this life and that to come, would be mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of these disquieting, perplexing imaginations.

3. Our cares are fruitless, vain, and insignificant, and therefore it is folly to indulge them; they will not gain us our wishes, and therefore ought not to hinder our repose; (v. 25.) "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit, or one inch; can add to his age one year, or one hour? Now if ye be not able to do that which is least, if it be not in your power to alter your statures, why should you perplex yourselves about other things, which are as much out of your power, and about which it is as necessary that we refer ourselves to the providence of God?" Note, As in God's providence, so in all the ways of life, it is our wisdom to take it as it is, and make the best of it; for fretting and vexing, carping and caring, will not mend it.

An inordinate solicitous pursuit of the things of this world, even necessary things, very ill becomes the disciples of Christ; (v. 29, 30.) "Whatsoever others do, seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; do not ye afflict yourselves with perplexing cares, nor wear yourselves with constant toil, nor hurry hither and thither with inquiries what ye shall eat or drink, as David's enemies, that wandered up and down for meat, (Ps. 59. 15.) or as the eagle that seeks the prey afar off, Job 39. 29. Let not the disciples of Christ thus seek their food, but ask it of God day by day; let them not be of doubtful mind; μην μετανοιως. — Be not as me
to come and inherit the kingdom, it is theirs for ever; a kingdom for each. [4.] The kingdom is given according to the good pleasure of the Father; it is you, your Father's good pleasure. It is given not for debts, but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, even to Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The kingdom is his; and may he not do what he will with his own? [5.] The believing hopes and prospects of the kingdom should silence and suppress the fears of Christ's little flock in this world. "Fear no trouble, for though it should come, it shall not come between the enemy and his kingdom. (That is not an evil worth trembling at the thought of, which cannot separate us from the love of God.)"

II. He charged them to make sure work for their souls, by laying up their treasure in heaven, v. 25, 34. Those who have done this may be very easy, as to all the events of time. 1. "Sit loose to this world, and to all your possessions in it. Sell that ye have, and give alms," that is, "rather than what wherewith to relieve those that are truly necessitous, sell that which you have surperfluous, all that you can spare from the supply of your means and estates, and give it to the floor. Sell that ye have, if ye find it a hinderance from, or incumbrance in, the service of Christ. Do not think yourselves undone, if by being fined, imprisoned, or banished, for the testimony of Jesus, you be forced to sell your estates, though they be the inheritance of your fathers. Do not sell, to hoard up the money, or because you can make more of it by usury, but sell, and give alms; what is given in money is given in goods, and may be used to the best interest, upon the best security."

2. "Set your hearts upon the other world, and your expectations from that world. Provide yourselves bags that wax not old, that wax not empty, not of gold, but of grace in the heart, and good works in the life; these are the bags that will last. Grace will go with us into another world, for it is woven in the soul, and our good works will follow us, for God is not unrighteous to forget them. These will be treasures in heaven, that will enrich us to eternity. (1.) It is treasure that will not be exhausted; we may spend upon it to eternity, and it will not be all the less; there is no danger of seeing the bottom of it. (2.) It is treasure that we are in no danger of being robbed of, for no thief approaches near it; what is laid up in heaven is laid up in the reach of enemies. (3.) It is treasure that will not spoil with keeping, any more than it will waste with spending; the moth does not corrupt it, as it doth our garments which we now wear. Now by this it appears that we have laid up our treasure in heaven, if our hearts be there while we are here, (v. 34.) if we think much of heaven, and keep our eye upon it, and think how it suits us best with ourselves and the hopes of it, and keep ourselves in awe with the fear of falling short of it. But if your hearts be set upon the earth and the things of it, it is to be feared that you have your treasure and portion in it, and are undone when you leave it."

III. He charged them to get ready, and to keep in a readiness for Christ's coming; when all those who have laid up their treasure in earth, shall enter upon the glory and felicities of heaven, v. 35, 36.

1. Christ is our Master, and we are his servants, not only working servants, but waiting servants, servants that are to do him honour, in waiting on him, and attending his motions; if any man serve me, let him follow me, follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; but that is not all, they must do him honour in waiting for him, and expecting his return. We

ors in the air, that are blown hither and thither with every wind; do not, like them, rise and fall, but maintain a consistency with yourselves in the world, and have your hearts fixed; live not in care ful suspense; let not your minds be continually perplexed between hope and fear, ever upon the rack." Let not the children of God make themselves uneasy; for,

1. This is to make themselves like the children of this world; "All these things do the nations of the world seek after." They do not, that is, not for the soul, for this world, and therefore, not for the other, look no further than what they shall eat and drink; and, having no all-sufficient God to seek to, and confide in, they burden themselves with anxious cares about those things; but it ill becomes you to do so. You, who are called out of the world, ought not to be thus conformed to the world, and to walk in the way of this people," Isa. 6. 12.

2. It is needless for them to disquiet themselves with care about the necessary supports of life, for they have a Father in heaven, who doth and will take care of them: "Your Father knows that you have need of these things, and considers it, and will supply your needs according to his riches and glory, for he is your Father, who made you subject to these necessities, and therefore will suit his compassions to them; your Father, who maintains you, educates you, and designs an inheritance for you, and therefore will take care that you want no good thing." (v. 31.) "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and mind that, ye, my disciples, who are to preach the kingdom of God; let your hearts be upon your work, and your great care how to do that well, and that will effectually divert your thoughts from inordinate care about the things of the world. And let all that have souls to save, seek the kingdom of God, in which only they can be safe. Seek admission into it, seek advancement in it, seek the kingdom of grace, to be subjects in that, the kingdom of glory, to be princes in that, and then all these things shall be added to you; mind the affairs of your souls with diligence and care, and then trust God with all your other affairs."

3. They have better things to mind and pursue; (v. 32.) "Fear not, little flock." For the banishing of inordinate cares, it is necessary that fears should be suppressed; when we frighten ourselves with an apprehension of evil to come, we put ourselves upon the stretch of care how to avoid it, when after all perhaps it is but the creature of our own imagination; therefore fear not, little flock, but hope to the end, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. This comfortable word we have from Christ himself, v. 26. Note, in the world there is a little flock; his sheep are but few and feeble. The church is a vineyard; a garden, a small spot, compared with the wilderness of this world; as Israel, (1 Kings 20. 27.) who were like two little flocks of kids, when the Syrians filled the country. [3.] Though it be a little flock, quite over-numbered, and therefore in danger of being overpowered, by reason of the greatness of the world; it is the way they should not be afraid. "Fear not, little flock, but mind yourselves safe under the protection and conduct of the great and good Shepherd, and lie easy." [3.] God has a kingdom in store for all that belong to Christ's little flock; a crown of glory, (1 Pet. 5. 4.) a throne of power, (Rev. 3. 21.) unsearchable riches, far exceeding the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces. The sheep on the right hand are called
must be as men that wait for their Lord, that sit up late while he stays out late, to be ready to receive him.

2. Christ our Master, though now gone from us, will return again, return from the wedding, from solemnizing the nuptials abroad, to complete them at home. Christ's servants are now in a state of expectation, looking for their Master's glorious appearing, and every thing with an eye to that, and in order to that. He will come to take cognizance of his servants, and that being a critical day, they shall either stay with him, or be turned out of doors, according as they are found in that day.

3. The time of our Master's return is uncertain; it will be in the night, it will be far in the night, when he has long deferred his coming; and when many have done looking for him; the time for the watch, just before midnight, or in the third watch, next after midnight, v. 38. His coming to us, at our death, is uncertain, and to many it will be a great surprise; for, (v. 40.) The Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not, without giving notice beforehand. This bespeaks not only the uncertainty of the time of his coming, but the prevailing security of the greatest part of men, who are unthinking, and sluing away regardless of the notices given them, so that, whenever he comes, it is in an hour that they think not.

4. That which he expects and requires from his servants, is, that they be ready to open to him immediately, whenever he comes, (v. 36.) that is, that they be in a frame fit to receive him, or, rather to be received by him; that they be found as his servants, in the posture that becomes them, with their bims girded about; alluding to the servants that are ready to go whither their master sends them, and do what their master bids them, having their long garments tucked up, (which otherwise would hang about them, and hinder them,) and their lights burning, with which to light their master into the house, and up to his chamber.

5. Those servants will be happy, who are found ready and in a good frame, when their Lord comes; (v. 37.) Blessed are those servants who, after having waited long, continue in a waiting frame, until the hour that their Lord comes, and are then found awake, and aware of his first approach, of his first knock; and again, (v. 38.) Blessed are those servants, for then will be the time of their preferment. Here is such an instance of honour done them, as is scarcely to be found among men; he shall make them rulers over many, and serve them; for the bridegroom to wait upon his bride at table is not uncommon, but to wait upon his servants is not the manner of men; yet Jesus Christ was among his disciples as one that served; and did once, to show his condescension, gird himself, and serve them, when he washed their feet; (John 13. 4. 5.) it signified the joy with which they shall be received into the other world by the Lord Jesus, who is gone before, and has told them that his Father will honour them, John 12. 26.

6. We are therefore kept at uncertainty concerning the precise time of his coming, that we may be always ready; for it is no thanks to a man, to be ready for an attack, if he know beforehand just the time when it will be made; The good man of the house, if he had known what hour the thief would come, though he were ever so careless a man, ever so careless a man, and have watched, and have tugged, and have kept watch, and have kept watch; or the thieves, v. 39. But we do not know at what hour the alarm will be given us, and therefore are concerned to watch at all times, and never be off our guard. Or this may intimately the miserable case of those who are careless and unbelieving in this great matter. If the good man of the house had had notice of his danger of being robbed such a night, he would have sitten up, and saved his house; but we have notice of the day of the Lord's coming, as a thief in the night, to the confusion and ruin of all secure sinners, and yet do not thus watch. If men will take such care of their houses, O let us be thus wise for our souls; be ye therefore ready also, as ready as the good man of the house would be, if he knew what hour the thief would come.

41. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42. And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 44. Of a truth I say unto you, That he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidsens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committ'd much, of him they will ask the more. 49. I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! 51. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Here is,

1. Peter's question, which he put to Christ upon occasion of the foregoing parable; (v. 41.) "Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us that are thy constant followers, to us that are ministers, or also to all that come to be taught by thee, to all the hearers, and in them to all christians?" Peter was now, as often, spokesman for the disciples. We have reason to bless God that there are some such forward and bold, that have a gift of utterance; let those that are such, take heed of being proud. Now Peter desires Christ
explain himself, and to direct the arrow of the foregoing parable to the mark he intended. He calls it a *parable*, because it was not only figurative, but wisely, clearly, and distinctly. Lord said ever, was it intended for us, or for all? To this Christ gives a direct answer, (Mark 13. 57.) *What I say unto you, I say unto all*. Yet here he seems to show that the apostles were primarily concerned in it. Note, We are all concerned to take to ourselves what Christ in his word designs for us, and to inquire accordingly concerning it; *SPEAKETH THIS TO YOU AND TO ALL*. Lord said ever, Doth this word belong to me? Speak it to my heart.

II. Christ's reply to this question, directed to Peter and the rest of the disciples. If what Christ had said before, did not so peculiarly concern them, but in common with other Christians, who must all watch and pray for Christ's coming, as his servants; yet this that follows, is peculiarly adapted to ministers, who are the *stewards* in Christ's house. Now our Lord Jesus here tells them,

1. What was their *duty* as stewards, and what the *trust* committed to them. (1.) They are made *rulers* of God's household, under Christ, whose own the house is; ministers derive an authority from Christ to preach the gospel, and to administer the ordinances of Christ, and apply the seals of the covenant of grace; their business is to give God's children and servants their *portion of meat*, that which is proper for them, and allotted to them; convictions and comfort to those to whom they respectively belong. *Suum cuique.—To every one his own.* This is rightly to divide the word of truth, 2 Tim. 2. 15. (3.) To give it them in due season, at that time and in that way which are most suitable to the temper and condition of those that are to be fed; a word in season to him that is weary. (4.) Herein they must approve themselves *faithful and wise*; faithful to their Master, by whom this great trust is reposed in them, and faithful to their fellow-servants, for whose benefit they are put in trust; and wise to improve an opportunity of doing honour to their Master, and service in the family. Ministers must be both skillful and faithful.

2. What would be their happiness, if they approve themselves faithful and wise; (v. 43.) *Blessed is that servant, (1.) That is doing, and is not idle, nor indulgent of his case; even the rulers of the household must be doing, and make themselves servants of all. (2.) That is so doing, doing as he should be, giving them their portion of meat, by public preaching, and personal application. (3.) That is found so doing, when his Lord comes; that perseveres to the end, notwithstanding the difficulties he may meet with in the way. Now his happiness is illustrated by the performance of a steward, that has approved himself within a lower and narrower degree of service; he shall be preferred to a larger and higher; (v. 44.) he will make him *ruler over all that he has*, which was Joseph's precept in Pharaoh's house; and he will be *made ruler over his household*, the Lord to be faithful, shall obtain further mercy to be abundantly rewarded for their faithfulness in the day of the Lord.

3. What a dreadful reckoning there would be, if they were treacherous and unfaithful, v. 45. 46. If that servant begin to be quarrelsome and profane, he shall be called to an account, and severely punish. (1.) Christ himself thinks of it; he therefore shall here only observe, (1.) Our looking upon Christ's second coming as a thing at a distance, is the cause of all those irregularities which render the thought of it terrible to us; He saith in his heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming.* Christ's patience is very often misinterpreted, his delay to his discouragement of his people, and the encouragement of his enemies. (2.) The persecutors of God's people are commonly abandoned to security and sensuality; they beat their fellow-servants, and then eat and drink with the drunken, altogether unconcerned for their own sin or the sin of others, and neglectful as the king and Haman, who sat down to drink when the city Shushan was perplexed. Thus they drank, to drown the clamours of their own consciences, and baffle them, which otherwise would fly in their faces. (3.) Death and judgment will be very terrible to all wicked people, but especially to wicked ministers; be not a surprise to them, at an hour when they are not aware, it will be the determining of them to endless misery, they shall be cut in sundry and have their portion assigned them with the unbelievers.

4. What an aggravation it would be of their sin and punishment, that they knew their duty, and did not do it, (v. 47, 48.) *For that servant that knew his lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* God will justly inflict more upon him for abusing the means of knowledge he afforded him, which others would have made a better use of; and because it argues a great degree of willfulness and contempt, to sin against knowledge, of how much sorcer punishment then shall they be thought worthy, beside the many stripes that their own consciences will give them; Son, remember. Here is a good reason for this added, To whosoever much is given, of him shall be much required, and to whom much is committed as a trust he is to account for. Those that have greater capacities of mind than others, more knowledge and learning, more acquaintance and converse with the scriptures, to them much is given, and their account will be accordingly.

III. A further discourse concerning his own sufferings, which he expected, and concerning the sufferings of his followers, which were also very considerable; in general, (v. 49.) *I am come to send fire on the earth.* By this some understand the preaching of the gospel, and the pouring out of the Spirit, holy fire; this Christ came to send with a commission to refine the world, to purge away its dross, to burn up its chaff, and it was already kindled; the gospel was begun to be preached, some prefaces were made to the nature of the case, the Spirit descended in fiery tongues; but by what follows, it seems rather to be understood of the fire of persecution; Christ is not the Author of it, as it is the sin of the incendiaries, the persecutors; but he permits it, nay he commissions it, as a refining fire for the trial of the persecuted. This fire was already kindled in the emnity of the carnal Jews to Christ and his followers. *What wilt thou that it may pre-
sently be kindled? What thou dost, do quickly. If it be already kindled, no fight! Shall I wait the quenching of it? No; for it must fasten upon myself, and upon all, and glory will redound to God from it.”

1. He must himself suffer many things; he must pass through this fire that was already kindled: (v. 50.) I have a baptism to be baptized with. Afflictions are compared both to fire and water, Ps. 66. 12.—69. 1, 2. Christ’s sufferings were both; he calls them a baptism, (Matt. 20. 22.) for he was watered over with Christ who was baptized in the cloud, and dipped into them, as Israel was baptized in the sea, 1 Cor. 10. 2. He must be sprinkled with his own blood, and with the blood of his enemies, Is. 63. 3. See here, (1.) Christ’s foresight of his sufferings; he knew what he was to undergo, and the necessity of undergoing it; I am to be baptized with a baptism; he calls his sufferings by a name that ministration, he is a baptism. Not a large; I must be dipped in them, not drowned in them; and by a name that sanctifies them, for baptism is a sacred rite. Christ in his sufferings devoted himself to his Father’s honour, and consecrated himself a Priest for evermore, Heb. 7. 27, 28. (2.) Christ’s forwardness to his sufferings; How am I straitened till it be accomplished! He longs for the time when he should suffer and die, having an eye to those sufferings of his, and to the work that was to be done by a woman in travail, that is pained to be delivered, and comes with her pains, because they hasten the birth of the child, and wishes them sharp and strong, that the work may be cut short. Christ’s sufferings were the travail of his soul, which he cheerfully underwent, in hope that he should by them see his seed, Isa. 53. 10, 11. So much was his heart upon the redemption and salvation of man.

2. 1.欲 to the other, that they must bear with hardships and difficulties; (v. 51.) Suppose ye that I came to give peace on earth, to give you a peaceable possession of the earth, and outward prosperity on the earth? It is intimated that they were ready to entertain such a thought as this, that they went upon this supposition, that the gospel would meet with a universal welcome, that people would unanimously embrace it, and would study to make the preachers of it easy and great, that Christ, if he did not give them peace and fower, would at least give them peace; and herein they were encouraged by divers passages of the Old Testament, which speak of the peace of the Messiah’s kingdom, which they were willing to understand of external peace. But, saith Christ, you will be mistaken, the event will declare the contrary, and therefore do not flatter yourselves into a fool’s paradise. You will find,

(1.) That the effect of the preaching of the gospel will be division. Not that the design of the gospel and its proper tendency are to unite the children of men to one another, to knit them together in holy love, and, if all would receive it, this would be the effect of it; but there being multitudes that not only despise it, but repulse it, and have their corruptions exasperated by it; and those that do receive it, it proves, though not the cause, yet the occasion, of division. While the strong man armed kept his palace, in the Gentile world, his goods were at peace; all was quiet, for all went on one way, the sects of philosophers agreed well enough, so did the worshippers of different deities; but when the gospel was preached, and many were enlightened by it, and turned from the power of Satan to God, then there was a disturbance, a noise and confusion. Ezek. 37. 7. Some distinguished themselves by embracing the gospel, and others were angry that they did so. Yea, and among them that received the gospel there would be different sentiments in lesser things, which would occasion division; and Christ permits it for holy ends, (1 Cor. 11. 19.) that Chris fians may learn and practise mutual forbearance, Rem. 14. 1, 2.

(2.) That this division will reach into private families, and the preaching of the gospel will give occasion for discord amongst the nearest relations; (v. 53.) The father shall be against the son, and the son against the father, when the one turns Christian, and the other does not; for the one that does turn Christian, will be zealous by arguments and endeavours to turn the other too; (1 Cor. 7. 16.) as soon as ever Paul was converted, he disputed; (Acts 9. 29.) the one that continues in unbelief will be provoked, and will hate and persecute the other that by his faith and obedience witnesses against, and condemns, his brethren in unbeliever. A spirit of bigotry and persecution will break through the strongest bonds of relation and natural affection; see Matt. 10. 34.—39. Even mothers and daughters fall out about religion; and those that believe not, are so violent and outrageous, that they are ready to deliver up into the hands of the bloody persecutors those that believe, though otherwise very near and dear to them. We find in the Acts, that whereas the gospel came nearest to a woman in travail, it was every where spoken against, and there was no small stir about that way. Therefore let not the disciples of Christ promise themselves peace upon earth, for they are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.

54. And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower: and so it is. 55. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat: and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites! can ye discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it, that ye do not discern this time? 57. Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? 58. When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. 59. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Having given his disciples their lesson in the foregoing verses, here Christ turns to the people, and gives them theirs, v. 54. He said also to the people: he preached ad populum—to the people, as well as ad clericum—to the clergy. In general, he would have them be as wise in the affairs of their souls as they are in their outward affairs. Two things he specifies,

1. Let them learn to discern the way of God toward them, that they may prepare accordingly. They were weather-wise, and by observing the winds and clouds, could foresee when there would be rain, and when there would be hot weather; (v. 54, 55.) and they did, accordingly, either house their hay and corn, or throw it abroad, and equipped themselves for a journey, according as they foresaw the weather would be. Even in the change of the weather God gives warning to us what is coming, and art has improved those notices of nature in weather-glasses. These preparations here spoken of, were made by repeated observations upon the chain of causes; from what has been we conjecture what will be; see the benefit of experience, by ta
king notice we may come to give notice; whose is
wise, will observe and learn. See now,
1. The particulars of the presages: “Ye see a
cloud arising out of the west,” (the Hebrew would
say, out of the sea,) “perhaps it is at first no bigh-
ger than a man’s hand,” (Kings 18. 14;) but ye
say, “There will be heat,” (for the hot countries
of Africa lay not far south from Judea,) “and it
usually comes to pass; yet nature has not tied itself
to such a truck, but that sometimes we are cut in
our prognostics.

2. The inferences from them, (v. 56,) “Ye hyp-
ocrites, ye tend to be wise, but really are not
so, who pretend to expect the Messiah and his
kingdom,” (for so the generality of the Jews did,) 
“and yet are no way disposed to receive and enter-
tain it, how is it that you do not discern this
time, that ye do not discern that, according to the indica-
tions given in the Old-Testament prophecies, now
is the time for the Messiah to appear, and that, ac-
cording to the marks given of him, I am he? Why
are ye not aware that ye have now an opportunity
which ye will not have long, and which ye may nev-
er have again, of securing to yourselves an in-
terest in the kingdom of God, and the privileges of
that kingdom?” Now is the accepted time, now
or never. It is the folly and misery of man, that he
knows not his time, Eccl. 9. 12. This was the ruin
of the men of that generation, that they knew not
the day of their visitation, Luke 10. 25. But in a
man’s heart discerns time and judgment; such was
the wisdom of the men of Issachar, who had un-
derstanding of the times, 1 Chron. 12. 32. He adds
(v. 57,) “Yea, and why even of yourselves, though
ye had not these loud alarms given you, judge ye
not what is right? Ye are not only stupid and re-
gardless in matters that are purely of divine reve-
lation, to submit to the hints which gives you,
but ye are so even in the dictates of the very light
and law of nature.” Christianity has reason and
natural conscience on its side; and if men could al-
low themselves the liberty of judging what is right,
they would soon find that all Christ’s precepts con-
cerning all things are right, and that there is nothing
more equitable in itself, nor better becoming us,
than to be governed by these rules, and be ruled by them.

II. Let them hasten to make their peace with God
in time, before it be too late, v. 55, 59. This we
had upon another occasion, Matt. 5. 26.
1. We reckon it our wisdom in our temporal af-
fairs, to compound with those with whom we can-
not contend, to agree with our adversary upon the
best terms we can, before the equity he forescored,
and we be left to the rigour of the law; “When
they goest with then adversary to the magistrate,
to whom the appeal is made, and knowest that he
has an advantage against thee, and thou art in dan-
ger of being cast, ye know it is the most prudent
course, to make the matter up between yourselves;
from thou art in the way, give diligence to be deliv-
ered from him, to get a discharge, lest judgment be
given, and execution awarded according to law.”

Woe to him that goeth down to the palace to an ex-
tricity, but accommodate them in time.
2. Let us do thus in the affairs of our souls; we
have by sin made God our adversary, have pro-
voked his displeasure against us, and he has both
right and might on his side; so that it is to no pur-
pose to think of carrying on the controversy with him either at bar or in battle. Christ, to whom all judgment is, is the Magistrate before whom we are hastening to appear; we stand in trial before him, and insist upon our own justifica-
tion, the cause will certainly go against us; the
Judge will deliver us to the officer, the ministers of
his justice, and we shall be cast into the furnace
of hell, and the debt will be exacted to the utmost,
though we cannot make a full satisfaction for it, it
will be continually demanded, till the last mite be
paid, which will not be to all eternity. Christ’s suf-
ferrings were short, 22. the Judge of them made
them fully satisfactory. In the sufferings of their
sinners, what is wanting in value, must be made up in
an endless duration. Now, in consideration of
this, let us give diligence to be delivered out of
the hands of God as an Advocate, into his hands as
a Father, and this we are in the way, which has
the chief stress laid upon it here. While we are
all, we wait for the vengeful Lord; he is very
righteous, by repentance and faith, through Christ, (who is the
Mediator as well as the Magistrate,) to get the quar-
rel made up, while it may be done, before it be too
late. Thus was God in Christ reconciling the world
to himself, beseeching us to be reconciled. Let us
take up the arm of the Lord stretched out in this
gracious offer, that we may make peace, and we
shall make peace; (Isa. 27. 4, 5;) for we cannot
walk together till we be agreed.

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The good improvement Christ
made of a piece of news that was brought him concerning
some Galileans, who were slain, v. 1. 2. And the Galileans,
who were sacrificing in the temple at Jerusalem, v. 1. 5
II. The parable of the fruitless fig-tree, by which we are
warned to bring forth fruits meet for that repentance
which he had in the foregoing passage called us to, v. 4.
III. Christ’s healing of a poor infirm woman on the sab-
both-day, and justifying of himself in it, v. 11. 17. IV.
A repetition of the parables of the grain of mustard-seed,
and the leaven, v. 18. 22. V. His answer to the question
concerning the number of the saved, v. 23. 30. VI. The
slight he put upon Herod’s malice and menaces, and the
doom of Jerusalem read, v. 31. 35.

I. THERE were present at that season
some that told him of the Galileans,
whose blood Pilate had mingled with their
sacrifices. 2. And Jesus answering said
unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans
were sinners above all the Galileans, be-
cause they suffered such things? 3. I tell
you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall
all likewise perish. 4. Or those eighteen,
upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and
drew them, think ye that they were sinners
above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? 5.
I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye
shall all likewise perish.

We have had,
I. Tidings brought to Christ of the death of some
Galileans lately, whose blood Pilate had mingled
with their sacrifices, v. 1. Let us consider,
1. What this tragic story was: it is briefly re-
lated here, and is not met with in any of the histo-
rians of those times. Josephus indeed mentions Pi-
late’s killing of some Samaritans, who, under the
conduct of a factious leader, were going in a tu
mulus, and were thought to be covetous, among
their Samaritans’ temple; but we can by no means
allow that story to be the same with this. Some
think these Galileans were of the faction of Judas
Gaultina, who is called Judas of Galilee, (Acts
5. 57;) who disowned Caesar’s authority, and
refused to pay tribute to him; or perhaps these,
being Galileans, were only suspected by Pilate
to be of that faction, and barbarously murdered,
because those who were in with that pretender,
were out of his reach. The Galileans being He-
rod’s subjects, it is probable that this outrage
committed upon them by Pilate, occasioned the
quarrel that was between Herod and Pilate, which w: read of, ch. 23. 12. We are not told what number they were, perhaps but a few, whom Pilate had some particular figure against; (and therefore the story is overlooked by Josephus;) but the circumstance remarked is, that he mingled their blood with their sacrifices in the court of the temple. Though perhaps they had been but a few, yet here, under pretence of that fear, keep away from Jerusalem, whether the law obliged them to go up with their sacrifices. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it probable that they were themselves killing their sacrifices, which was allowed; for the priest's work they (said) began with the sprinkling of the blood; and that Pilate's officers came upon them by surprise, just at that time when they were off their guard. (Whose guilty minds generally went well armed,) and mingled the blood of the sacrificers with the blood of the sacrifices as if it had been equally acceptable to God. Neither the holiness of the place nor of the work, would be a protection to them from the fury of an unjust judge, that neither feared God nor regarded man. The altar, which used to be a sanctuary and place of shelter, is now become a snare and a trap, and ensnares himself.

2. Why it was related at this season to our Lord Jesus. (1.) Perhaps merely as a matter of news, which they supposed he had not heard before, and as a thing which they lamented, and believed he would do so too; for the Galileans were their countrymen. Note, Sad providences ought to be observed by us, and the knowledge of them communicated to others, that they and we may be suitably affected with them, and make a good use of them. (2.) Perhaps it was intended as a confirmation of what Christ had said in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the necessity of making our peace with God in time, before we are delivered to the officer, that is, to death, and so cast into prison, and then it will be too late to make agreements: "Now," say they, "Master, here is a fresh instance of some that were very suddenly delivered to the officer, that were taken away by death when they little expected it; and therefore we have all need to be ready." Note, It will be of good use to us both to explain the word of God, and to enforce it upon ourselves, by observing the providences of God. (3.) Perhaps they would stir him up, being himself of Galilee, and a Prophet, and one that had a great interest in that country, to find out a way to revenge the death of these Galileans upon Herod. If they had any thoughts of this kind, they were quite out; for Christ was now going up to Jerusalem, to be delivered into the hands of Pilate, and to have his blood, not mingled with his sacrifice, but itself made a sacrifice. (4.) Perhaps this was told Christ, to deter him from going up to Jerusalem, to worship, v. 22, lest he should serve him as he had served those Galileans, and should suggest against him, as, probably, he had insinuated against those Galileans, in vindication of his concerning the Gentiles too to sacrifice as Absalom did, with a seditiuous design, under colour of sacrifice, to raise rebellion. Now, lest Pilate, when his hand was in, should proceed further, they think it advisable that Christ should for the present keep out of the way. (5.) Christ's answer intimates that they told him this with a spiteful intent, that, though Pilate was unjust in killing them, yet that, without doubt, they would not have done it, if he had permitted Pilate thus barbarously to cut them off. It was very inviorous; rather than they would allow them to be martyrs, though they died sacrificing, and perhaps suffered for their devotion, they will, without any colour of proof, suppose them to be malefactors; and it may be for no other reason than because they were not of their party and denomination, differed from them, or had difference with them; this fate of theirs, which was capable not only of a favourable, but an honourable, construction, shall be called a just judgment of God upon them, though they knew not for what.

11. Christ's reply to this report is this, which, like it, gave an instance of people's being taken away by sudden death. It is not long since the tower in Siloam fell, and there were eighteen persons killed and buried in the ruins of it. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is, that this tower adjoined to the pool of Siloam, which was the same with the pool of Bethesda, and that it belonged to these porches which were by the pool, in which the inhabitants of the country used the water. (John 5. 2.) And that they who were killed, were some of them, or some of those who in this pool used to purify themselves for the temple-service, for it was near the temple. Whoever they were, it was a sad story; yet such melancholy accidents we often hear of: for as the birds are caught in a snare, so are the sons of man snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, Ezek. 9. 12. Towers, v. 11., were built for safety, often with the men's destruction.

2. He continued his hearers not to make an ill use of these and such like events, nor from thence to.censure great sufferers, as if they were therefore to be accounted great sinners; Suppose ye that these Galileans, who were slain as they were sacrificing, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay, v. 2, 3. Perhaps they that told him the story of the Galileans, and Jews, and were glad of anything that furnished them with matter of reflection upon the Galileans, and therefore Christ retorted upon them the story of the men of Jerusalem, that came to an untimely end; for with what measure of that kind we met, it shall be measured to us again. "Now suppose ye that those eighteen who met with their death from the tower of Siloam, while perhaps they were expecting their cure from the pool of Siloam, were debarred to divine justice above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Whether it make for us or against us, we must abide by this rule, that we cannot judge of men's sins by their sufferings in this world; for many are thrown into the furnace as gold, to be purified, not as dress and chaff, to be consumed. We must therefore not be harsh in our censures of those that are afflicted more than their neighbours, as Job's friends were in their censure of him, lest we add sorrow to the sorrowful; nor, lest we condemn the generation of the righteous, Ps. 73. 14. If we will be judging, we have enough to do to judge ourselves; nor indeed can we know love or hatred by all that is before us, because all things come alike to all, Ecc. 9. 1, 2. And we might as justly conclude that the oppressors, and Pilate among the rest, on whose side are power and success, are the greatest sinners, as that the afflicted, and these Galileans among the rest who are all in tears, and they have no comforter, no, not the priests and Levites that attended the altar, are the greatest sinners. Let us, in our censures of others, do as we would be done by: for as we do we shall be done by Judge not, that we be not judged, Matth. 7. 1. 3. On these stories he founded a call to repentance, adding to each of them this awakening word, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, v. 3. (1.) Thus he made them tremble as much as they did, and had we been dealt with according to our sins, according to the iniquity of our holy things, our blood had been long ere this mingled with our sacrifices by the justice of God. It must moderate our censures, not only that we are sinners, but that we are as great sinners as they
have as much sin to repent of as they had to suffer for. (2.) That therefore we are all concerned to repent, to be sorry for what we have done amiss, and to do some more. The Jews accused Christ of making God everyone a debtor; and a loud call to us to repent. See J ew Christ improved every thing for the pressing of that great duty which he came not only to gain room for, and give hope to, but to enjoin us upon, —and that is, to repent. (3.) That repentance is the way to escape perishing, and it is a sure way; so iniquity shall not be your ruin, but upon no other terms. (4.) That, if we repent not, we shall certainly perish, as others have done before us. Some lay an emphasis upon the word likewise, and apply it to the destruction that was coming upon the people of the Jews, and particularly upon Jerusalem, who were destroyed by the Romans at the time of their passover, and so, like the Galileans, they had their blood mingled with their sacrifices; and many of them, both in Jerusalem and in other places, were destroyed by the fall of walls and buildings which were battered down about their ears, as those that died by the fall of the tower of Babel. But certainly it looks further; except we repent, we shall perish eternally, as they perish out of this world. The same Jesus that bid us repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, bid us repent, or otherwise we shall perish, in that which he hath set before us life and death, good and evil, and put us to our choice. (5.) The perishing of those in their impenitency will be in a particular manner aggravated, who have been most harsh and severe in judging others.

6. He spoke also this parable: A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. 7. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none; cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? 8. And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. And if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

This parable is intended to enforce that word of warning immediately going before, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; except ye be reformed, ye will be ruined, as the barren tree, except it bring forth fruit, will be cut down." I. This parable primarily refers to the nation and people of the Jews. God chose them for his own, made them a people near to him, gave them advantages for knowing and serving him above any other people, and expected answerable returns of duty and service from them; but, on the contrary, praising and honouring him, he would have accounted fruit; but they disappointed his expectations, they did not do their duty, they were a reproach, instead of being a credit, to their profession; upon this, he justly determined to abandon them, and cut them off, to deprive them of their privileges, to unchurch and unpeople them; but, upon Christ's, as of old upon Moab, the destruction, the returning from them, and the praise and honour, he would have accounted fruit. In general, he teaches us, that the patience of God is stretched out to long-suffering, with many that enjoy the gospel, and do not bring forth the fruits of it; and this patience is wretchedly abused, which provokes God to so much the greater severity. (How many times three years has God come to many of us, seeking fruit, but has not found it, and have them; but not only better than none, but) [2] That this fig-tree did not only not make fruit, but did hurt; it cumbered the ground, it took up the room of a fruitful tree, and was injurious to all about it. Note, Those who do not do good, commonly do hurt by the influence of their bad example; they grieve and discourage those that are good, they harden and encourage those that are bad. And the mischief is the greater, and the ground
more cumbered, if it be a high large spreading tree, and if it is a branched tree of long standing, and its fruits are cast out of it, and within it. It is cut down by, the judgments of God, especially spiritual judgments, such as those on the Jews that believed not, Isa. 6. 9, 10. It is cut down by death, and cast into the fire of hell; and with good reason, for why cumber it the ground? What reason is there where it should have a place in the vineyard to no purpose.

5. The Dresser's intercession for it. Christ is the great Intercessor, he ever lives, interceding; ministers are intercessors; they that dress the vineyard, should intercede for it; those we preach to, we should pray for, for we must give ourselves to the word of God, and to prayer. Now observe,

1. What it is he prays for, and that is, a re- 

2. Lord, let it alone this year also. He doth not pray, "Lord, let it never be cut down," but, "Lord, not now. Lord, do not remove the Dress- 

3. Lord, let them alone; and it is he that upholds all things. [3.] We are encouraged to pray to God for the merciful reproof of barren fig-trees; "Lord, let them alone; continue them yet a while in their probation; bear with them a little longer, and wait to be gracious." Thus must we stand in the gap, to turn away wrath.

4. Reprisals of mercy are but for a time; "Let it alone this year also, a short time, but a sufficient time."[4] Those that have been cumbered, may hope he will bear yet a little longer, but we cannot expect he should bear always. [5.] Re-

5. Reprisals may be obtained by the prayers of others for us, but not pardons; there must be our own faith, and repentance, and prayers, else no pardon.

(2.) How he promises to improve this reproof, if it be obtained; "I shall dig about it, and dung it." Note, [1.] In general, our prayers must always be seconded with our endeavours. The Dresser seems to say, "Lord, it may be I have been wanting in that which is my part; but let it alone this year, and I will do more than I have done towards its fruitfulness." Thus in all our prayers we must request God's grace, with a humble resolution to do our duty, else we mock God, and show that we do not rightly value the mercies we pray for. [2.] In particular, when we pray to God for grace for ourselves or others, we must follow our prayers with diligence in the use of the means of grace. The Dresser of the vineyard engages to do his part, and therein teaches ministers to do theirs. He will dig about the tree, and will dung it. Unfruitful Christians must be awakened by the terrors of the law, which break up the fallow ground, and then encouraged by the promises of the gospel, which are warning and flogging, as manure to the tree; both methods must be tried, the one prepares for the other, and all little enough.

(3.) Upon what foot he leaves the matter; "Let us try it and try what we can do with it one year more, and if it bear fruit, well;" (v. 5.) it is possible, nay there is hope, that yet it may be fruitful; in that hope the Owner will have patience with it, and the Dresser will take pains with it, and if it should have the desired success, both will be pleased that it was not cut down. The word well is not in the original, but the expression is abrupt; "If it bear fruit; supply it how you please, so as to express how wonderfully well-pleased both the Owner and Dresser will be; if it bear fruit, there will be reason to hope the tree will not be cut down; but it cannot be better expressed than as we do well. Note, Unfruitful professors of religion, if, after long unfruitfulness, they will repent, and amend, and bring forth fruit, shall find all is well. God will be pleased, for he will be praised; ministers' hands will be strengthened, and such penitents will be their joy now, and their crown shortly. Nay, there will be joy in heaven for it; the ground will be no longer cumbered, but bettered, the vineyard beautified, and the good trees in it made better. As for the tree itself, it is well for it; it shall not only not be cut down, but it shall receive blessing from God; (Heb. 6. 7.) it shall be purged, and shall bring forth more fruit, for the Father is its Husbandman; (John 15. 2.) and it shall at last be transplanted from the vineyard on earth to the paradise above.

6. But he adds, "If then, after that, thou shalt cut it down. Observe here, [1.] That though God bear long, he will bear always, with unfruitful professors; his patience will have an end, and, if it be abused, will give way to that wrath which will have no end. Barren trees will certainly be cut down at last, and cast into the fire. [2.] The longer God has waited, and the more cost he has been at upon them, the greater will their destruction be; to be cut down after that, after all these expectations from them, is the greater contention with them, this concern for it, will be sad indeed, and will aggravate the condemnation. [3.] Cutting down, though it is work that shall be done, is work that God doth not take pleasure in; for observe here, the Owner said to the Dresser, "Do thou cut it down, for it cumbereth the ground." "Nay," said the Dresser, "if it must be done at last, thou shalt cut it down, let not my hand be upon it." [4.] These are the words of the Dresser, that new interceding for barren trees, and take pains with them, if they persist in their unfruitfulness, will be even content to see them cut down, and will not have one word more to say for them. Their best friends will acquiesce in, may they will approve and applaud the righteous judgment of God, in the day of the manifestation of it, Rev. 15. 3, 4.

10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath: And he said, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. 15. The Lord
then answered him, and said, *Thou hypocrite!* doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Here is,

1. The miraculous cure of a woman that had been long under a spirit of infirmity. Our Lord Jesus spent his sabbaths in the synagogues, v. 10. We should make conscience of doing so, as we have opportunity, and not think we can spend the sabbath as we see fit. He had brought a good book, for religious assemblies are a divine institution, which we must bear our testimony to, though but of two or three. And when he was in the synagogues on the sabbath-day, he was teaching there—i.e., speaking; it denotes a continued act; he still taught the people knowledge. He was in his element when he was teaching.

Now to confirm the doctrine he preached, and recommend it as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance, he wrought a miracle, a miracle of mercy.

1. The object of charity that presented itself, was, a woman in the synagogue, that had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, v. 11. She had an infirmity, which an evil spirit, by divine permission, had brought upon her; which was such, that she was bowed together by strong convulsions, and could in no wise lift up herself; and, having been so long thus, the disease was incurable, she could not stand erect, which is reckoned man's honour above the beasts. Observe, Though she was under this infirmity, by which she was much deformed, and made to look mean, and not only so, but, as is supposed, motion was very painful to her, yet she went to the synagogues on the sabbath-days. Not even bodily infirmities, unless they be very grievous, should keep us from public worship on sabbath-days; for God can help us, beyond our expectation.

The offer of this cure to one that sought it not, bespeaks the preventing mercy and grace of Christ; (v. 11.) When Jesus saw her, he called her to him. It does not appear that she made any application to him, or had any expectation from him; but before she called he answered. She came to him, to be taught, and to get good to her soul, and then Christ gave this relief to her bodily infirmity. Note, Those whose first and chief care is for their souls, do best befriend the true interests of their bodies likewise, for other things shall be added to them. Christ in his gospel calls and invites them to come to him for healing, that labour under spiritual infirmities, and if he calls us, he will undoubtedly help us when we come to him.

3. The cure effectually and immediately wrought, bespeaks his almighty power. He laid his hands on her, and said, Woman, thou art loosened from thine infirmity; though thou hast been long labouring under it, thou art at length released from it. Let not those despair, whose disease is ineradicable, who have been long in affliction, God can at length relieve them; therefore, though he tarry, wait for him. Though it was a spirit of infirmity, an evil spirit, that she was under the power of, Christ has a power superior to that of Satan, is stronger than he. Though she could in no wise lift up herself, Christ could lift her up, and enable her to lift up herself. She that had been crooked, was immediately made straight, and the scripture was fulfilled, (Ps. 146. 8.) The Lord releaseth them that are bowed down.

This cure represents the work of Christ's grace upon the souls of people. (1.) In the conversion of sinners. Unsanctified hearts are under this spirit of infirmity, they are distorted, the faculties of the soul are quite out of place and order; they are bowed down toward things below. O curse in terram animae!—Base souls that bend toward the earth! They can in no wise lift up themselves to heavenward. Those men, like mountebanks in the sacred state, is the quite contrary way. Such crooked souls seek not to Christ, but he calls them to him, lays the hand of his power and grace upon them, speaks a healing word to them, by which he looses them from their infirmity; makes the soul straight, reduces it to order, raises it above worldly regards, and directs its affections and aims heavenly. Though man cannot make that straight, which God has made crooked, (Eccl. 7. 13.) yet the grace of God can make that straight, which the sin of man has made crooked. (2.) In the consolation of good people. Many of the children of God are long under a spirit of infirmity, a spirit of bondage; through prevailing grief and fear, their souls are cast down and disquieted within them, they are troubled, they are bowed down. Lord, bless and comfort thy people, all day long, Ps. 38. 6. But Christ, by his spirit of adoption, losess them from this infirmity in due time, and raises them up.

4. The present effect of this cure upon the soul of the patient as well as upon her body; she glorified God, gave him the praise of her cure, to whom all praise is due. When crooked souls are made straight, then shall it be shown by their clear eyes, that their days are addition. (2.) The offence that was taken at this by the ruler of the synagogue, as if our Lord Jesus had committed some heinous crime, in healing this poor woman. He had indignation at it, because it was on the sabbath-day, v. 14. One would think that the miracle should have convinced him, and that the circumstance of its being done on the sabbath day could not have served to overthrow him. But why was the sabbath-day so clear, so strong, which a spirit of bigotry and enmity to Christ and his gospel will not serve to shut men's eyes against? Never was such honour done to the synagogue he was ruler of as Christ had now done it, and yet he had indignation at it. He had not indeed the impudence to quarrel with Christ, but he said to the people, reflecting upon Christ in what he said, There are days in which men ought to work, in them therefore come, and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. See here how light he made of the miracles Christ wrought, as if they were things of course, and no more than what quacks and mountebanks did every day: You may come and be healed, any day of the week. Christ's cures were become, in his eyes, cheap and common things. See also how he stretches the sabbath to suit his reasons, or any just construction that could be put upon it, in making either healing or being healed with a touch of the hand, or a word's speaking, to be that work which is forbidden on the sabbath-day. This was evidently the work of God; and when God tied us out from working that day, did he tie himself out? The same word in Hebrew signifies both gladly and mercifully, (Gen. 17. 1.) and this is the natural construction of the word in the passage, and is in a manner works of piety, (1 Tim. 5. 4.) and therefore very proper on sabbath-days.

III. Christ's justification of himself in what he had done; (v. 15.) The Lord then answered him, as he had answered others, who in like manner ca
villed at him, _Thou hypocrite._ Christ, who knows men's hearts, may call these _hypocrites_, when it would be presumption for us to call so, who must judge charitably, and can judge but according to the outward appearance. Christ knew that he had a real enmity to him and to his gospel, that he did but cloak that with a pretended zeal for the Sabbath; and that when he bid the people come on the _six days_, and be healed, he really would not have them be healed any day. Christ could have shown this, but he vouchsafes to reason the case with him: and,

1. He _appells_ to the common practice among the Jews, which was never dissolved, that of working on the _sabbath-day_; those cattle would eat in the stable, and be constantly loused from the stall on the _sabbath-day_, and led away to watering. It would be a barbarous thing not to do it; for a _merciful man regards the life of his beast_, his own beast that serves him. Leaving the _cattle_ rest on the _sabbath-day_, as the law directed, would be worse than working them, if they must be made to fast on that day, as the Ninevites' cattle on their _fast-day_, though they were not permitted to feed or drink water, _Jon._ 3. 7.

2. He applies this to the present case; (v. 16.) " _Must an ox or an ass have compassion showed them on the sabbath-day_, and have so much time and pains bestowed upon them _every sabbath_, to be loused from the stall, led away perhaps a great way to the water, and then back again; and shall not you, with only a touch of the hand or word's speaking, be loused from a much greater grievance than that which the cattle undergo, when they are kept a day without water? For consider, (1.) _She is a daughter of Abraham_, whom you all pride yourselves in a relation to; _she is your sister_, and shall she be denied a favour that you grant to an ox or an ass, dispensing a little with the supposed strictness of the _sabbath-day_? _She is a daughter of Abraham_ and therefore entitled to the _blessings_, to the _bread_ which belongs to the children." (2.) _She is one whom Satan has bound_, he has a hand in the affliction, and therefore it was not only an act of charity to the poor woman, but of piety to God, to break the power of the devil, and _bufle her_. (3.) _She has been in this deplorable condition_, to _these eighteen years_, and therefore now that there is an opportunity of delivering her, it may and _should greatly increase_; you would come, should come upon the wing, should _fly like a cloud_, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction than in the branches of N eben-adnezzar's tree, _Dan._ 4. 21.

IV. The different effect that this had upon those that heard him. He had sufficiently made it out, not only that it was lawful, but that it was highly fit and proper, to heal this poor woman on the _sabbath-day_, and thus publicly in the synagogue, that they might all be witnesses of the miracle. And now observe,

1. What a confusion this was to the malice of his persecutors; _When he had said these things_, all his _adversaries were ashamed_, (v. 17.) they were put to silence, and were vexed that they were so, that they had not a word to say for themselves; it was not a shame that worked repentance, but indignation rather. _Note_, Sooner or later, all the adversaries of the gospel and his doctrine and miracles, will be made ashamed.

2. What a confirmation this was to the faith of his friends; _All the people_, who had a better sense of things, and judged more impartially than their rulers, rejoiced for _all the glorious things_ that _were done by him_. The shame of his foes was the joy of his followers; the increase of his interest was what the ene fretted at, and the other triumphed in. The things Christ did, were _glorious things_. "They were all so, and, though now clouded, perhaps will appear so, and we ought to rejoice in them. Every thing that is the honour of Christ, is the comfort of christians.

18. Then said he, _Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I liken it?_ 19. It is like a grain of _mustard-seed_, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and _waxed a great tree_; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. 20. And again he said, _Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?_ 21. It is like _leaven_, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. 22. And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The gospel's progress foretold in two parables, which we had before, _Mat._ 13. 31, 33. _The kingdom of the Messiah_ is the _kingdom of God_, for it advances his glory; this kingdom was yet a mystery, and people were generally in the dark, and under mistakes, about it. Now, when we would describe a thing to these that are strangers to it, we choose to do it by similitudes; _Such a person you know not, but I will tell you whom he is like;_ (v. 16.) so Christ undertakes here to show what the _kingdom of God is like_. 17. " _Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?_ v. 20. It will be quite another thing from what you expect, and will operate, and gain its point, in quite another manner._

(1.) _You expect it will appear great_, and will arrive at its perfection all of a sudden; but you are mistaken, it _is like a grain of mustard-seed_, a little thing, takes up but little room, makes but a little figure, and promises less, but yet with constant and sure progress, it _will wax a great tree_.

20. Many perhaps were prejudiced against the gospel, and loath to come in to _the obedience_ of it, because its beginning was so small; they were ready to say of Christ, _Can this man save us?_ And of his gospel, _Is this likely ever to come to any thing?_ Now Christ would remove this prejudice, by as- sureing them that though _its beginning was small_, its _latter end should greatly increase_; that many would come, should come upon the wing, should _fly like a cloud_, to lodge in the branches of it with more safety and satisfaction than in the branches of Nebuchadnezzar's tree, _Dan._ 4. 21.

(2.) _You expect it will make its way by external means_, by subduing nations and vanishing armies; though it should work _like leaven_, silently and insensibly, and without any force or violence, v. 22. A little _leaven_ leaveneth the whole lump. The doctrine of Christ will strangely _diffuse its relish_ into the world of mankind: in this it triumphs, that _the savour of the knowledge of it is unaccountably made manifest in every place, beyond what one could have expected_, 2 _Cor._ 4. 14. But you must _give it time_, wait for the issue of the preaching of the gospel to the world, and you will find it does wonders, and alter the prospect of the souls of men. By degrees the whole will be leavened, even as many as are, like the _meal_ to the _leaven_, prepared to receive the savour of it._
make in his way, he gave them a sermon or two, not only in the cities, but in the country-villages. Wherever Providence brings us, we should endeavor to do all the good we can.

23. Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that are saved? And he said unto them, 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: 26. Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. 27. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. 29. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

We have here,

1. A question put to our Lord Jesus; who it was that put it, we are not told, whether a friend or a foe; for he gave both a great liberty of questioning him, and returned answers to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The question was, Are there few that are saved? v. 23. or ὅσοι οὐκ ἐπισκέψατε — "If the saved be few? Master, I have heard thou shouldst say so; is it true?"

1. Perhaps it was a cautious question; he put it to him, tempting him, with a design to ensnare him, and lessen his reputation. If he should say that many would be saved, they would reproach him as too liberal, and making salvation cheap; if few, they would reproach him as precise and strait-laced. The Jewish doctors said, That all Israel should have a place in the world to come; and would he dare to contradict that! Those that have sucked in a corrupt notion, are ready to make it the standard by which to measure all men's judgments; and in nothing do men more betray their ignorance, presumption, and partiality, than in judging of the salvation of others.

2. Perhaps it was a curious question, a nice speculation, which he had lately been disputing upon with his companions, and they all agreed to refer it to Christ. Note, Many are more inquisitive respecting who shall be saved, and who not, than respecting what they shall do to be saved. It is commonly asked, "May such and such be saved?" But it is well that we may be saved without knowing that.

3. Perhaps it was an amusing question; he had taken notice how strict the law of Christ was, and how bad the world was, and comparing these together, cries out, "How few are there that will be saved!" Note, We have reason to wonder, that of the many to whom the word of salvation is sent, there are so few to whom it is indeed a saving word.

4. Perhaps it was an inquiring question; If there be few that be saved, what then? What influence should this have upon me? Note, It concerns us all seriously to improve the great truth of the fewness of those that are saved.

II. Christ's answer to this question, which directs us what use to make of this doctrine. Our Savior did not give a direct answer to his inquiry, for it was not to guide men's consciences, but to gratify their curiosity. Ask not, "How many shall be saved?" But, be they more or fewer, "Shall I be one of them?" v. 24. What shall become of such and such, and what shall this man do?" But, "What shall I do, and what shall be become of me?" Now in Christ's answer observe,

1. A quickening exhortation and direction; Strive to enter in at the strait gate. This is directed not to him only that asked the question, but to all, to us, it is in the plural number; Strive ye. Note. (1.) All that will be saved, must enter in at the strait gate, must undergo a change of the whole man, such as can never be less than being born again, and must submit to a strict discipline. (2.) Those that would enter in at the strait gate, must strive to enter, it is a hard matter to get to heaven, and a point that will not be gained without a great deal of care and pains, of difficulty and diligence. We must strive with God in prayer, wrestle as Jacob, strive against sin and Satan; we must strive in every duty of religion.

2. Divers awakening considerations, to enforce this exhortation. O that we may be all awakened and quickened by them! They are such considerations as will serve to answer the question, Are there few that shall be saved?

(1.) Think how many take some pains for salvation, and yet perish because they do not take enough; and you will say that there are few that will be saved, and that it highly concerns us to strive; Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able; they seek, but they do not strive. Note, The reason why many come short of grace and glory, is, because they rest in a lazy seeking of that which will not be attained without a laborious striving. They have a good opinion of themselves, and a good opinion of holiness, and take some good steps; but their convictions are weak, they do not consider what they know and believe, and, consequently, their desires are cold, and their endeavours feeble, and there is no strength or steadiness in their resolutions; and thus they come short, and lose the prize, because they do not press forward. Christ averts this upon their own words, I say unto you; and we may take it upon his word, for he knows both the counsels of God and the hearts of the children of men.

(2.) Think of the distinguishing day that is coming, and the decisions of that day; and you will say there are few that shall be saved, and that we are concerned to strive; The Master of the house will rise up, and shut to the door, v. 25. Christ is the Master of the house, that will take cognizance of all that frequent the house, and entertainers to it, will examine comers and goers, and those that pass and repass. Now he seems as if he left things at large; but the day is coming when he will rise up, and shut to the door. What door? [1.] A door of distinction. Now, within the temple of the church there are carnal professors who worship in the outer-court, and spiritual professors who worship within the wall; between these the door is now open, and they meet promiscuously in the same external performances. But when the Master of the house is risen up, the door will be shut between them, that those who an
4. How terrible their punishment will be: (v. 28.) There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, the utmost degree of grief and indignation; and that which is the cause of it, and contributes to it, is a sight of the happiness of those that are saved; Ye shall see the parricides and prophets in the kingdom of God, and shall be cast out, out of the house of God, and shall be cast into outer darkness; there is no least degree of happiness in God's sight, but the punishment of sin, and did the devil's drudgery in Christ's livery.

[3.] That the Old-Testament saints are in the kingdom of God: these had benefit by the Messiah, who died before his coming; for they saw his day at a distance, and it reflected comfort upon them. [2.] That New-Testament sinners will be thrust out of the kingdom of God. It intimates that they will be thrusting in, and will presume upon admission, but in vain; they shall be thrust out with shame, as having no part or lot in the matter. [3.] That the sight of the same sinners will be a great aggravation of sinners' misery; they shall thus far see the kingdom of God, that they shall see the prophets in it, whom they hated and despised, and themselves, who thought themselves sure of it, thrust out. This is that at which they will gnash their teeth, Ps. 112. 10.

[4.] Think who are they that shall be saved, notwithstanding (v. 29, 36.) They shall come from the east and from the west; and the last shall be first. [5.] By what Christ had said, it appeared that but few should be saved, of those whom we think most likely, and who bid fairest for it. Yet do not say then that the gospel is preached in vain, for though Israel be not gathered, Christ will be glorious. There shall come many from all parts of the Gentile world, that shall be admitted into the kingdom of grace in this world, and of glory in the other. Plainly, when we come to heaven, we shall meet a great many there, whom we little thought to have met there, and miss a great many there, whom we verily expected to have found there.

[2.] Those who sit down in the kingdom of God, are such as had taken pains to get thereto; for they came from far—from the east, and from the west; from the north, and from the south; they had passed through different climates, had broken through many difficulties and discouragements; which shows that he who would be in the kingdom of God, must strive, as the queen of Sheba, who came from the utmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They who travel now in the service of God and religion, shall shortly sit down to rest in the kingdom of God.

[3.] Many who stood fair for heaven, came short, and others who seemed cast behind, and thrown quite out of the way, will be found at last to have been thrust in, and forced upon them to strive to enter. Let us be provoked, as Paul desired the Jews might be, to a holy emulation by the zeal and forwardness of the Gentiles, Rom. 11. 14. Shall I be outstripped by my juniors? Shall I, who started first, and stood nearest, miss of heaven, when others, less likely, enter into it? If it be by striving, why should not I strive?
vertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. 34. Of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! 35. Behold your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Here is,

I. A suggestion to Christ of his danger from Herod, now that he was in Galilee, within Herod's jurisdiction; (v. 31.) Certain of the Pharisees (for there were those of that sect dispersed all the nation over) came to Christ, pretending friendship and a concern for his safety, and said, Get thee out of this country, and depart hence, for otherwise Herod will kill thee, as he did John. Some think that these Pharisees had no ground at all for this, that Herod had not given out any words to this purport, but that they framed this lie, to drive him out of Galilee, where he was not so much disliked as in Judæa, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was curaged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance, which was a great stroke against him, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life. But Christ's answer being directed to Herod himself, it should seem that the Pharisees had ground for what they said, and that Herod was curaged against Christ, and designed him a mischief, for the honourable testimony he had borne to John Baptist, and to the doctrine of repentance, which was a great stroke against him, and to drive him into Judea, where they knew there were those that really sought his life.

II. His defiance of Herod's rage and the Pharisees too; he fears neither the one nor the other; Go ye and tell that fox so, v. 32. In calling him a fox, he gives him his true character; for he was subtle as a fox, or as the serpent is, and crafty, and treacherous, and busies, and preying (as they say of a fox) furthest from his own den. And though it be a black and ugly character, yet it did not ill become Christ to give it him, nor was it in him a violation of that law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. For Christ was a Prophet, and prophets always had a liberty of speech in reproving princes and great men. Nay, Christ was more than a prophet, he was a King, he was King of kings, and the greatest of men, and was accountable to him, and therefore it became him to call this proud king by his own name; but it is not to be drawn into an example by us. "Go, and tell that fox, yea, and this fox too," (for so it is in the original,) ταυτα ταυτης, "that Pharisee whoever he be is that whipsers this in my ear, let him know that I do not hate him, nor regard him in any. For I, I know that I must die, and must die shortly; I expect it and count upon it, the third day," that is, "very shortly; my hour is at hand." Note, it will help us very much above the fear of death, and of them that have the power of death, to make death familiar to us, to expect it, think of it, and converse with it, and see it at the door. If Herod should say to me, I will not give you this day, then I say to him, I will not live this day. If I know that death will be not only no prejudice to me, but that it will be my preferment; and therefore tell him, I do not fear him; when I die, I shall be perfected, I shall then have finished the hardest part of my undertaking, I shall have completed my business; τελειωμα—εγωςασει—shall be consecrated. When Christ died, he is said to have sanctified himself; he consecrated himself to his priestly office with his own blood.

3. I know that neither he nor any one else can kill me, till I have done my work. Go, and tell him that I value not his impotent rage. I will cast out devils, and do cures, to-day, and to-morrow, that he may know me, and that there be some of him to come, in spite of him and all his threats. I must walk, I must go on in my intended journey, and it is not in his power to hinder me. I must go about, as I now do, preaching and healing, to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." Note, it is good for us to lock upon the time we have before us as but a little, two or three days perhaps may be the most, then, this might be quickened to do the work of the day in its day. And it is a comfort to us, in reference to the power and malice of our enemies, that they can have no power to take us off as long as God has any work for us to do. The witnesses were not slain till they had finished their testimony.

4. I know that Herod can do me no harm, not only because my time is not yet come, but because the place appointed for my death is Jerusalem, which is not within his jurisdiction. It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem," that is, "any where but at Jerusalem." If a true prophet was put to death, he was prosecuted as a false prophet. Now none undertook to try prophets, and to judge concerning them, but the great Sanhedrim, which always sat at Jerusalem. It was a case which the inferior courts did not take cognizance of, and therefore if a prophet be put to death, it must be at Jerusalem.

III. His lamentation for Jerusalem, and his denunciation of wrath against that city, v. 34, 35. This we had, Matth. 23. 37—39. Perhaps this was not said now in Galilee, but the evangelist, not designing to bring it in its proper place, inserted it here, upon occasion of Christ's mentioning the being put to death at Jerusalem.

Note, 1. The wickedness of persons and places that more eminently than others profess religion and relation to God, is in a particular manner provoking and grieving to the Lord Jesus. How pathetically does he speak of the sin and ruin of that holy city! O Jerusalem! Jerusalem!

2. Those that enjoy great plenty of the means of grace, if they are not profited by them, are often prejudiced against them. They that would not hearken to the prophets, nor welcome those whom God had sent to them, killed them, and stoned them. If men's corruptions are not conquered, they are provoked.

3. Jesus Christ hath showed himself willing, freely willing, to receive and entertain poor souls that came to him, and put themselves under his protection; How often would I have gathered them together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings; with such care and tenderness!

4. The reason why sinners are not protected and provided for by the Lord Jesus, as the chickens are by the hen, is, because they will not; I would, I often would, and ye would not. Christ's willingness aggravates sinners' unwillingness, and leaves their blood upon their own heads.

5. The house that Christ leaves, is left desolate. The temple, though richly adorned, though hugely frequented, is yet desolate, if Christ have deserted it; he leaves it to them, they had made an idol of it, and let them take it to themselves, and make the best of it, Christ will trouble it no more.

6. Christ justly withdraws from those that drive him from them. They would not be gathered by him, and therefore, saith he, You shall not see me, you shall not hear me, any more;" as Moses said to
Pharaoh, when he forbade his presence, Exod. 10. 28, 29.

7. The judgment of the great day will effectually convince unbelievers that would not now be convinced: "Then thou will say, Blessed be he that kept himself from doing that, is it, you will be glad to be among those that say so, and will not see me to be the Messiah till then when it is too late."

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, we have, I. The cure which our Lord Jesus wrought upon a man that had the dropsy, on the sabbath-day, and his justification, and that of the Pharisees who were ill at his doing it on that day, v. 1-6. II. A lesson of humility given to those who were ambitious of the highest rooms, v. 7-11. III. A lesson of charity to these who feasted the rich man, which proved so poor, v. 12-18. IV. The success of the gospel-offer foretold in the parable of the guests invited to a feast, signifying the rejection of the Jews, and all others that set their hearts upon this world, and the entreaty of the Gentiles, and all others that come empty of self, to be filled with Christ, v. 19-24. V. The great law of discipleship laid down, with a caution to all that will be Christ's disciples, to undertake it deliberately, and with consideration, and particularly to ministers to retain their favour, v. 25-35.

1. AND it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath-day, that they watched him. 2. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. 3. And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day? 4. And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go: 5. And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath-day? 6. And they could not answer him again to these things.

In this passage of story we find,

I. That the Son of man came, eating and drinking, conversing familiarly with all sorts of people; not declining the society of publicans, or those whom they called ill will, nor of Pharisees, though they thought him ill will, but accepting the friendly invitations both of the one and the other; that, if possible, he might do good to both. Here he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, a ruler, it may be, and a magistrate in his country, to eat bread on the sabbath-day, v. 1. See how favourable God is to us, that he allows us time, even on his own day, for bodily refreshments; and how careful we should be not to abuse that liberty, or turn it into licentiousness. Christ went only to eat bread, to take such refreshment as was necessary on the sabbath-day. Our sabbath-meals must, with a particular care, be guarded against all manner of excess. On sabbath-days we must do, as Moses and Jethro did, eat bread before God, (Exod. 18. 12,) and, as is said of the primitive christians, on the Lord's day, must eat and drink as those that must pray again before we go to rest, that we may not be unfit for that.

II. That he went about, doing good. Wherever he came, he sought opportunities to do good, and not only improved those that fell in his way; here was a certain man before him, which had the dropsy, v. 2. We do not find that he offered himself, or that his friends offered him to be Christ's patient, but Christ presented himself with those blessings of his goodness, and before he called he answered him. Note, It is a happy thing to be where Christ is, to be present before him, though we be not presented to him. This man had the dropsy, it is probable, in a high degree, and that he appeared much swelling with it; probably, he was some relation of the Pharisees that now lodged in his house, which is more likely than that he should be an invited guest at the table of the Pharisees; Jethro invited him, it should seem, did it with a design to pick some quarrel with him; if it were so, Christ knew it, and yet went, for he knew himself a match for the most subtle of them, and how to order his steps with an eye to their observers. Those that are watched, but need not to be feared. It was, as Dr. Hammond observes, contrary to all laws of hospitality, to seek advantage against one that you in vited to be your guest, for such a one you have taken under your protection. These lawyers and Pharisees, like the fowler that lies in wait to muzzle the birds, held their peace, and acted very silently. When Christ asked them whether they thought it lawful to heal on the sabbath-day, (and herein he is said to answer them, for it was an answer to their thoughts, and thoughts are words to Jesus Christ,) they would say neither Yea nor Nay, for their design was to inform against him, not to be informed by him. They would not say, It was lawful to heal, for then they would preclude themselves from imputing it to him as a crime; and yet the thing was so plain and self-evident, that they could not for some say it was not lawful. Note, Good men have often been put to the same as, and have contended with, their persecutors, if they would but give their consciences leave to speak out, could not but own to be lawful and good. Many a good work Christ did, for which they cast stones at him and his name.

IV. That Christ would not be hindered from doing good by the opposition and contradiction of sinners; (v. 4.) He took him, and healed him, and let him go. Yea, though he embraced him in another room, and healed him there, because he would neither profess himself, such was his humility, nor provoke his adversaries, such was his wisdom, his meekness of wisdom. Note, Though we must not be driven off from our duty by the malice of our enemies, yet we should order the circumstances of it so as to make it the least offensive. Or, He took him, that is, he laid hands on him, to cure him; (v. 5.) He took him, and laid his hands on him, as he was, (for a dropsical person generally is,) and reduced him to shape. The cure of a dropsy, as much as of any disease, one would think, should be gradual; yet Christ cured even that disease, perfectly cured it in a moment. He then let him go, lest the Pharisees should fall upon him for being healed, though he was purely passive: for what absurdities would not such men as they lay it to their reason against him! Whose body? Whose sin? Whose polluting? Whose fallen into a pit, by accident, will he not pull him out on the sabbath-day, and that straightforward, not deferring it till the sabbath he over, lest it perish? Observe, It is not so much out of compassion to the poor creature, that they do it, but a concern for their own interest. It is their own ox, and their own ge, that is worth money, that they will dispense with the law of the sabbath for the saving of; though this was an evidence of their hypocrisy, and that it was not out of any real regard to the sabbath, that
they found fault with Christ for healing on the sabbath-day; (that was only the pretence;) but really they were angry at the miraculous good works which Christ wrought; the proof he thereby gave of his divine mission, and the interest he thereby gained among the people. Many were easily disposed with that; for their own interest, which they cannot dispense with for God's glory and the good of their brethren. This question silenced them; they could not answer him again to these things, v. 6. Christ will be justified when he speaks, and every mouth stopped before him.

7. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them,

8. When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. 10. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

11. For whosoever exaltest himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. 12. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.

13. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14. And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Our Lord Jesus here sets us an example of profitable, edifying discourse at our tables, when we are in company with our friends. We find that when he had none but his disciples, that were his own family, with him at his table, his discourse with them was good, and to the use of edifying: and not only so, but when he was in company with strangers, nay, with enemies that watched him, he took occasion to reprove what he saw amiss in them, and to instruct them; though the wicked were before him, he did not keep silence from good, (as David did, Ps. 39. 1, 2,) for, notwithstanding the provocation given him, he had not his heart but within him, nor was his spirit stirred. We must not only not allow any corrupt communication at our tables, such as that of the hypocritical mockers at feasts, but we must go beyond common harmless talk, and should take occasion from God's goodness to us at our tables, to speak well of him, and to spiritualize common things. The lips of the righteous should then feed many.

Many Lord Jesus was among persons of quality, yet, as one that had not respect of persons,

1. He took occasion to reprove the guests for striving to sit upthermost, and from hence gives us a lesson of humility.

2. He observed how these lawyers and Pharisees affected the highest seats, toward the head-end of the table, v. 7. He had charged that sort of men with this in general, ch. 11. 43. Here he brings home the charge to particular persons; for Christ will give every man his own. He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; every man, as he came in, got as near the best seat as he could. Note, Even the common actions of life, which indeed are but toys, are of use to us, and he marks what we do, not only in our religious assemblies, but at our tables, and makes remarks upon it.

2. He observed how those who were thus aspiring, often exposed themselves, and came off with a slit; whereas those who were modest, and seated themselves in the lowest seats, often gained respect. As those who, in choosing their seats, in the house of God, choose the highest, may perhaps be degraded, and forced to come down to give place to one more honourable, v. 8, 9. Note, It ought to check our high thoughts of ourselves, to think how many there are, that are more honourable than we, not only in respect of worldly dignities, but of personal merits and accomplishments. Instead of being proud that so many give place to us, it should be humbling to us, that there are so many that we must give place to. The master of the feast will marshal his guests, and will not see the more honourable kept out of the seat that is his due, and therefore will make bold to take him lower that usurped it; Give this man place; and this will be a disgrace to him that would be thought more deserving than really he was, before all the company, v. 9. Pride will have shame, and will at last have a fall. (2.) Those who, when they come in, content themselves with the lowest seats, are likely to be preferred; (v. 10.) "Go, and seat thyself in the lowest room, as taking it for granted that thy friend who invited thee, has guests to come, that are of better rank and quality than thou art; but perhaps it may not prove so, and then it will be seen how wise it was to come. Friend, go up higher. The upper seats of the feast will be so just to thee, as not to keep thee at the lower end of the table, because thou wast so modest as to seat thyself there." Note, The way to rise high, is, to begin low; and this recommends a man to those about him; "Thou shalt have honour and respect before those that sit with thee. They will see thee to be an honourable man, beyond what first they thought; and honours and praisings will shine, and clear forth shining out of obscurity. They will likewise see thee to be a humble man, which is the greatest honour of all. Our Saviour here refers to that advice of Solomon, (Prov. 25. 6, 7.) Stand not in the place of great men, for better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be put lower." And Dr. Lightfoot quotes a parable out of one of the rabbinins, somewhat like this, "Three men (said he) 'were bidden to a feast; one sat highest, For, said he, I am a prince; the other next, For, said he, I am a wise man; the other lowest, For, said he, I am a humble man. The king seated the humble man highest, and put the prince lowest." 3. He applies this generally, and would have us all learn not to mind high things, but to content ourselves with meaner things, as far as we can. This was the way of the Saviour, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men, for whosoever exaltest himself shall be abased; but humility and self-denial are really honourable, he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted, v. 11. We see it in other instances, that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit, and before honour is humility. So in Ps. 37. 11. The taking actions of life, as if we were the masters, so far this, because pride and ambition are disgraceful before men, for whosoever exaltest himself shall be abased; but humility and self-denial are really honourable, he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted, v. 11. We see it in other instances, that a man's pride will bring him low, but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit, and before honour is humility.
here teaches us, that the using of what we have, in works of charity, is better, and will turn in a better account, than using it in works of generosity and in magnificent house-keeping.

1. "Covet not to treat the rich; (v. 12.) invite not thy friends, and brethren, and neighbours that are rich." This does not prohibit the entertaining of such; there may be occasion for it, for the cultivation of friendship among relations and neighbours. But, (1.) Downing and from a pure motive of it; spend as little as thou canst that way, that thou mayst not desire thyself to lay out in a better way, in almsgiving. Thou wilt find it very expensive and troublesome; one feast for the rich will make a great many meals for the poor." Solomon saith, He that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want, Prov. 22. 16. "Give" (saith Hark, Epist.) "to thy friends, but let it be remembered in the resurrection to those that need thee not." (2.) "Be not proud of it." Many make feasts, only to make show, as Ahasuerus did; (Esth. 1. 3, 4.) and it is no reputation to them, they think, if they have not persons of quality to dine with them, and thus rob their families, to please their fancies. (3.) "Aim not at being paid again in your own coin." This is that which our Saviour blames in making such entertainments. "You commonly do it in hopes that you will be invited by them, and so a recompense will be made you; you will be gratified with such dainties and varieties as you treat your friends with, and this will feed your sensuality and luxury, and you will be no real gainer at last.

2. "Be forward to relieve the poor; (v. 13, 14.) When thou makest a feast, instead of furnishing thyself with what is rare and nice, get thy table spread with a competency of plain and wholesome meat, which will not be so costly, and invite the poor and meek, such as have nothing to live upon, nor are able to work for their living. These are objects of charity, they want necessities; furnish them, and they will recompense thee with their prayers; they will commend thy provisions, which the rich, it may be, will despise. They will go away, and thank God for thee, when the rich shall go away, and rejoice that they had not thou a lessor because they cannot recompense thee, thou art so much out of pocket; no, it is so much set out to the best interest, on the best security, for thou shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." There will be a resurrection of the just, a future state of the just. There is a state of happiness reserved for them in the other world; and we may be sure that the charitable will be remembered in the resurrection of the just, for alms are righteousness. Works of charity perhaps may not be rewarded in this world, for the things of this world are not the best things, and therefore God doth not pay the best men in those things; but they shall in no wise lose their reward; they shall be recompensed in the resurrection. It will be found that the longest voyages make the richest returns, and that the charitable will be no losers, but unspeakable gainers, by having their recompense adjourned till the resurrection.

15. And when one of them that sat at meat with him, heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16. Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; 17. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. 22. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. 23. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. 24. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were hidden shall taste of my supper. Here is another discourse of our Saviour's, in which he spiritualizes the feast he was invited to; which is another way of keeping up good discourse in the midst of common actions. This occasion of the discourse was given by one of the guests, who, when Christ was giving rules about feasting, said to him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, (v. 15.) which, some tell us, was a saying commonly used among the rabbins. But with what design does this man bring it in here? 1. Perhaps this man, observing that Christ reproved first the guests, and then the master of the house, fearing he should put the common out of humour, started this, to divert the discourse to something else. Or, 2. Admiring the good rules of humility and charity which Christ had now given, but desiring to see them lived up to in the present degenerate state of things, he longs for the kingdom of God, when these and other good laws shall obtain, and pronounces them blessed, who shall have a place in that kingdom. Or, 3. Christ having mentioned the resurrection of the just, a recompense for charity, which is a present blessing. He confirms what he said, "Yea, Lord, they that shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, shall eat bread in the kingdom, and that is a greater recompense than being reinvited to the table of the greatest man on earth." Or, 4. Observing Christ to be silent, after he had given the foregoing lessons, he was willing to draw him in again to further discourse, so wonderfully well-pleased was he with the subject. He is something more likely to engage him, than to mention the kingdom of God. Note, Even these that are not of ability to carry on good discourse themselves, ought to put in a word now and then, to countenance it, and help it forward. Now that which this man said, was plain and acknowledged truth, and it was quoted very appropriately now that they were sitting at meat; for we should talk of a recompense from a common table, and speak of these heavenly and spiritual things which are incorporated to them; for that is one end of borrowing similitudes from them. And it will be good for us, when we are receiving the gifts of God's Providence, to pass through them to the consideration of the gifts of his grace, these better things. This thought will be very seasonable when we are partaking of bodily refreshments: Blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom.
of God. (1.) In the kingdom of grace, in the kingdom of the Messiah, which was expected now shortly to be set up. Christ promised his disciples that they should eat and drink with him in his kingdom. They that partake of the Lord's supper, eat bread in the kingdom of God. (2.) In the kingdom of heaven. The privileges of heaven is an everlasting feast; blessed are they that shall sit down at that table, whence they shall rise no more. II. The parable which our Lord Jesus put forth upon this occasion, v. 16. &c. Christ joins with the good man in what he said; "It is very true, Blessed are they that shall partake of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom; but yet, though you shall enjoy that privilege? You Jews, who think to have the monopoly of it, will generally reject it, and the Gentiles will be the greatest sharers in it." This he shows by a parable; for, if he had spoken it plainly, the Pharisees would not have borne it.

Now in this parable we may observe,

1. The free grace and mercy of God, shining in the gospel of Christ; it appears, (1.) In the rich provision he has made for poor souls, for their nourishment, refreshment, and entertainment; (v. 16.) A certain rich man made a great supper. There is in Christ and the grace of the gospel, which will be food and a feast for the soul of man that knows its own capacities, for the soul that is a stranger that knows its own necessities and miseries. It is called a feast, because in those countries supper-time was the chief feasting-time, when the business of the day was over. The manifestation of gospel-grace to the world was the evening of the world's day; and the fruition of the fulness of that grace in heaven is reserved for the evening of our day. (2.) In the gracious invitation given us to come and partake of this provision. Here is, [1.] A general invitation given he made many. Christ invited the whole nation and people of the Jews to partake of the benefits of his gospel. There is provision enough for as many as come; it was prophesied of as a feast for all people, Isa. 25. 6. Christ in the gospel, as he keeps a good house, so he keeps an open house. (2.) A particular memorandum given, when the supper-time was at hand; the servant was sent round to put them in mind of it; Come, for all things are ready. The supper-time was at hand, when Christ and the gospel-church planted, those who before were invited, were more closely pressed to come in presently; Now all things are ready, the full discovery of the gospel ministry is now made, all the ordinances of the gospel are now instituted, the society of Christians is now incorporated, and, which crowns all, the Holy Ghost is now given. This is the call now given us: ‘All things are now ready, now is the accepted time, it is now, and has not been long, it is now, and will not be long; it is a season of grace that will be soon over; and therefore come now; do not delay; accept the invitation; believe yourselves welcome; eat, 0 friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, 0 beloved.'

2. The cold entertainment which the grace of the gospel meets with. The invited guests declined coming, they did not say flat and plain that they would not come, but they all with one consent began to make excuse, v. 18. One would have expected that they should all with one consent have come to a good supper, when they were so kindly invited to it; who would have refused such an invitation? Yet, on the contrary, they all found out some pretence or other to shift off their attendance. This bespeaks the general neglect of the Jewish nation to close with Christ, and accept of the offers of his grace, and the contempt they put upon the invitation. It speaks also the backwardness there is in most people to close with the gospel-call. They cannot for shame avow their refusal, but they desire to be excused; they all exeunt, some supply, we go, all straightforward, they could give an answer extemore; and needed not to study for it; were not to seek for an excuse. Others supply, they were unamnous in it; so one was the way.

(1.) Here were two that were purchasers, who were in such haste to go and see their purchases, that they could not find time to go to this supper: one had purchased land, he had bought a piece of ground, which was represented to him to be a good bargain, and he must needs go and see whether it was so or no; and therefore I pray thee have me excused. His heart was so much upon the enlarging of his lands, that he was not fit to be invited to a feast that was kind to himself. Note, Those that have their hearts full of the world, and fond of laying house to house, and field to field, have their ears deaf to the gospel-invitation. But what a frivolous excuse was this! He might have deferred going to see his piece of ground till the next day, and have found it in the same place and plight it was now in, if he had so pleased. Another had purchased stock for his land; 'I have bought five yoke of oxen for the plough, and I must just now go prove them, must go and try whether they be fit for my purpose; and therefore excuse me for this time." The former intimates that inordinate complacency in the world, this, the inordinate care and concern about the world, which keep people from Christ and his grace; both intimate a preference given to the body above the soul, and to the things of time above those of eternity. Note, It is very criminal, when we are called to any duty, to make excuses for our neglect of it: it is a sign that there are convictions that it is duty, but no inclination to it. These things here, that were the matter of the excuses, were, [1.] Little things, and of small concern. It had better become them to improve what they are told saide, 'I am invited to eat bread in the feast of God, and therefore must be excused from going to see the ground or the oxen." [2.] Lawful things. Note, Things lawful in themselves, when the heart is too much set upon them, prove fatal hindrance; in religion—Licitis perimus omnes. It is a hard matter so to manage our worldly affairs, that they may not divert us from spiritual pursuits; and this ought to our great care.

(2.) He brought in one that was newly married, and could not leave his wife to go out to supper, no not for once; (v. 20.) I have married a wife, and therefore, in short, I cannot come. He pretends that he cannot, when the truth is, he will not. Thus many pretend inability for the duties of religion, when really they have an aversion to them. He has married a wife; it is true, he that was married, was excused by the law from going to war for the first year, (Dent. 24. 5.) but would that excuse him from going up to the feasts of the Lord, which all the males were yearly to attend? Much less will it excuse from the gospel feast, which the other were but types of. Note, Our affections to our relations often proves a hindrance to us in our duty to God. Adam's excuse was, The woman that thou gavest me, came, and showed his lord these things; told him with surprise, that he was likely to sup alone, for the guests that were invited, though they had timely notice a good while before, that they might order their affairs accordingly, yet were now engaged to some other business. He made the matter neither better nor
worse, but related it just as it was. Note, Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry. They must do it now at the throne of grace; if they see the travail of their soul, they must go to God with their thanks; if they labour in vain, they must go to God with their complaints. They will do it hereafter at the judgment-seat of Christ; they shall be there accused by their enemies, and defended by their friends, and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited; and for those who accepted the call, Behold, I and the children thou hast given me. The apostle urges this as a reason why people should give ear to the word of God sent them by his ministers; for they watch for your souls, as those that must give account, Heb. 13. 17.

He was angry, v. 21. Note, The ingratitude of those that slight gospel offers, and the contempt they put upon the God of heaven thereby, are a very great provocation to him, and justly so. Absurd mercy turns into the greatest wrath. The doom he passed upon them, was, None of the men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper. This was like the doom passed upon ungrateful Israel, when they despised the plagues sent to the land of Egypt, they should not enter into his rest. Note, Grace despised is grace forfeited, like Esau’s birthright. They that will not have Christ when they may, shall not have him when they would. Even those that were bidden, if they slight the invitation, shall be forbidden; when the door is shut, the foolish virgins will be de nied entrance.

35. The care that was taken to furnish the table with guests, as well as meat. “Go, (saith he to the servants,) go first into the streets and lanes of the city, and invite, not the merchants that are going from the custom-house, or the tradesmen that are shutting up their shops, they will desire to be excused; one is going to his compting-house, to cast up his books, another to the tavern, to drink a bottle with his friend;) but, that you may invite those that will be glad to come, bring in better the poor, and the maimed, the halt and the blind; pick up the common beggars.” The servants object not, that it will be a disarrangement to the master and his house, to have such guests at his table: for they knew his mind, and they soon gather an abundance of such guests; Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded. Many of the Jews are brought in, not of the Scribes and Pharisees, such as Christ was now at dinner with, who were considered as guests against the guests at the Messiah’s table, but publicans and sinners, these are the poor and the maimed. But yet there is room for more guests, and provision enough for them all. “Go, then, secondly, into the highways and hedges; go out into the country, and pick up the vagrants, or those that are returning now in the evening from their work in the field, from hedging and ditching there, and compel them to come in, not by force of angels, but by theворот of your minister, that the poorest may be earnest with them, for in this case it would be necessary to convince them that the invitation was sincere, and not a banter; they will be shy and modest, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome, and therefore be importunate with them, and draw them to him you have prevailed with them.” This refers to the calling of the Gentiles, to whom the apostle writes of the mediation given. He first refers the offers, and with them the church was filled. Now observe here, (1.) The provision made for precious souls in the gospel of Christ, shall appear not to have been made in vain; for if some reject it, yet others will thankfully accept the offer of it. Christ comforts himself with this, that, though Israel be not gathered, yet he shall be glorious, as a Light to the Gentiles, Isa. 54. 5. 6. God will have a church in the world, though there are those that are unchurched; for the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect. (2.) Those that are very poor and low in the world, shall be as welcome to Christ as the rich and great; nay, and many times the gospel has greatest success among those that labour under worldly disadvantages, as the poor, and bodily infirmities, as the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. Christ here plainly refers to what he had said just before, in order to us, to invite to our tables the poor and maimed, the lame and blind, v. 13. For, the consideration of the convenience which Christ’s gospel gives to the poor, should engage us to be charitable to them. His condescensions and compassions toward them should engage ours. (3.) Many times the gospel helps them, and gives those that are most likely to have the benefit of it, and who least expected it. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before the scribes and Pharisees; so that the last shall be first, and the first last. Let us not be confident concerning those that are most forward, nor despair of those that are least promising. (4.) Christ’s ministers must be both very expeditious and very importunate, in bringing in those that are lost. The gospel-feast is so large, that the greatest of men are not ready. Call to them to come to-day, while it is called to-day. And compel them to come in, by accepting them kindly, and drawing them with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. Nothing can be more absurd than fetching an argument from hence for compelling men’s consciences, nay, for compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion; “You shall receive the Lord’s supper, or you shall be fined and imprisoned, and ruined in your estate.” Certainly nothing like this was the compulsion here meant, but only that of reason and love; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. (5.) Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still there is room for more; for the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves. (6.) Christ’s house, though it be large, shall at last be filled: it will be so when the number of the elect is completed, and as many as were given him are brought to him.

25. And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned and said unto them, 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28. For which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? 29. Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him. 30. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. 31. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? 32. Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an embassy, and desireth conditions of peace.
33. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. 34. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? 35. It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

See how Christ in his doctrine suited himself to those to whom he spake, and gave every one his portion of meat. To Pharisees he preached humility and charity. He is in these verses directing his discourse to the multitudes that crowded after him, and seemed zealous in following him: and his exhortation to them is, to understand the terms of discipleship, before they undertook the profession of it, and to consider what they did.

I. How zealous people were in their attendance on Christ; (v. 25.) There went great multitudes with him, many for love, and more for company, for where there are many, there will be more. Here was a mixt multitude, like that which went with Israel out of Egypt; such we must expect there will always be in the church, and it will therefore be necessary that ministers should carefully separate between them. Many were for the show, and many were for the scandal. How many young men, to be seen in the church, that decline the service of Christ, and opportunities of converse with him, and are ashamed to confess him, for fear of dissembling a relation or friend, or losing a customer, give cause to suspect that they love them better than Christ.

2. That they must be willing to bear that which was very heavy; (v. 27.) Whosoever doth not carry his cross, as those did, that were condemned to be crucified, in submission to the sentence and in expectation of the execution of it, and so come after me, whithersoever I shall lead him, he cannot be my disciple; that is, (saith Dr. Hammond,) he is not for my turn; and my service, being so sure to bring persecution along with it, will not be f. or him. Though the disciples of Christ are not all crucified, yet they all bear their cross, if, as Christ says, being being crucified. They must be content to be put into an ill name, and to be loaded with infamy and disgrace; for no name is more ignominious than further—the bearer of the gibbet. He must bear his cross, and come after Christ; that is, he must bear it in the way of his duty, whenever it lies in that way. He must bear it when Christ calls him to it, and in bearing it he must have an eye on Christ, and fetch encouragement from him, and live in hope of a recompence with him.

3. He bids them count upon it, and then consider of it. Since he has been so just to us, as to tell us plainly what difficulties we shall meet with in following him, let us be so just to ourselves, as to weigh the matter seriously before we take upon us a profession of religion. Joshua obliged the people to consider what they did when they promised to serve the Lord, Josh. 24. 19. It is better never to begin than not to proceed; and therefore before we begin we must consider what it is to proceed. This is to act rationally, and as becomes men, and as we do in other cases. The cause of Christ will bear a scrutiny. Satan shows the best, but hides the worst; because his best will not encompass to build a tower; but Christ's will abundantly. This considering of the case is necessary to perseverance, especially in suffering times. Our Saviour here illustrates the necessity of it by two similitudes; the former showing that we must consider the expenses of our religion, the latter, that we must consider the perils of it.

1. When we take upon us a profession of religion, we are like a man that undertakes to build a tower, or stately house for himself, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost? And he must be sure to count upon a great deal more than his workmen will tell him it will lie him in. Let him compare the charge with his purse, lest he make himself to be laughed at, by beginning to build and going not. [1.] All that take upon them a profession of religion, undertake to build a tower, not as the tower of Babel, in opposition to Heaven, which therefore was left unfinished, but in obedience to Heaven, which therefore shall have its top-stone brought forth. Begin low, and lay the foundation deep, lay it on the rock, and make sure work, and then aim as high as heaven. [2.] Those
that intend to build this tower, must sit down, and count the cost; let them consider, it will cost them the mortifying of their sins, even the most beloved lusts, it will cost them a life of self-denial and watchfulness, and a constant course of holy duties; it may, perhaps, cost them their reputation among men, their comforts with friends, and all that is dear to them in this world, even life itself. And if it cost us all this, what is it in comparison with what it cost Christ to purchase the advantages of religion for us, which come to us without money and without price? [3.] Many that begin to build this tower, do not go on with it, nor persevere in it, and it is their folly; they have not courage and resolution, have not a rooted, fixed principle, and therefore have nothing to do. It is possible there have been some of us in sufficient to finish this tower, but Christ hath said, My 

18.) for he that draws the sword, throws away the scabbard; so with good advice enter upon a profession of religion, as those that know that except you forsake all you have, you cannot be Christ's disciples; that is, except you consent to be cast out of all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, and yet continue to live godly.

3. He warns them against apostasy and a degeneracy of mind from the truly Christian spirit and temper, for that would make them utterly useless, v. 34, 35. (1.) Good Christians are the salt of the earth, and good ministers especially, (Matt. 5. 13,) and this salt is good and of great use; by their instructions and examples they season all they converse with, to keep them from putrefying, and to quicken them, and make them savoury. (2.) Degenerate Christians, who, rather than part with what they have in the world, will throw up their profession, and then of course become carnal and worldly, and wholly destitute of a Christian spirit, are like salt that has lost its savour; like that which the chemists call the calciu mortuum; that has all its salts drawn from it, that is the most useless, worthless thing in the world; it has no manner of virtue or good property in it. [1.] It can never be recovered; Wherewith shall it be seasoned? You cannot salt it. This intimates that it is extremely difficult, and next to impossible, to recover an apostate, Heb. 6. 4-6. If Christianity will not preserve their wisdom and sanctity, if that remedy has been tried in vain, their case must even be concluded desperate. [2.] It is no use; it is not fit, as dungs is, for the land, to make that, nor will it be the better if it be laid in the dunghill to rot, there is nothing to be got out of it. A professor of religion, whose mind and manners are depraved, is the most insatiable animal that can be. If he do speak of the things which be without, and know not that which be beneath, and can do neither, and know not the value of the one, he is but a fool; he is so awkwardly, that none are the better for it; it is a parable in the mouth of a foot. [3.] It is abandoned; men cast it out, as that which they will have no more to do with. Such scandalous professors ought to be cast out of the church, not only because they have forfeited all the honours and privileges of their church-membership, but because there is danger that others will be infected with their depravity. Our text gives us the reason of this, that they have not only to all the action of the voice, but to all to take notice of it, and to take warning; He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Now can the faculty of hearing be better employed than in attending to the word of Christ, and particularly to the alarms he has given us of the danger we are in of apostasy, and the danger we run ourselves into by apostasy?

CHAP. XV.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; so, in this chapter, the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees at the grace of Christ and his preachers, it is a necessary consequence of the spirit of the times in the public, who have been, in the Old Testament, that he had no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, but that he has great pleasure in their return and repentance, and rejoices in the gracious entertainment he gives them there. Here is, 1. The offence which the Pharisees took at Christ for conversing with heathen men and publicans, and preaching his gospel to them, v. 1-2. 11. Hisjustifying of himself in it, by the design and propriety of it, and the effect of it, and that was, the bringing of them to repent, and reform their lives; than which there could not be a more pleasing and acceptable service done to God; which he shows this was, by the state of his disciples, and the manner in which he brought home with joy, v. 4-7. 2. Of the lost silver that was found with joy, v. 8-10. 3. Of the lost son that had been a prodigal, but returned to his father's house, and was received with great joy, though his elder brother, like these scribes and Pharisees, was offended at it, v. 11-32.
1. HEEN drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him. 2. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 3. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, 4. What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5. And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. 8. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? 9. And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. 10. Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Here is,

I. The diligent attendance of the publicans and sinners upon Christ's ministry; Great multitudes of Jews went with him, (ch. 14. 23.) with such an assurance of admission into the kingdom of God, that he found it requisite to say that to them, which would shake their vain hopes. Here multitudes of publicans and sinners drew near to him, with a humble, modest fear of being rejected by him, and to them he found it requisite to give encouragement, especially because there were some haughty, supercilious people, that frowned upon them. The publicans, who collected the tribute paid to the Romans, were perhaps some of them bad men, but they were all industriously put into an ill name, because of the prejudices of the Jewish nation against their office; they are sometimes ranked with harlots, (Matt. 21. 32.) here and elsewhere with sinners, such as were openly vicious, that trailed with harlots; known rakes. Some think that sinners here were heathen, and that Christ was now on the other side Jordan, or in Galilee of the Gentiles. These drew near, when perhaps the multitude of the Jews that had followed him, were (upon our approaches in the close of the foregoing chapter) dropt off; thus afterward the Gentiles took their turn in hearing the apostles, when the Jews had rejected them. They drew near to him; being afraid of drawing nearer than just to come within hearing. They drew near to him, not, as some did, for curiosity to see him, nor as others did, to solicit for cures, but to hear his excellent doctrine. Note, In all our approaches to Christ, this we must have, in our eye, to hear him; to hear his instructions he gives us, and his answers to our prayers.

II. The offence which the scribes and Pharisees took at this; (v. 2.) They murmured, and turned it to the reproach of our Lord Jesus, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. 1. They were angry that publicans and heathens had the means of grace allowed them, were called to repent, and encouraged to hope for pardon upon repentance; for they looked upon their case as desperate, and that none but Jews had the privilege of repenting and being pardoned, though they were offended at; and therefore they reproached him for eating with them, which was more expressly contrary to the tradition of the elders. Censure will fall, not only upon the most innocent and the most excellent persons, but upon the most innocent and most excellent actions, and we must not think it strange.

III. Christ's justifying of himself in it, by showing that the worse these people were to whom he preached, the more glory would redound to God, and the more joy there would be in heaven, if by his preaching they were brought to repentance. It would be a more pleasing sight in heaven, to see Gentiles brought to the worship of the true God, than to see Jews go on in it; and to see publicans and sinners live an orderly sort of life, than to see ascetics or monks. Our Lord Jesus did not here set an example of living such a life. This he here illustrates by two parables, the explication of both which is the same.

1. The parable of the lost sheep. Something like it we had, Matth. 18. 12. There it was designed to show the care God takes for the preservation of saints, as a reason why we should not offend them; here it is designed to show the pleasure God takes in the conversion of sinners, as a reason why we should rejoice in it. We have here,

(1.) The case of a sinner that goes on in sinful ways; he is like a lost sheep; a sheep gone astray; lost to God, who has not the honour and service he should have from him; lost to the flock, which has not communion with him; lost to himself, he knows not where he is, wanders endlessly, is continually exposed to the beasts of prey, subject to frights and dangers; and, under the Shepherd's care, and wanting the green pastures; and it cannot of itself find the way back to the fold.

(2.) The care the God of heaven takes of poor wandering sinners. He continues his care of the sheep that did not go astray, they are safe in the wilderness; but there is a particular care to be taken of this lost sheep; and though he has, for a considerable flock, yet he will not lose that one; but he goes after it, and shows abundance of care. [1.] In finding it out; he follows it, inquiring after it, and looking about for it, until he finds it. God follows backsliding sinners with the calls of his word, and the stirvings of his Spirit, until at length they are wrought upon to think of returning. [2.] In bringing it home; though he finds it weary, and desponding, and cast down, the shepherd pours upon him the balm of pity, and relishes, and not able to bear being driven home, yet he doth not leave it to perish, and says, It is not worth carrying home; but lays it on his shoulders, and, with a great deal of tenderness and labour, brings it to the fold. This is very applicable to the great work of our redemption. Mankind were gone astray; (Isa. 53. 6.) the value of the whole race to God was so much more than that of one sinner that had a blemish; what loss would it have been to God, if they had all been left to perish? There is a world of holy angels that are as the ninety-nine sheep, a noble flock; yet God sends his Son to seek and save that which was lost, Luke 19. 10. Christ is said to gather the lambs in his arms, and carry
them in his bosom, denoting his pity and tenderness toward poor sinners; here he is said to bear them upon his shoulders, denoting the power wherewith he supports and bears them up; these can never perish, whom he carries upon his shoulders.

(3.) The pleasure that God takes in repenting, rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents. It is the language of joy, of the pleasure of finding it, put her, for the present, into a kind of transport, ὅπεξ, ὅπεξ,—I have found, I have found, is the language of joy.

3. The explication of these two parables is to the same purport; (v. 7. 10.) There is joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repents; this is the language of joy; what he did, some of them, at least, (and if but one of them did repent, Christ would reckon it worth his while,) more than over a great number of just persons, which need no repentance. Observe,

(1.) The repentance and conversion of sinners on earth, are matter of joy and rejoicing in heaven. It is possible that the greatest of sinners may be brought to repentance there is hope there is room for hope, and the worst are not to be despised of; and that a multitude of sinners, if they repent and turn, shall find mercy. Yet that is not all. [1.] God will delight to show them mercy; will reckon their conversion a return for all the expense he has been at upon them. There is always joy in heaven; God rejoiceth in all his works, but particularly in the works of his grace; he rejoiceth to do good to penitent sinners, with his whole heart, and his whole soul. He rejoiceth not only in the conversion of churches and nations, but even over one sinner that repenteth, though but one. [2.] The good angels will be glad that mercy is shown them, so far are they from reproving at it, though these of their nature that sinned be left to perish, and no mercy showed to them; though those sinners that repent, that are so mean, and have been so vile, are, upon their repentance, to be taken in communion with them, and shortly to be made like them, and equal to them. The conversion of sinners is the joy of angels, and they gladly become ministering spirits to them for their good, upon their conversion. The redemption of mankind was matter of joy in the presence of the angels; for they sung, Glory to God in the highest, Luke 2. 14.

(2.) There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth, and turneth to be religious from a course of life that had been notoriously vile and vicious, than there is over ninety-nine just persons, who need no repentance. [1.] More joy for the redemption and salvation of fallen man than for the preservation and confirmation of the angels that stand, and did indeed need no repentance. [2.] More joy for the conversion of the sinners of the Gentiles, and of those publicans that now heard Christ preach, than for all the praises and devotions, and all the God I thought, than, and was not any concern then, satisfying Jews, who thought that they needed no repentance, and that therefore God should abundantly rejoice in them, and make his boast of them, as those that were most his honour; but Christ tells them that it was quite otherwise, that God was more praised in, and pleased with, the penitent, broken heart of one of those despised, envied sinners, than all the long prayers which the scribes and Pharisees prayed, who could not set their eyes upon themselves. Nay, [3.] More joy for the conversion of one such great sinner, such a Pharisee as Paul had been in his time, than for the regular conversion of one that had always conducted himself decently and well, and comparatively needs no repentance, needs not such a universal change of the life as those great sinners need. Not but that it is best not to go astray; but the grace of God, both the power and the pity of great grace, is in the conduct of those great sinners, more than in the conducting of those that never went astray. And many times those that have been great sinners before their conversion, prove more eminently and zealously good after; of which Paul is an instance, and therefore in him God was greatly glorified, Gal. 1. 24. They to whom much is forgiven, will love much. It is spoken after the manner of men; we are moved with a more sen-
sible joy for the recovery of what we had lost than for the continuance of what we had always enjoyed; for health out of sickness than for health without sickness. It is as life from the dead. A constant course of religion may in itself be more valuable, and yet a sudden return from an evil course and way of sin may yield a more surprising pleasure. Now if there is such joy in heaven, for the conversion of sinners, then the Pharisees were very much strangers to a heavenly spirit, who did all they could to hinder it, and were grieved at it; and who were exasperated at Christ when he was doing a piece of work that was of all others most grateful to Heaven.

11. And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12. And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. 14. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. 15. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18. I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. 25. Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing: 26. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. 27. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. 28. And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him.

29. And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: 30. But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. 31. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. 32. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

We have here the parable of the prodigal son; the scope of which is the same with those before, to show how pleasing to God the conversion of sinners is, of great sinners, and how ready he is to receive and entertain such, upon their repentance; but the circumstances of the parable do much more largely and fully set forth the riches of gospel grace than those did, and it has been, and will be, while the world stands, of unspeakable use to poor sinners, both to direct and to encourage them in repenting and returning to God. Now,

I. The parable represents God as a common Father to all mankind; to the whole family of Adam; we are all his offspring; have all one Father, and one God created us, Mal. 2. 10. From him we had our being, in him we still have it, and from him we receive our maintenance. He is our Father, for he has the educating and portioning of us, and will put us in his testament, or leave us out, according as we are, or are not, dutiful children to him. Our Saviour hereby intimates to those proud Pharisees, that these publicans and sinners, whom thus they despised, were their brethren, partakers of the same nature, and therefore they ought to be glad of any kindness shown them. God is the God, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles; (Rom. 3. 29.) the same Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him.

II. It represents the children of men as of different characters, though all related: God as their common Father; he had reserved to himself one, whom a grave youth, reserved and austere, sober himself, but not at all good-humoured to those about him; such an one would adhere to his education, and not be easily drawn from it; but the other volatile and mercurial, and impatient of restraint, roving, and willing to try his fortune, and, if he fall into ill hands, likely to be a rake, notwithstanding his virtuous education. Now this latter represents the publicans and sinners, whom Christ is endeavouring to bring to repentance, and the Gentiles, whom the apostles were to be sent forth to preach repentance to. The former represents the Jews in general, and particularly the Pharisees, whom he was endeavouring to reconcile to that grace of God, which was offered to, and bestowed upon, sinners.

The younger son is that sinner, whose character and case are here described to represent that of a sinner, that of every one of us in our natural state, but especially of some.

Now we are to observe concerning him,

1. His riot and ramble when he was a prodigal, and the extravagances and miseries he fell into.

We are told,

(1.) What his request to his father was; (v. 12.) He said to his father, proudly and pertly enough, "Father, give me," (he might have put a little
more in his mouth, and have said, 

Pray give me, or, Sir, if you please, give me, but he makes an impetuous demand, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me; not the portion of goods which falls to me as my due." Note, It is bad, and the beginning of worse, when men look upon God's gifts as due debts. "Give me the portion, all my child's part, that falls to me; not, "Try me with a little, and see how I can manage that, and accordingly trust me with more;" but, "Give it me all at present in possession, and I will never expect any thing in reversion, any thing hereafter." Note. The great folly of sinners, and that which move them, is, being content to have their portion in hand; now in this life-time to receive their good things. They look only at the things that are seen, that are temporal, and covet only a present gratification, but have no care for a future felicity, when that is spent and gone.

And why did he desire to have his portion in his own hands? Was it that he might apply himself to business, and trade with it, and so to make it more? No; he had no thought of that. But, [1.] He was weary of his father's government, of the good order and discipline of his father's family, and was fond of liberty falsely so called, but indeed the greatest slavery, for such a liberty to sin is. See the folly of many young men, who are religiously educated, but are impatient of the confinement of their education, and never think themselves their own masters, their own handmen, till they have broken all God's hands in summer, and cast away his cords from them, and, instead of them, bound themselves with the cords of their own lust. Here is the original of the apostasy of sinners from God; they will not be tied up to the rules of God's government, they will themselves be as gods, knowing no other good and evil than what themselves please. [2.] He was willing to get from under his father's eye, for that was always a check to him, and they gave a check to him. A slyness of God and a willingness to disbelieve his omnipresence, are at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked. [3.] He was distrustful of his father's management; he would have his portion of goods inimical, for he thought that his father would be laying up for hereafter for him, and, in order to that, would limit him in his present expenses, and that he did not like. [4.] He was proud of himself, and had no relish of doing, and therefore, if they had had his portion in his own hands, he could manage it better than his father did, and make a better figure with it. There are more young people ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. Our first parents ruined themselves and all theirs by a foolish ambition to be independent, and not to be beholden even to God himself; and this is at the bottom of sinners persisting in their sin—they will be independent.

(2.) How kind his father was to him; He divided unto them his living. He computed what he had to dispose of between his sons, and gave the younger son his share, and offered the elder his, which ought to be a double portion; but, it should seem, he desired his father to keep it in his own hands still, and we may see what he got by it; (v. 31.) All that I have, &c. He got all he could, and being staying for something in his own hands, He gave the younger son his share, and the son had no reason to complain that he did him any wrong in the dividend; he had as much as he expected, and perhaps more. [1.] Thus he might now see his father's kindness, how willing he was to please him, and make him easy, and that he was not such an unkind father as he was willing to represent him, when he wanted an excuse to be gone. [2.] Thus he would in a little time be made to see his own folly, and that he was not such a wise manager for himself as he would be thought to be.

Note, God is a kind Father to all his children, and gives to them all life, and breath, and all things, even to the evil and unthankful sinners, so as has his hand in all. God's giving of us life, is putting us in a capacity to serve and glorify him.

How he managed himself when he had got his portion in his own hands; he set himself to spend it as fast as he could, and, as prodigals generally do, in a little time he made himself a beggar, not many days after; v. 13. Note, If God leaves us ever so little to ourselves, it will not be long ere we repent it. So as ever the bridle of restraining grace is taken off, we are soon gone. That which the younger son determined, was, to be gone presently, and, in order to that, he gathered all together. Sinners, that go astray from God, venture their all.

Now the condition of the prodigal in this ramble of his representatives to us a sinful state, that miserable state into which man is fallen.

First, A sinful state is a state of departure and distance from God. 1. It is the sinfulness of sin, that is an apostacy from God. He took his journey from his father's house. Sinners are fled from God; they go a whoring from him, they revolt from their allegiance to him, as a servant that runs from his service, or a wife that treacherously departs from her husband, and they say unto God, Depart. They get as far off as they can. The world is the theatre in which they make up the want of wisdom, and are revelling in the sin in which they make up the want of reverence, and are tainting the service and enjoyment of it they sicken their all. 2. It is the misery of sinners, that they are afar off from God, from him who is the Fountain of all good, and are going further and further from him. What is hell itself, but being afar off from God?

Secondly, A sinful state is a spending state; There he wasted his substance with riotous living, (v. 13.) devoured it with harlotry, and there was a famine, (v. 30.) and in a little time he was to be hungry and to die, (v. 14.) He bought fine clothes; spent a deal in meat and drink, treated high, conversed with those that helped him to make an end of what he had, in a little time. As to this world, they that live riotously, waste what they have, and will have a great deal to answer for, that they spend that upon their lusts, which should be for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families. But this is to be applied spiritually; wilful sinners, that labour under the loss of their patrimony, for they misemploy their thoughts and all the powers of their souls, mispend their time and all their opportunities; do not only bury, but embazze, the talents they are entrusted to trade with for their Master's honour; and the gifts of Providence, which were intended to enable them to serve God, and to do good with, are made the food and fuel of their lusts. The soul that is made a dudgeon, either to the world or to the flesh, wastes his substance, and lives riotously. One sinner destroys much good, Eccl. 9. 18. The good he destroys, is valuable, and it is none of his own; they are his Lord's goods that he wastes, which must be accounted for.

Thirdly, A sinful state is a wanting state; When he had spent all upon his harlots, they left him, to seek such another prey; and there was nothing left at home, (v. 16.) He was as hungry as at first, and he began to be in want, v. 14. Note, Wilful waste brings woeful want. Riotous living in time, perhaps in a little time, brings men to a morsel of bread; especially when bad times hasten on the consequences of bad husbandry, which good husbandry would have provided for. This represents the misery of sinners, who have thrown away their own mercies, the favour of God, their interest in Christ, the satisfactions of the Spirit, the admonitions of conscience; these they gave away for the pleasure of sense, and the wealth of the world, and then
are ready to perish for want of them. Sinners want necessities for their souls, they have neither food nor raiment for them, nor any provision for hereafter. A sinful state is like a land where famine reigns, a mighty famine; for the heaven is as brass; the dews of God's favour and blessing are withheld, and we must need good things if God deny them us; and the earth is as iron; the sinner's heart is hard and barren, and has no good in it, those sinners are wretchedly miserable and poorly poor, and, what aggravates it, they brought themselves into that condition, and keep themselves in it, by refusing the supplies ordered.

Fourthly, A sinful state is a vile, servile state. When this young man's riot had brought him to want, his want brought him to servitude (v. 15.) He went, and joined himself to a citizen of that country. The same wicked life that before was represented by riotous living, is here represented by servile living; for sinners are perfect slaves. The devil is the citizen of that country, for he is both in city and country; sinners join themselves to him, hire themselves into his service, to do his work, to be his hirelings, and upon his wages, and a portion. They that commit sin, are the servants of sin, John 8. 34. How did this young gentleman debase and disgrace himself, when he hired himself into such a service? And under such a master as this! He sent him into the fields, not to feed sheep, (there had been some credit in that employment, Jacob, and Moses, and David, kept sheep,) but to feed swine, one of the most detestable things of all the animal race, to make provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof, and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine; and how can rational immortal souls more disgrace themselves?

Fifthly, A sinful state is a state of perpetual dissatisfaction. When the prodigal began to be in want, he thought to help himself by going to service; and he must be content with the provision which took the house, but the field, afforded, but it was poor provision; (v. 16.) He would fain have filled his belly, satisfied his hunger, and nourished his body, with the husks that the swine did eat. A fine pass my young master had brought himself to, to be fellow-commoner with the swine! Note, That which sinners, when they depart from God, promise themselves will certainly disappoint them; they are labouring for that which satisfies not, Isa. 55. 2. That which is the stumbling-block of their iniquity, will never satisfy their souls, nor fill their bowels, Ezek. 7. 19. Husks are food for swine, but not for men. The wealth of the world and the entertainments of sense will serve for bodies; but what are those to precious souls? They neither suit their nature, nor satisfy their desires, nor supply their needs. He that takes up with them, feeds on wind, (Hos. 12. 1.) feeds on ashes, Isa. 44. 20.

Sixthly, A sinful state is a state which cannot expect relief from any creature. This prodigal, when he could not earn his bread by working, took to begging; but no man gave unto him, because they knew he had brought all this misery upon himself, and because he was raskish, and profligate to every body; such poor are least fitted. This, in the application of the parable, intimated that those who depart from God, cannot be helped by any creature. In vain do we cry to the world and the flesh; (those gods which we have served;) they have that which will poison a soul, but have nothing to give it, which will feed and nourish it. If thou refuse God's help, and to his providence hast thou committed it, (v. 27.)

Seventhly, A sinful state is a state of death; (v. 24, 32.) This my son was dead. A sinner is not only dead in law, as he is under a sentence of death, but dead in state too, dead in trespasses and sins, destitute of spiritual life; no union with Christ, no spiritual senses exercised, no living to God, and therefore dead. The prodigal in the far country was dead to his father and his family, cut off from them, as a member from the body, or a branch from the tree, and therefore dead, and it is his own doing.

Eighthly, A sinful state is a lost state; This my son was lost; lost to every thing that was good, lost to himself, lost to the kingdom of God; for as long as he was gone from his father's house, they had no joy of him. Souls that are separated from God, are lost souls; lost as a traveller that is out of his way, and, if infinite mercy prevent not, will soon be lost as a ship that is sunk at sea, lost irrecoverably.

Ninthly, A sinful state is a state of madness and frenzy; which is intimated in that expression, (v. 17.) when he came to himself, he intimates that he had been beside himself, surely he was so when he left his father's house, and much more so when he rejoined himself to the citizen of that country. Madness is said to be in the heart of sinners, Eccl. 9. 3. Satan has got possession of the soul; and how raging mad was he that was possessed by Legion! Sinners, like those that are mad, destroy themselves (Luke 8. 27.) Fools they were, and fools they are, (v. 17,) begging pardon for themselves with foolish hopes; and they are, of all diseased persons, most enemies to their own cure.

2. We have here his return from this ramble, his penitent return to his father again. When he was brought to the last extremity, then he betook himself how much it was his interest to go home. Note, We must not despair of the worst; for while there is one who has sinned, the Lord is still in the city of salvation. He softens the hardest heart, and give a happy turn to the strongest stream of corruption. Now observe here,

(1.) What was the occasion of his return and repentance; it was his affliction, when he was in want, then he came to himself. Note, Afflictions, when they are sanctified by divine grace, prove happy means of turning sinners from the error of their ways. By them the ear is opened to discipline, and the heart disposed to receive instruction; and they are sensible proofs both of the vanity of the world and of the mischievousness of sin. Apply it spiritually, when we find the insufficiency of creatures to make us happy, and have tried all other ways of relief for our poor souls in vain, then it is time to seek mercy from God. When we see what miserable comforters, what physicians of no value, all but Christ are, for a soul that groans under the guilt and power of sin, and no man gives unto us what we need, then surely we shall apply ourselves to Jesus Christ.

(2.) What was the preparative for it; it was consideration. He said within himself, when he recovered his right mind, How many hired servants of my father have enough? Note, Consideration is the first step towards conversion, Ezek. 18. 28. He considers and turns. To consider is to retire into ourselves, to reflect upon ourselves, and to compare one thing with another, and determine accordingly.

Now observe what it was that he considered.

[1.] He considered how bad his condition was; I perish with hunger. Not only, "I am hungry," but, "I perish with hunger, for I see not what way to expect relief." Note, Sinners will not come to the service of Christ, till they are brought to see themselves just ready to perish in the service of sin; and the consideration of that should drive us to Christ. Master save us, we perish. And though gospel grace is driven to Christ, he will not therefore reject us, but think himself disinterested by our being forced to him, but rather honoured by his being applied to in a desperate case.

[2.] He considered how much better it might be
made, if he would but return; _How many hired servants of my father's, the meanest in his family, the very day-labourers, have bread enough, and to spare:_ such a good house does he keep! Note, First, In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare, that was taught by the twelve loaves of Show-bread, that were constantly upon the holy table in the sanctuary, a loaf for every tribe. Secondly, There is enough and to spare, enough for all, enough for each, enough to spare for such as will join themselves to his domestics, enough and to spare for charity. Yet there is room; there are crumbs that fall from his table, which many would be thankful to have, and that we take with them.

Thirdly, _Even the hired servants in God's family are well provided for;_ the meanest that will but hire themselves into his family, to do his work, and depend upon his reward, shall be well provided for.

**Fourthly, The consideration of this should encourage sinners, that have gone astray from God, to think of returning to him._ Thus that adulteress reasons with herself, when she is disappointed in her new lover; _I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now._ Hos. 2. 7.

(3.) _What was the purpose of it._ Since it is so that his condition is so bad, and may be bettered by returning to his father, his consideration issues, at length, in this conclusion, _I will arise, and go to my father._ Note, Good purposes are good things, but still good performances are all in all.

[1.] _He determined what to do._ I will arise, and go to my father. He will not take any longer time to consider of it, but will forthwith arise and go. Though he be in a far country, a great way off from his father's house, yet, far as it is, he will return; every step of backsliding from God, must be a step back again in return to him. Though he be joined to a citizen of this country, he makes no difficulty of breaking through the walls of some city of sin, and returning to the flesh, we are under no obligation at all to our Egyptian task-masters to give them warning, but are at liberty to quit the service when we will. Observe with what resolution he speaks, _I will arise, and go to my father;_ I am resolved I will, whatever the issue be, rather than stay here, and starve.

[2.] He determined what to say. _True repentance is a rising, and coming to God; Behold, we are in our sins._ This was the best that he could say. How about you? He here considers what to say. Note, In all our addresses to God, it is good to deliberate with ourselves beforehand what we shall say, that we may order our cause before him, and fill our mouth with arguments. We have liberty of speech, and we ought to consider seriously with ourselves, how we may use that liberty to the utmost, and yet not abuse it.

Let us observe what he purposed to say,

First, He would confess his fault and folly; _I have sinned._ Note, Forasmuch as we have all sinned, it behoves us, and well becomes us, to own that we have sinned. (_The confession of sin is required and insisted upon, as a necessary condition of peace and pardon._) If we plead not guilty, we put ourselves upon a trial by the covenant of innocency, which will certainly condemn us, if we plead guilty, by the covenant of condemnation, and, obedient heart, we refer ourselves to the covenant of grace, which offers forgiveness to those that confess their sins.

Secondly, He would aggravate it, and would be so far from extenuating the matter, that he would lay a load upon himself for it; _I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee._ Let those that are undeniably to their earthly parents, think of this, they sin against heaven, and before God. Offences against them are offences against God. Let us all think of this, as that which renders our sin exceeding sinful, and should render us exceeding sorrowful for it.

1. Sin is committed in contempt of God's authority over us: _We have sinned against heaven._ God is here called Heaven, to signify how highly he is exalted above us, and the dominion he has over us, for the Heavens do rule. The malignity of sin aims high, it is against Heaven. The daring sinner is said to have set his mouth against the Heavens, Ps. 73. 9. Yet it is impotent malice, for we cannot hurt the Heavens. Nay, it is foolish malice; what is shot against the heavens, will return upon the head of him thatshoots it, Ps. 7. 16. Sin is a affront to the God of Heaven, it is a reproach to him, and a contradiction to the designs of the kingdom of heaven. 2. It is committed in contempt of God's eye upon us; _'I have sinned against heaven, and yet before thee, and under thine eye;_ than which there could not be a greater affront put upon him.

Thirdly, He would judge and condemn himself for it, and acknowledge himself to have forfeited all the privileges of the family: _I am no more worthy to be called thy son._ He does not deny the relation, (for that was all he had to trust to,) but he owns his father might justly deny the relation, and shut his doors against him. He had, at his own demand, the portion of good that belonged to him, and had reason to expect no more. Note, It becomes sinners to acknowledge themselves unworthy to receive any favour from God, and to humble and abase themselves before him.

Fourthly, He would nevertheless sue for admission into the family, though it were into the meanest post there; _Make me as one of thy hired servants;_ that is good enough, and too good for me._ Note, True penitents have a high value for God's house, and the privileges of it, and will be glad of any place, so they may but be in it, though it be but as door-keepers, Ps. 84. 10. He does not say, _I will sit at the table with the servants, I will not only submit to it, but count it a preferment, in comparison with his present state._ Those that return to God, from whom they have revolted, cannot but be desirous some way or other to be employed for him, and put into a capacity of serving and honouring him; _Make me as a hired servant, that I may show I love my father's house as much as ever I slighted it._

Fifthly, He might expect of all this he would have an eye to his father as a father; _I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father._ Note, Eying God as a Father, and our Father, will be of great use in our repentance, and return to him. It will make our sorrow for sin genuine, our resolutions against it strong, and encourage us to hope for pardon. God delights both by penitents and petitioners to be called Father: _Is not this a goodly sight?_ (4.) _What was the performance of this purpose._ He arose, and came to his father. His good resolve he put in execution without delay; he struck while the iron was hot, and did not adjourn the thought to some more convenient season. Note, It is our interest speedily to close with our convictions. Have we said that we will arise, and go? Let us immediately arise, and come. He did not say, _I will not improve this time._ He was sinned, and could get no further, but weak and weary as he was, he made a thorough business of it. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return unto me, and do thy first works.

3. We have here his reception and entertainment with his father, _He came to his father;_ but was he welcome? Yes, heartily welcome. And by the way, it is an example to parents whose children have been foolish and disobedient, if they repent, and seek it themselves, not to be harsh and severe with them, but to be governed in such a case by the wisdom that is from above, which is gentle, and easy to be en
treated; herein let them be followers of God, and merciful, as he is. But it is chiefly designed to set forth the grace and mercy of God to poor sinners that repent, and return to him, and his readiness to forgive them. Now here observe,

(1.) The great love and affection wherewith the father received the son; (v. 20.) When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him. He expressed his kindness before the son expressed his repentance. It is the greatest encouragement to sinners, that he who is to be a hired servant is thus regarded, and that the provisions of God comforted him, Jer. 31. 18, 20. It is strange that here is no one word of rebuke: ‘Why did you not stay with your harlots and your swine? You could never find the way home till beaten with your own rod.’ No, here is nothing like this; which intimates that, when God forgives the sins of true penitents, he forgets them, he remembers them no more; and he that has sinned shall not be mentioned against them, Ezek. 18. 22.

But this is not all; here is rich and royal provision made for him, according to his birth and quality, far beyond what he did, or could, expect. He would have thought it sufficient, and been very thankful, if his father had but taken notice of him, and bid him go to the kitchen, and get his dinner there. He was a servant; and God did not show his kindness to him who return to their duty, and cast themselves upon his mercy, abundantly above what they are able to ask or think. The prodigal came home between hope and fear, fear of being rejected, and hope of being received; but his father was not only better to him than his fears, but better to him than his hopes, not only received him, but received him with respect.

(2.) He came in rage, and his father not only clothed him, but adorned him. He said to the servants, who all attended their master, upon notice that his son was come, ‘Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.’ The worst old clothes in the house might have served and had been good enough for him; but the father calls not for a coat, but for a robe, the garment of princes and great men, the harlot’s attire is taken away, and the signet-ring, andadder, and sword, are put on. He gives him an emphatic, ‘that robe, that princely robe, you know which I mean;’ the first robe, (so it may be read,) the robe he wore before he ran his ramble. When backsliders repent, and do their first works, they shall be received, and dressed in their first robes. ‘Bring hither that robe, and put it on him; he will be ashamed to wear it, and think that it ill becomes him who comes home in such a dirty pocklet, but put it on him; and do not offer it him only: and put a ring on his hand, a signet-ring with the arms of the family, in token of his being owned as a branch of the family.’ Rich people wore rings, and his father hereby signified that though he had spent one portion, yet, upon his repentance, he intended him another. He came home barefoot, his feet perhaps sore with travel, and this he does not mind, ‘laid on his shoulder a heavy burden, and with his mouth a penitent confession of it, even of those sins which they have reason to hope are pardoned. David penned Ps. 51. after Nathan had said, ‘The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Nay, the comfortable sense of the pardon of sin should increase our sorrow for it; and the grace of God should multiply it, and make our sentimental sorrow, which is increased by such a consideration. See Ezek. 16. 63. Thou shalt be ashamed and confounded, when I am pacified toward thee. The more we see of God’s readiness to forgive us, the more difficult it should be to us to forgive ourselves.

(3.) The splendid provision which this kind father made for the returning prodigal. He was going on in his submission, but one word we find in his purpose to say, (v. 19.) which we do not find that he did say, (v. 21.) and that was, ‘Make me as one of thy hired servants.’ We cannot think that he forgot it; much less that he changed his mind, and was now desirous of a hireling’s employment. He meant, when he was made that purpose, but his father interrupted him, prevented his saying it; ‘Hold, son, talk no more of thine unworthiness, thou art heartily welcome, and, though not worthy to be called a son, shalt be treated as a dear son, as a pleasant child.’ He who is thus entertained at first, needs not ask to be made as a hired servant; God has made it the way of every man. God comforted him, Jer. 31. 18, 20.
They that are sanctified, are adorned and dignified, are put in power, as Joseph was by Pharaoh’s giving him his ring; “Put a ring on his hand, to be before him a constant memorial of his father’s kindness, that he may never forget it.” Thirdly, The preparation of the gospel of peace, is shoes for our feet; (Eph. 6. 15.,) so that, compared with this here, signifies (sixth Grotius) that God, when he receives true penitents into his favour, makes use of them for the convincing and converting the minds of others by their instructions, and it was the father’s examples, David, when pardoned, would teach transgressors God’s ways, and Peter, when he is converted, will strengthen his brethren. Or, it intimates that they shall go on cheerfully, and with resolution, in the way of religion, as a man does when he has shoes on his feet, above what he does when he is barefoot.

He came home hungry, and his father not only fed him, but feastcd him; (v. 23.) “Bring hither the fatted calf, that has been stall-fed, and long reserved for some special occasion, and kill it, that my son may be satisfied with the best we have.” Cold meat might have served, or the leavings of the last meat; but he shall have fresh meat and hot meat, and the fatted calf can never be better bestowed. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ is provided by the heavenly Father for all the heirs of the covenant to come to him. Christ himself is the Bread of life; his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; in him there is a feast for souls, a feast of fat things. It was a great change with the prodigal, who a while ago would have filled his belly with husks. How sweet will the supplies of the new covenant be, and the relishes of its comforts, to those who have been hungering in vain for satisfaction in the creature? Now he found his own words made good, In my father’s house there is bread enough and to spare.

The great joy and rejoicing that there were for his return. The bringing of the fatted calf was designed to be not only a feast for him, but a festival for the family; “Let us all eat and be merry, for it is a good day; for this my son was dead, when he was in his rambles, but his return is life; he is alive again; we thought that he was dead, having heard nothing from him of a long time, but behold, he lives; he was lost, we gave him up for lost, we despaired of hearing of him, but he is found.” Note, [1.] The conversion of a sinner from sin to God, is the raising of that soul from death to life, and the finding of that which seemed to be lost: it is a great and wonderful and happy change. What was in itself dead, is made alive; what was lost to God and his church, is found, and what was unprofitable becomes profitable, Phil. 1. 11. It is such a change as that upon the face of the earth, when the spring returns. [2.] The conversion of sinners is greatly pleasing to the God of heaven; and all that belong to his family, ought to rejoice in it; those in heaven do, and those on earth should. Note, God’s kingdom is a joy, and set all the rest on rejoicing. Therefore we should be glad of the repentance of sinners, because it accomplishes God’s design; it is the bringing of those to Christ, whom the Father had given him, and in whom he will be for ever glorified. We joy for your sakes before our God, with an eye to him, (1 Thess. 3. 9.,) and we are rejoicing in the presence of the family, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Master of the family, 1 Thess. 2. 19.

The family complied with the master; They began to be merry. Note, God’s children and servants ought to be affected with things as he is. We have here the refining and engrafting of the elder brother, which is described by way of reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, to show them the folly and wickedness of their discontent at the repentance and conversion of the publicans and sinners, and the favour Christ showed them; and he repre-
that have long served God, and been kept from gross
sins, have a great deal to be humbly thankful for,
but need not lose sight of.

Secondly, He complained of his father, as if he
had not been so kind to him as he ought to have
been, who had been so dutiful; Thou never gavest
me a child, that I might make merry with my friends.
He was out of humour now, else he would not have
made this complaint; for, no question, if he had
asked such a thing at any time, he might have had
it. Having been turned out in want, he could not
think he did not desire it, but the killing of the fatted
calf put him upon making this peevish reflection. When
men are in a passion, they are apt to reflect so as
they would not if they were in their right mind.
He had been fed at his father's table, and had many
a time been merry with him and the family; but
his father had never given him so much as a kid,
which was but a small quantity of flesh, as compared
with the fatted calf, and so he would have been
happy had he been given the fatted calf. Note,
Those that think highly of themselves and their services,
are apt to think hardly of their master, and meanly of his favours.
We ought to own ourselves utterly unworthy of
those mercies which God hath thought fit to give us,
muioch more of those that he hath not thought fit to
give us, and therefore we must not complain. He
would have had the fatted calf, not the fatted calf,
friends abroad, whereas the fatted calf he grudged
so much, was given to his brother, not to make
merry with his friends abroad, but with the family
at home: the mirth of God's children should be with
their friends and his family, in communion with
God and his saints, and not with any other friends.

Thirdly, He was very ill-humoured towards his
younger brother, and harsh in what he thought and
said concerning him. Some good people are apt
to be overtaken in this fault, nay, and to indulge
themselves too much in it; to look with disdain upon those
who have not preserved their reputation so clean as
they have done, and to be sour and morose toward
them, yea though they have given very good evi-
dences of their repentance and reformation; this is
not the Spirit of Christ, but of the Pharisees. Let
us observe the instances of it.
1. He would not go in, except his brother be
turned out; one house shall not hold him and his
own brother, no not his father's house. The lan-
guage of this was that of the Pharisee, (Isa. 65. 5.)
Stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier
than thou; and, (Luke 18. 11.) I am not as other
men, I take not upon me the form of a slave. Though
we are to shun the society of those sinners with whom
we are in danger of being infected by, yet we must not
be shy of the company of penitent sinners, whom
we may get good by. He saw that his father had
taken him in, and yet he would not go in to him.
Note, We think too well of ourselves, if we cannot
find in our hearts to receive those whom God hath
received, and to admit these into favour and friend-
ship with fellowship with us, whom we have receiv-
to think God has a favour for, and who are taken
into friendship and fellowship with him.
2. He would not call him brother; but this thy
son, which sounds arrogantly, and not without re-lection upon his father, as if his indulgence had
made him a prodigal; He is thy son, thy darling.
Note, Forgetful the relation we stand in to our
brethren, we must not think we have a right to,
bottom of all our neglects of our duty to them and
our contradictions to that duty. Let us give our
relations, both in the flesh and in the Lord, the ti-
tles that belong to them. Let the rich call the poor
brethren, and let the innocents call the penitents so.
3. He aggravated his brother's faults, and made
the worst of them, endeavouring to incense his
father against him; He is this son, who hath devoured
thy living with harlots. It is true, he had spent his
own portion foolishly enough; (whether upon har-
lots or no we are not told before, perhaps this was
only the language of the elder brother's jealousy
and ill will;) but that he had devoured all his fa-
ther's living, was false, the father had still a good
estate; now this shows how apt we are, in cen-
suring our brethren, to make the worst of every
thing, and to set it cut in the blackest colours, which
is not doing as we would be done by, nor as our
heavenly Father does us, who is not extreme to
multiply iniquities among us who are not willing to
multiply iniquities among us.

4. He grudged him the kindness that his father
showed him; Thou hast killed for him the fatted
calf, as if he were such a son as he should be. Note,
It is a wrong thing to envy penitents the grace of
God, and to have our eye evil because his is good.
As we must not envy those that are the worst of
sinners, the gifts of common providence, (Luke
19. 19.) they have been bestowed upon them, which makes them eminently ac-
ceptable or useful. Paul, before his conversion, had
been a prodigal, had devoured and wasted all his
father's living, Luke 15. 11, 15. when after his con-
version he had greater measures of grace given him,
and more honour put upon him than the other ap-
estes, who they were the elder brethren, who had been serving Christ when he
was persecuting him, and had not transgressed at any
time his commandments, did not envy him his vi-
sions and revelations, nor his more extensive useful-
fulness, but glorified God in him, which every one of
these that have been the worst of sinners, the gifts
of covenant-love upon their repentance; we must
don't envy them their pardon, and peace, and com-
fort, no, nor any extraordinary gift which God be-
stows upon them, which makes them eminently ac-
ceptable or useful. Methinks, the mercy and grace of
our God in Christ shine almost as bright in his ten-
der and gentle bearing with fervish saints, repre-
sented by the elder brother here, as before, in his
reception of prodigal sinners upon their repentance,
represented by the younger brother. The discip-
es of Christ themselves had many infirmities, and
were men subject to like passions as others, yet Christ
bore with them, as a nurse with her children; see
1 Thess. 2. 7.

[1.] When he would not come in, his father came
out, and entreated him, acutalizing him, and gave
him his goods, and desired him to come in. He
might justly have said, "If he will not come in, let
him stay out, shut the doors against him, and send
him to seek a lodging where he can find it. Is
not the house my own, and may I not do what I please
in it? Is not the fatted calf my own, and may I not
do what I please with it? No, as he went to meet
the younger son, so now he goes to court the elder,
his own brother, and overtures a kind of peace to
him, but went himself. Now, First, This is de-
signed to refer us to the goodness of God; how
strangely gentle and winning he has been toward
those that were strangely forward and provoking.
He reasoned with Cain; Why art thou wrath? He
bare Israel's manners in the wilderness, Acts 13. 18.
How mildly did God reason with Elijah, when he
broke down in a passion with God, as was shown
with Jonah, whose case was very parallel with this
here, for he was there disquieted at the repentance
of Nineveh, and the mercy showed it, as the elder
brother here; and those questions, Dest thou well
to be angry; and, Should I spare Nineveh? are
not unlike these expostulations of the father with
the elder brother here. Secondly, It is to teach all
superiors to bear with gentle patience their inferiors,
even when they are in a fault, and passionately justly,
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CHAP. XVI.

The scope of Christ's discourse in this chapter, is, to awaken and quicken us all; to use this world as not to abuse it; so to manage all our possessions and enjoyments here, as that they shall not be had for us, as though we were secure of them in the other world; for they will do either the one or the other, according as we use them now. 1. If we do good with them, and lay out what we have in works of pity and charity, it will respect itself. 2. If we use them for our own beastliness and vanity, and this he shows in the parable of the unjust steward, who made so good a hand of his lord's goods, that, when he was turned out of his stewsipship, he had a comfortable subsistence for the time to come; v. 1. 8; the explanation and application of it, v. 9. 18; and the contempt which the Pharisees put upon the doctrine Christ preached to them, for which he sharply reproved them, and disavowed the other divinity saying, v. 19. 20. 3. If instead of doing good with our worldly enjoyments, we make them the food and fuel of our lusts, of our luxury and sensuality, and deny relief to the poor, we shall certainly perish eternally, and the things of this world, which were thus abused, will but add to our misery and torment. This he shows in the other parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which has likewise a further reach, and that is, to awaken us all to take the warning given us by the written word, and not to expect immediate messages from the other world, v. 19. 31.

1. AND he said also unto his disciples,

There was a certain rich man which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. 2. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. 3. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do, for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. 4. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. 5. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? 6. And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. 7. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou! And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. 8. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. 9. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. 10. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters: for
14. And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

16. The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.

17. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

18. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery.

We mistake if we imagine that the design of Christ's doctrine and holy religion was either to make men wretched, or to enthrall them with notions of divine mercies. No, the divine revelation of both these in the gospel, is intended to engage and quicken us to the practice of Christian duties, and, as much as any one thing, to the duty of beneficence, and doing good to those who stand in need of any thing that either we have, or can do for them. This our Saviour is here pressing us to, by reminding us that we are but stewards of the manifold grace of God; and since we have in divers instances been unfaithful, and have forfeited the favour of our Lord, it is our wisdom to think how we may, some other way, make what we have in the world turn to a good account. Parables must not be forced beyond their primary intendment, and therefore we must not hence infer that any one can befriend us if we lie under the displeasure of our Lord; but that, in the general, we must so lay out what we have, in works of piety and charity, as that may meet it again with comfort, on the other side death and the grave. If we would act wisely, we must be as diligent and industrious to employ our riches in the acts of piety and charity, in order to promote our future and eternal welfare, as worldly men are in laying them out to the greatest temporal profit, in making to themselves friends with them, and securing other secular interests. So Dr. Clarke.

Now let us consider,

1. The parable itself, in which all the children of men are represented as stewards of what they have in this world, and we are but stewards; whatever we have, the property of it is God's, we have only the use of it, and that according to the direction of our great Lord, and for his honour. Rabbi Kimchi, quoted by Dr. Lightfoot, saith, "This world is a house; heaven, the roof; the stars, the lights; the earth with its fruits, a table spread; the Master of the house is the holy and blessed God; man is the steward, into whose hands the goods of this house are delivered; if he behave himself well, he shall find favour in the eyes of his Lord; if not, he shall be turned out of his stewardship."

Now, 1. Here is the dishonesty of this steward. He wasted his lord's goods, embezzled them, misspent them, or through carelessness suffered them to be lost and damaged; and for this he was accused to his lord, v. 1. We are all liable to the same charge: we have not made a due improvement of what God has intrusted us with in this world, but have perverted his purpose. And that we may not be for this judged of our Lord, it concerns us to judge ourselves.

2. His discharge out of his place. His lord called for him, and said, "How is it that I hear this of thee? I expected better things from thee." He speaks as one sorry to find himself disappointed in him, and under a necessity of dismissing him from his service: it troubles him to hear it, but the steward cannot deny it, and therefore there is no remedy, he must make up his accounts, and be gone in a little time. Now this design the Lord hath us.

(1.) That we must all of us shortly be discharged from our stewardship in this world; we must not always enjoy those things which we now enjoy.

Death will come, and dismiss us from our stewardship, will deprive us of the abilities and opportunities we now have of doing good, and others will come in our places, and have the same. (2.) That our discharge from our stewardship at death, is just, and what we have deserved, for we have wasted our Lord's goods, and thereby forfeited our trust, so that we cannot complain of any wrong done us. (3.) That when our stewardship is taken from us, we must give an account of it to our Lord; after death the judgment; both which, both our discharge and our account, we are fairly warned of, and ought to be frequently travailing in our hearts.

3. His after-salvation. Now he began to consider. What shall I do? v. 5. He would have done well to have considered that before he had so foolishly thrown himself out of a good place by his unfaithfulness; but it is better to consider late than never.

Note, Since we have all received notice that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, we are concerned to consider what we shall do then. He must live; which way shall he have a livelihood?

(1.) He knows that he has not such a degree of industry in him as to get his living by work; "I cannot dig; I cannot earn my bread by my labour." But why can he not dig? It does not appear that he was either old or lame, but the truth is, he is lazy; his cannot is a will not; it is a natural but a moral disability that he labours under; if his master, when he turned him out of the stewardship, had continued him in his service as a labourer, and set a task-master over him, he would have made him dig. He cannot dig, for he was never used to it; now this intimates that we cannot get a livelihood for our souls by any labour for this world; nor indeed can do any thing to purpose for our souls by any ability of our own.

(2.) He knows that he has not such a degree of humility as to get his bread by begging; To beg I am ashamed. This was the language of his pride, as the former of his slothfulness; these whom God, in his providence, has disabled to help themselves, should not be ashamed to ask relief of others. This steward, and more reason to be ashamed, than his Lord's master than of begging his bread.

(3.) He therefore determines to make friends of his lord's debtors, or his tenants that were behind with their rent, and had given notes under their hands for it; (v. 4.) "I am resolved what to do. My lord turns me out of his house, I have none of my own to go to, I am acquainted with my lord's tenants, have done them many good turns, and them well; which will so oblige them, that they will bid me welcome to their houses, and the best entertainment they afford; and so long as I live, at least till I can better dispose of myself, I will quarter upon them, and go from one good house to another." Now the way he would take to make them his friends, was, by strik- ing off a considerable part of their debt to his lord,
and giving it in his accounts so much less than it was. Accordingly, he sent for one, who owed him a hundred talents of silver; (A) for that commodity he paid his rent;) Take thy bill, said he, here it is, and sit down quickly, and write fifty; (v. 6.) so he reduced his debt to the one half. Observe, He was in haste to have it done; "Sit down quickly, and do it, lest we be taken treating, and suspected." He took another, who owed him a hundred measures of wheat, and from his bill he cut off a fifth part, and bid him write for forty; (v. 7.) probably, he did it by the like others, abating more or less, according as he expected kindness from them. See here what uncertain things our worldly possessions are; they are all so most to those who have most of them, who devote upon others all the care concerning them, and so put it into their power to cheat them, because they will not trouble themselves to see with their own eyes. See also what treachery is to be found everywhere, that knowing the steward was to be dismissed, he hard it is to find one that confidence can be reposed in! Let God be true, but every man a liar. Though this steward is turned out for dealing dishonestly, yet still he does so. So rare is it for men to mend of a fault, though they smart for it.

4. The approbation of this; (v. 8.) The lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely. It may be meant of his lord, the lord of that scandalous steward, that he approved very well of his knavery, yet was pleased with his ingenuity and policy for himself; but, taking it so, the latter part of the verse must be the words of our Lord, and therefore I think the whole is meant of him. Christ did, as it were, say, "Now commend me to such a man as this, that knows how to do well for himself, how to improve a present opportunity, and how to provide for a future necessity." He does not commend him because he had done falsely to his master, but because he had done wisely for himself. Yet perhaps herein he did well for his master too, and but justly with the tenants. He knew what hard bargains he had set them, so that they could not pay their rent, but, having been screwed up by his rigour, were thrown behindhand, and they and their families were likely to go to ruin; in consideration of the kindness he had shown to them, he was ought to do both in justice and charity, not only easing the part of their arrears, but abating of their rent for the future. How much wiser thou? may mean, "What rent dost thou sit upon? Come, I will sit thee an easier bargain, and yet no easier than what thou owestest to have." He had been all for his lord, but now he begins to consider the tenants, that he might have their favour when he had lost his. Those in whom trust would be a lasting kindness, and more likely to engage them than abating their arrears only.

Now, this forecast of his, for a comfortable subsistence in this world, shames our improvidence for another world; The children of this world, who choose and have their portions in it, are wiser for their generation, act more considerately, and better consult their worldly interest and advantage, than the children of light, who enjoy the gospel in their generation, that is, in the concerns of their souls and eternity. Note, (1.) The wisdom of worldly people in the concerns of this world, is to be imitated by us in the concerns of our souls: it is their principle to improve their opportunities; to do that first, which is most needful; in summer and harvest to lay up for winter; to take a good bargain when it is offered them; to trust the faithful, and not the unjust stewards. O how different are our spiritual affairs! (2.) The children of light are commonly outdone by the children of this world. Not that the children of this world are truly wise, it is only in their generation; but that they are wiser than the children of light in theirs: for though we are told that we must shortly be turned out of our stewardship, yet we do not provide as we should for such a day; we live as if we were to be here always, and as if there were not another life after this; and are not solicitous, as this steward was, to provide for hereafter; though, as children of the light, that light to which life and immortality are brought by the gospel, we cannot but see another world before us, yet we do not prepare for it, do not send our best effects to it, and it is that affairs to it, which it is that affairs to the world.

II. The application of this parable, and the inferences drawn from it; (v. 9.) "Say unto you, my disciples;" (for to them this parable is directed, v. 1.) "though you have but little in this world, consider how you may do good with that little. Observe,

1. What it is that our Lord Jesus here exhorts us to; to provide for our comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this world; Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, as the steward with his lord's goods made his lord's tenants his friends. It is the wisdom of the men of this world so to manage their money, as that they may have the benefit of it hereafter, and not for the present only; therefore they put it to advantage, but on interest; for their other fund. Now we should learn of them to make use of our money, so as that we may be the better for it hereafter in another world, as they do in hopes to be the better for it hereafter in this world; so cast it upon the waters, as that we may find it again after many days, Ecl. 11. 1. And in our case, though whatever we have is our Lord's goods, yet, as long as we dispose of them among our Lord's tenants, and for their advancement, it is reckoned from being a wrong to our Lord, that it is duty to him as well as policy for ourselves.

Note, (1.) The things of this world are the mammon of unrighteousness, or the false mammon; not only because often got by fraud and unrighteousness, but because those who trust to it for satisfaction and happiness, will certainly be deceived; for riches are perishing things, and will disappoint them, even when they have got it; and these we receive from false friends, and it is a desirable thing to be befriended in the account and state to come. (3.) At death we must all fail stay wicked—when ye suffer an eclipse. Death eclipses us. A tradesman is said to fail, when he becomes a bankrupt; we must all thus fail shortly; death shuts up the shop, seals up the hand. Our comforts and enjoyments on earth will all fail us; flesh and heart fail. (4.) It ought to be our great concern to make it sure to ourselves, that when we fail at death we may be received into everlasting habitations in heaven. The habitations in heaven are everlasting; not made with hands, but eternal, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Christ is gone before, to prepare a place for those that are his, and is there ready to receive them; the bosom of Abraham is ready to receive them, and when a guard of angels carries them thither, a choir of angels is ready to receive them there. The poor that are deserted, are those that in this world distribute to their necessities. (5.) This is a good reason why we should use what we have in the world for the honour of God and the good of our brethren, that thus we may with them lay up in store a good
bond, a good security, a good foundation for the time to come, for an eternity to come. See I Tim. 6. 17—19. which explains this here.

(1.) If we do not make a right use of the gifts of God's providence, how can we expect from him those present and future comforts which are the gifts of his spiritual grace? Our Saviour here compares these, and shows that though our faithful use of the things of this world cannot be thought to merit and obtain, at the same time, the gifts of God's grace, yet, to an eye of faith, it is evident that the providence in the use of them may be justly reckoned a forfeiture of that grace which is necessary to bring us to glory, and that it is which our Saviour here shows, v. 10—12.

[1.] The riches of this world are the less; grace and glory are the greater. Now if we be unfaithful in the less, if we use the things in this world to other purposes than those for which they were given us, it may justly be feared that we shall be so in the gifts of God's grace, that we shall receive them also in vain, and therefore they will be denied us: He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. He that serves God, and does good, with his money, will serve God; and do good, with the more noble and valuable talents of wisdom and grace, and when he has the care of a child, let him be sure that he buries the one talent of this world's wealth, will never improve the five talents of spiritual riches. God withholds his grace from covetous worldly people more than we are aware of.

[2.] The riches of this world are deceitful and uncertain, they are the unrighteous mammon, which is hastening from us space, which, if we will make any advantage of, we must be with ourselves quickly, but if we do not, how can we expect to be entrusted with spiritual riches, which are the only true riches? v. 11—13. Let us be convinced of this, that those are truly rich, and very rich, who are rich in faith, and rich toward God, rich in Christ, in the promises, and in the earnest of heaven; and therefore let us lay up our treasure in them, and expect our portion from them, and mind them in the first place, the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and then, if other things be added to us, use them in ordine ad spiritualia— with a spiritual reference, so that by using them we may take the faster hold of the true riches, and may be qualified to receive yet more grace from God; for God growth to a man that is good in his sight, that is, to a free-hearted child of God, who, though he be poor, yet he is only (Excl. 2. 26.) that is, to a man that is faithful in the unrighteous mammon, he gives the true riches.

[3.] The riches of this world are another man's; they are not ascetyres, not our own, for they are foreign to the soul and its nature and interest; they are not our own, for they are God's, his title to them is prior and superior to ours; the property remains in the very man we use them of, and he is the only one that will never be taken away from us. If we make Christ our own, and the promises our own, and heaven our own, we have that which we may truly call our own. But how can we expect God should enrich us with these, if we do not serve him with our worldly possessions, which we are but stewards of?

(2.) We have no other way to prove ourselves the servants of God, than by giving up ourselves so entirely to his service as to make mammon, that is, all our worldly gain, serviceable to us in his service. (v. 13.) No servant can serve two masters, whose commands are so inconsistent as those of God and mammon. If a man will love the world, and hold to that, it cannot be but he will hate God, and despise him. He will make all his pretensions of religion trussle to his secular interests and designs, and the things of God shall be made to help him in serving and seeking the world; but on the other hand, if a man will love God, and adhere to him, he will comparatively hate the world, (whenever God demands of us the right use of the world, and makes us to seek it, and make all his business and success in the world some way or other conducive to the furtherance of him in the business of religion; and the things of the world shall be made to help him in serving God and working out his salvation. The matter is here laid plainly before us; he cannot serve God and mammon. So divided are their interests, that their services can never be compounded. If therefore we be determined to serve God, we must disclaim and abjure the service of the world.

3. We are here told what entertainment this doctrine of Christ met with among the Pharisees, and what rebuke he gave them.

(1.) They wickedly reiled him, v. 14. The Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and could not but have them in their thoughts, and consider them, and think that he who was so mean to them, and did make them no respecters, let him and his. Let us consider this. First, As their sin, and the fruit of their covetousness, which was their reigning sin, their own iniquity. Note, Many that make a great profession of religion, have much knowledge, and abound in the exercises of devotion, yet are ruined by the love of the world; nor does any thing harden the heart more against the word of Christ. These covetous Pharisees could not bear that touch- ed, which was their Delilah, their darling lust; for this they derided him, who must have a whole course of their error, and all his wretchedness of it, was that, they sniffed up their noses at him, or blew their noses on him. It is an expression of the utmost scorn and disdain imaginable; the word of the Lord was to them a reproach, Jer. 6. 10. They laughed at him for going so contrary to the opinion and way of the world, for endeavouring to recover them from a sin which they were resolved to hold fast. Note, It is common for those to make a jest of the word of God, who are resolved that they will not be ruled by it; but they will find at last it cannot be turned off so. Secondly, As his suffering. Our Lord Jesus endured not only the contradiction of sinners, but their contempt; they had him in derision all the day. He was derided in the words, and in the actions, and in the thoughts of the Pharisees; they ridiculed, that his faithful ministers, whose preaching is unjustly derided, may not be disheartened at it. It is no disgrace to a man, to be laughed at, but to deserve to be laughed at. Christ's apostles were mocked, and no wonder; the disciple is not greater than his Lord.

(2.) He highly reproved them; not for deriding him (he knew how to despise the shame,) but for devising themselves with the shows and colours of piety, when they were strangers to the power of it, v. 15. Here is,

[2.] Their specious outside; nay, it was a splendid one. First, They justified themselves before men; they denied whatever ill was laid to their charge, even by Christ himself. They claimed to be well disposed to religion, and to have great piety and devotion, and justified themselves in that claim; " Ye are they that do that, so as none ever did, that make it your business to court the opinion of men, and right or wrong, will justify yourselves before the world; you are notorious for this." Secondly, They were highly esteemed among men; men did not only acquire them from any blame they were under, but applaud them, and had them in veneration, not only as great men, but as the best of men. Their sentiments were
enjoyed by it are duties still; the sins forbidden by it are sins still. Nay, the precepts of it are explained and enforced by the gospel, and made to appear more spiritual. The ceremonial law is perfected in the gospel, and its shades are filled up with the gospel-colours; not one tittle of that fails, for it is found printed off in the gospel, where, though the force of it is as a law taken off, yet the figure of it as a type shines very bright, witness the Epistle to the Hebrews. There were some things which were condemned at by the law, for the preventing of greater mischief, which the gospel has indeed taken away the permission of, but without any detriment or dispensation to the law, for it has thereby reduced them to the primitive use of the law, as in the case of divorce. (v. 18.) which we had before, Matt. 5. 32.—19. Christ will not allow divorces, for his gospel is intended to strike at the bitter root of men's corrupt appetites and passions, to kill them and pluck them up; and therefore they must not be so far indulged as that permission did indulge them, for the more they are indulged, the more impetuous and headstrong they grow.

19. There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. 22. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom: 24. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from hence. 27. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, 28. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.
As the parable of the prodigal son set before us the grace of the gospel, which is encouraging to us all; so this sets before us the \textit{wrath to come}, and is designed for our awakening! and very fast asleep these are in sin, that will not be awakened by it. The Pharisees made a jest of Christ's sermon against worldliness; now this parable was intended to make them anxious and serious. The tendency of the gospel of Christ is both to reconcile us to poverty and affliction, and to arm us against temptations to worldliness and sensuality. Now this parable, by drawing the curtain, and letting us see what will be the end of both in the other world, goes very far in prosecuting these two great intentions.

This parable is not like Christ's other parables, in which he often used a story to illustrate a truth, and ideas borrowed from worldly things, as those of the sower and the seed, (except that of the sheep and goats,) the prodigal son, and indeed all the rest but this. But here the spiritual things themselves are represented in a narrative or description of the different state of good and bad in this world and the other. Yet we need not call it a history of a particular person; he is \textit{of fact} that, true every day; that poor giddy people might not more neglect and trample upon, die away out of their miseries, and go to heavenly bliss and joy, which is made the more pleasant to them by their preceding sorrows; and that rich epicures, who live in luxury, and are merciful to the poor, die, and go into a state of insupportable torment, which is more grievous and terrible to them, because of the sensual lives they lived; and that there is no pleasing relief from their torments. Is this a parable? What similitude is there in this? The discourse indeed between Abraham and the rich man is only an illustration of the description, to make it more affecting, like that between God and Satan in the story of Job. Our Saviour came to bring us acquainted with another world, and to show us the reference which this world has to that; and here he does it.

In this description, (for so I shall choose to call it,) we may observe,

1. The different condition of a wicked rich man, and a godly poor man, in this world. We know that as some of late, so the Jews of old, were ready to make prosperity one of the marks of a true christian; that is, a good man, and a favourite of heaven, so that they could hardly have any favourable thoughts of a poor man. This mistake Christ, upon all occasions, set himself to correct, and here very fully; where we have,

1. A wicked man, and one that will be for ever miserable, in the height of prosperity; (v. 19.) \textit{There was a certain rich man, from the Latin we commonly call him \textit{Dives}—a rich man;} but, as Bishop Tillotson observes, he has no name given him, as the poor man has, because it had been invicious to have named any particular rich man in such a description as this, and apt to provoke and gain ill-will. But others observe, that Christ would not do the rich man so much honour as to name him, though when perhaps he called his hands by his own name, he thought it should long survive that of the beggar at his gate, which yet is laughed at when that of the rich man is buried in oblivion. Now we are told concerning this rich man, (1.) That he was \textit{clad in purple and fine linen, and that was his adorning. He had fine linen for pleasure, and clean, no doubt, every day; night-linen, and day-linen. He had purple for state, for that which is the ornament of the people;} which has made some conjecture that Christ had an eye to Herod in it. He never appeared abroad but in great magnificence. (2.) \textit{He dined deliciously and sumptuously every day. His table was furnished with all the}}

Varieties and dainties that nature and art could furnish him with; his side-table richly adorned with plate, his servants, who waited at table, in rich liv-}

eries, and the guests at his table, no doubt, such as he thought grooved it.

Well, and what harm was there in all this? It is no sin to be rich, no sin to wear purple and fine linen, or to keep a magnificent table; but, [1.] Christ would hereby show that a man may have a great deal of the wealth and pomp and pleasure of this world, and yet die and perish for ever under God's wrath and curse. We cannot infer from men's living a great deal, that God has given them in giving them so much, or that they love God for, or in, that much; happiness consists not in these things. [2.] That plenty and pleasure are a very dangerous, and to many a fatal temptation to luxury and sensuality, and forgetfulness of God and another world. This man might have been happy if he had not had great possessions and enjoyments. [3.] That the indulgence of these things is apt to make a man worldly and pleasure loving, and to lose his riches, which are the ruin of many a soul, and the most common cause of it. It is true, eating good meat and wearing good clothes is lawful; but it is as true, that it often becomes the food and fuel of pride and luxury, and so turns into sin to us. [4.] That feasting ourselves and our friends, and, at the same time, forgetting the distresses of the poor and afflicted, are very provoking to God and damming to the soul. The sin of rich men is as great as that of the poor, for it is no less a sin to give a poor man rich dress or his diet, and yet his living for himself only.

2. Here is a godly man, and one that will be for ever happy, in the depth of adversity and distress; (v. 20.) \textit{There was a certain beggar, named Lazarus: a beggar of that name, eminently devout, and in great distress, was, probably, well known among good people at that time: a beggar, suppose such a one as Eleazer, or Lazarus. Some think Eleazar a proper name for any poor man; for it signifies the help of God, which they must fly to, that are destitute of other helps. This poor man was reduced to the last extremity, as miserable as you can lightly suppose a man to be in this world, as to outward things. (1.) His body was full of sores, like Job. To be sick and weak in body is a great affliction; but, above all, to have some kind of complaint, and to be balsome to these about him. (2.) He was forced to beg his bread, and to take up with such scraps as he could get at rich people's doors. He was so sore and lame, that he could not go himself, but he was carried by some compassionate hand or other, and laid at the rich man's gate. Nete, These that are not able to help the poor with their \textit{purse}, should help them with their \textit{palms}; those that cannot lend a \textit{purse}, should lend them a \textit{hand}; those that have not wherewithal to give to them themselves, should either bring them, or go for them, to those that have. Lazarus, in his distress, had nothing of his own to subsist on, no relation to go to, nor did the parish take care of him. It is an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, that such a godly man as Lazarus was, should be suffered to perish for want of necessary food. Now observe, [1.] His expectations from the rich man's table, \textit{He desired to be fed with the crumbs, v. 21.} He did not look for a mess from off his table, though he ought to have had one, one of the best; but would be thankful for the crumbs from under the table, the broken meat which was the rich man's leavings; may, the leavings of his dogs. \textit{The poor man's \textit{extra-}}
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food, and must be content with such they are given. Now this is taken notice of to show, \textit{First, What was the distress, and what the disposition, of the poor man. He was poor, but he was poor in spirit,}}
contentedly poor. He did not sit at the rich man's gate, complaining, and bawling, and making a noise, but silently and modestly desiring to be fed with the crumbs. This miserable man was a good man, and in favour with God. Note, It is often the lot of some of the dearest of God's saints and servants to be greatly afflicted in this world, while wicked people, 2 Tim. 2:10, 14. Here is a child of wrath and an heir of hell sitting in the house, faming sumptuously; and a child of love and an heir of heaven, lying at the gate, perishing for hunger. And is men's spiritual state to be judged of then by their outward condition? Secondly, What was the temper of the rich man toward him? We are not told that he abused him, or forbade him to enter his gate, but is intimated that he slighted him; he had no concern for him, took no care about him. Here was a real object of charity, and a very moving one, which spake for itself; it was presented to him at his own gate; the poor man had a good character and a good conduct, and every thing that could recommend him. A little thing would be a great kindness in a good man; a mere beggar, who had not order him to be taken in, and lodged in the barn, or some of the out-buildings, but let him lie there. Note, It is not enough not to oppress and trample upon the poor; we shall be found unfaithful stewards of our Lord's goods in the great day, if we do not succour and relieve them. The reason given for the most fearful doom is, I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat. I wonder how these rich persons in Christ's case, who believe that they believe it, can be so unconcerned as they often are, in the necessities and miseries of the poor and afflicted!

[2.] The usage he had from the dogs: The dogs came and licked his sores. The rich man kept a kennel of hounds, it may be, or other dogs, for his diversion, and to please his fancy, and those were fed to the full, when poor Lazarus was not got enough to keep him alive. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for hereafter, that feed their dogs, but neglect the poor. And it is a great aggravation of the uncharitableness of many rich people, that they bestow upon their fancies and fowles, which would supply the necessity, and rejoice the heart, of any good christian in distress. Those offend God, nay, and they put a contempt upon human nature, that pamper their dogs and horses, and let the families of their poor neighbours starve. Now those dogs came, and licked the sores of poor Lazarus; which may be taken, First, As an aggravation of his misery. His sores were bloody, which tempted the dogs to come and lick them, as they did the blood of Naboth and Ahab, 1 Kings 21. 19. And we read of the tongue of the dogs licked in the blood of enemies, Ps. 68. 22. They attacked him while he was yet alive, as if he had been already dead, and he had not strength himself to keep them off, nor would any of the servants be so civil as to check them. The dogs were like their master, and thought they fared sumptuously when they regaled themselves with human gore. Or, it may be taken, Secondly, As some relief to him in his misery; 44. He was art-hartened toward him, but the dogs came, and licked his sores. They lifted and eased them; it is not said, They sucked them, but licked them, which was good for them. The dogs were more kind to him than their master was.

II. Here is the different condition of this godly poor man, and this wicked rich man, at, and after, death. Hitherto the wicked man seems to have had the advantage, but Exulius acta probat—Let us wait a while, to see the end hereof.

1. They both die; (v. 22.) The beggar died; the rich man also died. Death is the common lot of rich and poor, godly and ungodly; there they meet together. One dieth in his full strength, and another in the bitterness of his soul; but they shall lie down alike in the dust, Job 21. 26. Death favours not either the rich man for his riches, or the poor man for his poverty. Saints die, that they may bring their sorrow into the grave, and enter upon their joys. Sinners die, that they may go to give up their account. It concerns both rich and poor to prepare for death, for it waits for them both. More seeptura lignitius equa—Death bends the sceptre with the spade.

—exequi pulsatis paepe pauperum tabernas,
Regnumque turres.

With equal pace, impartial Fate
Knocks at the palace, as the cottage gate.

2. The beggar died first. God often takes godly people out of the world, when he leaves the wicked to flourish still. It was an advantage to the beggar, that such a speedy end was put to his miseries; and since he could find no other shelter or resting-place, he was hid in the grave, where the weary are at rest.

3. The rich man died, and was buried. Nothing is said of the interment of the poor man; they digged a hole anywhere, and tumbled his body in, without any solemnity; he was buried with the burial of an ass: nay, it is well if they let the dogs lick his sores, did not let them gnaw his bones. But the rich man had a great and stately sepulchre, and had a train of mourners to attend him to his grave, and a stately monument set up over it; probably, he had a funeral oration in praise of him, and his generous way of living, and the good table he kept, which those would commend, that had been feasted at it. It is said of the wicked man, that he is brought to the grave with no small ado, and laid in the tomb, and the closing of the covers of the grave, where it possible, are made sweet to him, Job 21. 32, 33. How foreign is the ceremony of a funeral to the happiness of the man!

4. The beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. How much did the honour done to his soul, by this convey of it to its rest, exceed the honour done to the rich man, by the carrying off his body with so much magnificence to its grave! Observe, (1.) His soul exhibited in a state of separation from its body. It did not die, or fall asleep, with the body, his candle was not put out with him, but lived, and acted, and knew what it did, and what was done to it. (2.) His soul removed to another world, to the world of spirits; it returned to God who gave it, to its native country; this is implied in its being carried. The spirit of a man goes upward. (3.) Angels took care of it; it was carried by angels. They are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, not only while they live, but when they die, and have a charge concerning them, to bear them up in their hands, not only in their journeys to and fro on earth, but in their great journey to their long home in heaven, be both their guide and their guard through regions unknown and unsafe. The soul of man, if not chained to this earth, and clogged by the weight of its flesh, is in its exalted state, a spirit, capable of sublimation; by which it springs upward as soon as it gets clear of the body; but Christ will not trust those that are his to that, and therefore will send special messengers to fetch them to himself. One angel one would think sufficient, but here are more, as many were sent for Elijah. Amasis, king of Egypt, had his chariot drawn by kings; but what was that honour to this? Saints ascend in the virtue of Christ's ascension; but this convey of angels is added for state and decorum; saints shall be brought home, not only safely, but
honourably. What were the bearers at the rich man’s funeral, though, probably, those of the first rank, compared with Lazarus’s bearers? The angels were not nay of touching him, for his sores were on his body, not on his soul; that was presented to God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. “Is not this Abraham your father?” said he, “exclaiming, “now come, and do your office.” (4.) It was carried into Abraham’s bosom. The Jews expressed the happiness of the righteous at death, three ways; they go to the garden of Eden; they go to be under the throne of glory; and they go to the bosom of Abraham; and that is it which our Saviour here makes use of. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and the grandsire of the souls that were in a faithful biography of his heart, but to him, when Abraham, a tender father, lays them in his bosom, especially at their first coming, to bid them welcome, and to refresh them when newly come from the sorrows and fatigues of this world? He was carried to his bosom, that is, to feast with him, for at least the guests are said to lean on one another’s breasts; and the saints in heaven sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham was a noble and rich man, and in heaven he does not disdain to lay poor Lazarus in his bosom. Rich saints and poor meet in heaven. This poor Lazarus, who might not be admitted within the rich man’s gate, is conducted into the dining-room, into the bed-chamber, of the heavenly palace; and he is laid in the bosom of Abraham, while the rich gluton scornd to set with the dogs of his flock.

5. The next news you hear of the rich man, after the account of his death and burial is, that in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment, v. 23.

(1.) His state is very miserable. He is in hell, in hades, in the state of separate souls, and there he is in the utmost misery and anguish possible. As the souls of the faithful, immediately after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; so wicked and unsanctified souls, immediately after they are fetched from the pleasures of the flesh by death, are in misery and torment endless, useless, and remediless, and which will be much increased and completed at the resurrection. This rich man had entirely devoted himself to the pleasures of the world of sense, was wholly taken up with the cares of the body, and therefore was wholly unfit for the pleasures of the world of spirits; so that a carnal mind as his would indeed be no pleasure, nor could he have any relish of them, and therefore he is of course excluded from them. Yet that is not all; he was hard-hearted to God’s poor, and therefore he is not only cut off from mercy, but he has judgment without mercy, and falls under a punishment of sense as well as a punishment of loss.

(2.) The misery of his state is aggravated by his knowledge of the happiness of Lazarus; He lift up his eyes, and sees Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. It is the soul that is in torment, and they are the eyes of his mind that are lifted up. He now began to consider what was become of Lazarus; he had not seen him for his part, or he, plainly sees him, and with as much assurance as if he had seen him with his bodily eyes, afar off in the bosom of Abraham. This same aggravation of the miseries of the damned we had before; (ch. 13. 28.) Ye shall see Abraham, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. [1.] He saw Abraham afar off; To see Abraham we should think a pleasing sight; but to see him afar off was a tormenting sight. Near himself he saw devils and damned companions, frightful sights, and painful ones; afar off he saw Abraham. Note, Every sight in hell is aggravating. [2.] He saw Lazarus in his bosom; that same Lazarus whom he had looked upon with so much scorn and contempt, as not worthy his notice, he now sees preferred, and to be envied. The sight of him brought to his mind his own cruel and barbarous conduct toward him; and the sight of him in that happiness made his own misery the more grievous.

M. 1. There is an account of what passed between the rich man and Abraham in the separate state—a state of separation one from another, and of both from this world. Though it is probable that there will not be, nor are, any such dialogues or discourses between glorified saints and damned sinners, yet it is very proper, and what is usually done in descriptions, especially such as are designed to be pathetic and moving, by such dialogues to represent what they were, and what Abraham has said and sent forth of the other. And since we find damned sinners tormented in the presence of the Lamb, (Rev. 14. 10.) and the faithful servants of God looking upon them that have transgressed the covenant, there where their worm does not, and their fire is not quenched, (Isa. 66. 23, 24.) such a discourse as this is not incongruous to be supposed.

Now in this discourse we have,

1. The request which the rich man made to Abraham for some mitigation of his present misery; (v. 24.) seeing Abraham afar off, he cried to him, cried aloud, as one in earnest and as one in pain and misery, mixing shrieks with his petitions, to enforce them by moving compassion. He that used to command aloud, now begs aloud; louder than ever Lazarus did when he cried, have mercy. And now the levels are all turned into lamentations. Observe here,

(1.) The title he gives to Abraham; Father Abraham. Note, There are many in hell, that can call Abraham father; that were Abraham’s seed after the flesh; nay, and many that were, in name and profession, the children of the covenant made with Abraham. Perhaps this rich man, in his carnal sight, had mingled Abraham and the sons of Abraham, as the scoffers of the latter days do; but now he gives him a title of respect, Father Abraham. Note, The day is coming, when wicked men will be glad to scruple acquaintance with the righteous, and to claim kindred to them, though now they slight them. Abraham in this description represents Christ, for to him all judgment is committed; and if the son of Abraham here speaks, then it is aught for him, and the sons of Abraham here apply themselves to him, that now slight Christ, will shortly make their court to him, Lord, Lord.

(2.) The representation he makes to him of his present deplorable condition; I am tormented in this flame. It is the torment of his soul that he complains of, and therefore such a fire as will operate upon souls; and such a fire the wrath of God is, fastening upon a guilty conscience; such a fire horror of mind is, and the reproaches of a self-accusing, self-condemning heart. Nothing is more painful and terrible to the body than to be tormented with fire; by that therefore the miseries and agonies of damned souls are represented.

(3.) His request to Abraham, in consideration of this misery; Have mercy on me. Note, The day is coming, when that will be the first prayer that makes right for the damned, will beg hard for it. O for mercy, mercy, when the day of mercy is over, and offers of mercy are no more made. He that had no mercy on Lazarus, yet expects Lazarus should have mercy on him, “For,” thinks he, “Lazarus is better natured than ever I was.” The particular favour he begs is, Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue. [1.] Here he complains of the torment of his tongue particularly, as if he were more tormented there than in any other part, the punishment answering the sin. The tongue is one of the organs of speech, and by the torments of that he is put in mind of all the wicked words that
he had spoken against God and man; his cursing, and railing, and blasphemy, all his hard speeches, and filthy speeches; by his words he is condemned, and therefore in his tongue he is tormented. The tongue is also one of the organs of tasting; and therefore the torments of that will remind him of his inordinate relish of the delights of sense, which he had raved under his tongue. [2.] He desires a drop of water to cool his tongue. He does not say, Father Abraham and child. Thou art here in the torment of hell, and I stand before thee. 

He who at a time lies; unscripted souls do not, cannot, truly desire the happiness of heaven; nay, he does not say, Father Abraham, order me a release from this misery, help me out of this pit, for he utterly despairs of that; but he asks as small a thing as could be asked, a drop of water to cool his tongue for one moment. [3.] He desires that Lazarus might bring it. I have sometimes suspected that he had herein an ill design upon Lazarus, and hoped, if he could get him within his reach, he should keep him from returning to the bosom of Abraham again. The heart that is filled with rage against God, is filled with rage against the people of God. But we will think more charitably even of a damned sinner, and suppose he intended here to show respect to Lazarus as one whom he would now gladly be born to see, and would have him mind, he and thinks Lazarus will not be unwilling to do him this good office for old acquaintance-sake. Grotesque here quotes Plato describing the torments of wicked souls, and among other things he saith, They are continually raving on those whom they have murdered, or been any way injurious to, calling upon them to forgive them the wrongs they did them. 

Note, There is a day coming when those that now hate and despise the people of God would gladly receive kindness from them.

2. The reply which Abraham gave to this request. In general, he did not grant it. He would not allow him one drop of water to cool his tongue. Note, The damned in hell shall not have any the least abatement or mitigation of their torment. If we now improve the day of our opportunities, we may have a full and lasting satisfaction in the streams of mercy; but if we now slight the offer, it will be in vain in hell to expect the least drop of mercy. See how justly this rich man is paid in his own coin. He that denied a crumb, is denied a drop. Now it is said to us, ask, and it shall be given you; but if we set this accepted time, we may ask, and it shall not be given us. But this is not all; had Abraham said, You shall have nothing to abate your torment, it had been sad; but he saith a great deal which would add to his torment, and make the flame the hotter, for every thing in hell will be tormenting.

(1.) He calls him son; a kind and civil title, but here it serves only to aggravate the denial of his request, which shuts up the bowels of the compassion of a father from him. He had been a son, but a reprobate and rebellious son. See the folly of those who rely on that plea. We have Abraham to our father, when we find one in hell, and doomed to be there ever for ever, whom Abraham calls son.

(2.) He puts him in mind of what had been both his own condition, and the condition of Lazarus, in their life-time; Son, remember; this is a cutting word. The memories of damned souls will be their torment. The memory under his tongue is now stirred up and stirred up to do its office, which here they would not suffer it to do. Nothing will bring more oil to the flames of hell than Son, remember. Now sinners are called upon to remember, but they do not, they will not, they find ways to avoid it. Son, remember the Creator, thy Redeemer, remember the latter end, but they can turn a deaf ear to these

memories, and forget that for which they have their memories; justly therefore will their everlasting misery arise from a Son, remember, which they will not be able to turn a deaf ear to. What a dreadful pelt will this ring in our ears, Son, remember the many warnings that were given thee, not to come to this place of torment, which thou wouldst not regard; remember the fair offers made thee of eternal life and glory, which thou wouldst not accept; for which he is here put in mind of, is, [1.] That thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things. He does not tell him that he had abused them, but that he had received them; [2.] Remember what a bountiful benefactor God has been to thee, how ready he was to do thee good; thou canst not therefore say, He owes thee any thing, no, not a drop of water. What he gave thee, thou receivedst, and that was all; thou ever gavest him no trip for them, in a thankful acknowledgment of them, much less didst thou ever make any grateful return for them, or improvement of them; thou hast been the grave of God's blessings, in which they were buried, not the field of them, in which they were sown. Thou receivedst thy good things; thou receivedst them, and usedst them, as if they had been thine own, and the things of this world had been thine own. Or rather, they were the things which thou didst choose for thy good things, which were in thine eye the best things, which thou didst content thyself with, and portion thyself in. Thou hast received, and drink, and clothes of the richest and finest, and these were the things thou didst place thy happiness in; they were thy reward, thy consolation, the pleasure thou didst agree for, and thou hast had it. Thou hast waited for the good things of thy life-time, and hast had no thought of better things in another life, and therefore hast no reason to expect them. The day of thy good things is past and gone, and now is the day of thine evil things, of recompense for all thine evil deeds. Thou hast already had the last drop of the viats of mercy that thou couldst expect to fall to thy share; and there remains nothing but viats of wrath without mixture. [3.] "Remember, too, what evil things Lazarus received. Thou enviest him his happiness here; but think what a large share of misery he had in his life-time. Thou hast had as much good as could be thought to fall to the lot of so bad a man, and he as much evil as could be thought to fall to the lot of so good a man. He received his evil things; he borne them patiently, received them from the hand of God, as Job did (ch. 2. 10. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall not receive evil also?) He received them as physically appointed for the cure of his spiritual distempers, and the cure was effected. As wicked people have good things only in this life, and at death they are for ever separated from all good; so godly people have evil things only in this life, and at death they are for ever put out of the reach of them. Now Abraham, by putting him in mind of this, would have him consider how he would be better pleased with any thing that was in the future state of recompense and retribution, those that are now dealt with, both by God and man, better than they deserve, must expect to be rewarded every man according to his works.

(3.) He puts him in mind of Lazarus's present bliss, and his own misery; But now the tables are turned, and so they must abide for ever; now he is
comforted, and thou art tormented. He did not need to be told that he was tormented; he felt it to his coat; he knew that he who lay in the bosom of Abraham, could not but be comforted there; yet Abraham puts him in mind of it, that he might, by comparing one thing with another, observe the righteousness of God, in reciprocating tribulation to them who trouble his people, and to those who are troubled, ver. 2 These. 1. 6, 7. He observes, [1.] Heaven is a place of joy. His bosom is weeping and wailing, and pain in perfection. [2.] The soul, as soon as it leaves the body, goes either to heaven or hell, to comfort or torment, immediately, and does not sleep, or go into purgatory. [3.] Heaven will be heaven indeed to those that go thither through many and great calamities; of those that had grace, but little of the comfort of it here, (people of such souls refuted to be comforted,) yet, when they are fallen asleep in Christ, you may truly say, "Now they are comforted: now all their tears are wiped away, and all their fears are vanished." In heaven there is everlasting consolation. And, on the other hand, hell will be hell indeed to those that go thither from the midst of the enjoyment of all the delights and pleasures of sense; to them the corporal region of the greater, and the greater part of the pleasures are described to be to the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy, Deut. 28. 56. (4.) He assures him that it was to no purpose to think of having any relief by the ministry of Lazarus; for, (v. 26.) "Aside all this, worse yet, brethren, behold, and you there is a great gulf fixed, an impassable one; a great chasm, that so there can be no communication between glorified saints and damned sinners. [1.] The kindest saint in heaven cannot make a visit to the congregation of the dead and damned, to comfort or relieve any there, who once were their friends. "They that would pass from hence to you, cannot; they cannot leave beholding the face of their Father, nor the work about his throne, to fetch water for you; that is no part of their business." [2.] The most daring sinner in hell cannot force his way out of that prison, cannot get over that great gulf. They cannot pass to us, that would come from thence. It was not to be expected, for the door of mercy is shut, the bridge is drawn; there is no coming out upon parole or bail, no, not for one hour. In this world, blessed be God, there is no passage between a state of nature and grace, but we may pass from one to the other, from sin to God; but if we die in our sins, if we throw ourselves into the pit of destruction, there is no coming out. It is a pit in which there is no water, and out of which there is no redemption. The decree and counsel of God have fixed this gulf, which all the world cannot unfix. This abounds this miserable creature to despair; it is now too late for any change of his condition, or any the least relief: it might have been prevented in time, but it cannot now be remedied to eternity. The state of damned sinners is fixed by an irrepealable and unalterable sentence. A stone is rolled to the door of the pit, which cannot be rolled back. 3. The further request he had to make to his father Abraham; not for himself, his mouth is stopped, and he has a word to say in answer to Abraham's denial of a drop of water. Damned sinners are made to know that the sentence they are under is just, and they cannot alleviate their own misery by making any objection against it. And since he cannot obtain a drop of water to cool his tongue, we may suppose he gnawed his tongue for pain, as those are said to do, on whom one of the nails of God's wrath is bared out, Rev. 16. 10. The shrieks and outcries which we may suppose to be now uttered by him were hideous; but since he has an opportunity of speaking to Abraham, he will improve it for his relations whom he had left behind, since he can not improve it for his own advantage. Now as to this, (1.) He begs that Lazarus might be sent to his father's house, upon an errand thither; (v. 27.) "I pray thee therefore for father Abraham, that he send his angel out of heaven, to look on my father, and show unto him, in the request he is importunate, "I pray thee. O deny me not this." When he was on earth, he might have prayed, and been heard, but now he prays in vain. "Therefore, because thou hast denied me the former request, surely thou wilt be so compassionate as not to deny this: or, Therefore, because there is a great gulf fixed, seeing there is a gulf fixed here, O send to prevent their coming hither:" or, "Though there is a great gulf fixed between you and me, yet since there is no such gulf fixed between you and them, send him thither. Send him back to my father's house; he knows well enough where it is, has been there many a time, having been denied the crumbs that fell from the table. He knows I have five brothers; if he can find them, they will know him, and will regard what he saith, for they knew him to be an honest man; let him testify to them; let him tell them what condition I am in, and that I brought myself to it by my luxury and sensuality, and my unmercifulness to the poor; let him warn them not to tread in my steps, nor to go on in the way in which I led them, and left them; lest they also come into this place of torment." v. 28. Some observe, that he speaks of five brethren only, whence they infer he had no children, else he would have mentioned them, and then it was an aggravation of his uncharitableness, that he had no children to provide for. Now he would have them stopped in their sinful course. He does not say, "Go give me leave to tell them," for he knew that there was a great gulf fixed, and despaired of a permission so favourable to himself: his going would frighten them out of their sins; but, "Send Lazarus, whose address will be less terrible, and yet his testimony sufficient to frighten them out of their sins." Now he desired the preventing of their ruin, partly in tenderness to them, for whom he could not but have a natural affection; he knew their temptations, their ignorance, their infidelity, their inconsistence, and wished to prevent the destruction they were running into; but it was partly in tenderness to himself; for their coming to him, to that place of torment, would but aggravate the misery to him, who had helped to show them the way thither, as the sight of Lazarus helped to aggravate his misery. When partners in sin come to be sharers in weal, as tares bound in bundles for the fire, they will be a terror to one another. (2.) Abraham denies him this favour too. There is no request granted in hell. Those who make the rich man's praying to Abraham, a justification of their praying to saints departed, as they are far to seek for proofs, when the case of a damned sinner is put for an example, so they have it to encourage them to follow the example, when all his prayers were made in vain. Abraham leaves them to the testimony of Moses and the prophets, the ordinary means of conviction and conversion: they have the written word, which they may read and hear read; "Let them attend to the letter of prophecy, for God will messenger the errand out of the common world." Here is their privilege; They have Moses and the prophets, and their duty; "Let them hear them, and mix faith with them, and that will be sufficient to keep them from this place of torment." By this it appears
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1. THEN said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! 2. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 3. Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. 4. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. 5. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. 6. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye might say unto this sycamore-tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. 7. But which of you, having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? 8. And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? 9. Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. 10. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

We are here taught,
1. That giving of offences is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid, and carefully watch against, v. 1. 2. We can expect no other than that offences will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offences, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but that offences will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom they come, his doom will be heavy, (v. 2) more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors, who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt much ponderous than that of millstones.

This speaks a woe, 1. To the executors, who offer any injury to the cause of Christ's little ones, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it. 2. To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ, and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples; for they are those by whom offences come. 3. To those who, under the profession of the christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the hands and sudden the hearts of God's people: for by them the offence comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, we have, i. Some particular discourses which Christ had with his disciples, in which he teaches them to take heed of giving offence, and to forgive the injuries done them, (v. 1. 4.) encourages them to pray for the increase of their faith, (v. 8. 6.) and then teaches them humility, whatever service they had done for God, v 7. 10. II.
be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offences will come.

11. That forgiving of offences is a great duty, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of; (v. 2.) Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones. Ministers must be very careful not to say or do any thing that may be a discouragement to weak Christians; there is need of great caution, and they ought to speak and act very considerately, for fear of this: or, "When your brother trespasses against you, does any injury, put any slight or affront upon you, if he be accessory to any damage done you in your property or reputation, take heed to yourselves at such a time, lest you be put into a passion; lest, when your spirits are provoked, you speak unwarily, and rashly vow revenge, (Prov. 24. 29.) I will do so to him, as he has done to me. Take heed what you say at such a time, lest you say amiss."

1. "If you are permitted to rebuke him, you are advised to do so. Smother not the resentment, but give it vent; tell him his faults, show him wherein he has not done well nor fairly by you, and, it may be, you will perceive (and you must be very willing to perceive it) that you mistook him, that it was not a trespass against you, or not designed, but an oversight, and either that will be enough for considering him;" as seek. 22. 30, 31.

2. "You are commanded, upon his repentance, to forgive him, and to be perfectly reconciled to him; If he repent, forgive him; forget the injury, never think of it again, much less upbraid him with it. Though he do not repent, you must not therefore bear malice to him, or meditate revenge; but if you do not at least say that he repents, you are not bound to be free and familiar with him as you have been. If he be guilty of gross sin, to the offence of the Christian community he is a member of, let him be gravely and mildly reproved for his sin, and, upon his repentance, received into friendship and communion again." This the apostle calls forgiveness. 2 Cor. 2. 7.

3. "You must repent this every time he repeats his trespass, v. 4. If he could be supposed to be either so negligent, or so impudent, as to trespass after thrice seven times in a day, and as often professes himself sorry for his fault, and promises not again to offend in like manner, continue to forgive him." Humanum est errare—To err is human.

Note, Christians should be of a forgiving spirit, willing to make the best of every body, and all about them easy; forward to extenuate faults, and not to aggravate them; and should contrive as much to show that they have forgiven an injury, as others to show that they resent it.

111. That we have all need to get our faith strengthened, because, as that grace grows, all other graces grow. The more firmly we believe the doctrine of Christ, and the more confidently we rely upon the grace of Christ, the more it will be with us every way. Now observe here.

1. The address which the disciples made to Christ, for the strengthening of their faith, v. 5. The apostles themselves, so they are here called, though they were prime ministers of state in Christ's kingdom, yet acknowledged the weakness and deficiency of their faith, and saw their need of Christ's grace for the improvement of it; they said unto Christ, Lord, "Increase our faith, and perfect what is lacking in it. Let the discoveries of faith be more clear, the desires of faith more strong, the dependences of faith more firm and fixed, the dedications of faith more entire and resolute, and the delights of faith more pleasing." Note, The increase of our faith is what we should earnestly desire, and we should offer up that desire to God in prayer. Some think that they put up this prayer to Christ, upon occasion of his pressing upon them the duty of forgiving injuries; "Lord, increase our faith, or we shall not be able to practise such a difficult duty as this." Faith in God's pardoning is to well enable us to get over the greatest difficulties that lie in the way of our forgiving our brother. Others think that it was upon some other occasion, when the apostles were run about in working some miracle, and were reproved by Christ for the weakness of their faith, as Matt. 17. 16, 17. To him that trusts they must apply themselves for grace to mend them; to him they cry, Lord, "Increase our faith."

2. The assurance Christ gave them of the wonderful efficacy of true faith; (v. 6.) "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, so small as mustard-seed, but yours is yet less than the least; or so sharp as mustard-seed, so pungent, so exciting to all other graces, as mustard to the animal spirits, and therefore used in medicines, you might wonder much beyond what you now do; nothing would be too hard for you, that were fit to be done for the glory of God, and the confirmation of the doctrine you preach, yea though it were the transplanta tion of a tree from the earth to the sea. See Matt. 17. 26. As with God nothing is impossible, so it is with all those that are made strong by that grace which is given to them."

IV. That whatever we do in the service of Christ, we must be very humble, and not imagine that we can merit any favour at his hand, or claim it as a debt; even the apostles themselves, who did so much more for Christ than others, must not think that they had thereby made him their debtor.

1. We are all God's servants; (his apostles and ministers in a special manner so;) and, as servants, are bound to wait upon our Master, that our whole strength and our whole time are to be employed for him; for we are not our own, nor at our own disposal, but at our Master's service. 2. As God's servants, it becomes us to fill up our time with duty, and we have a variety of work appointed us to do; we ought to make the end of one service the beginning of another. The servant that has been ploughing or feeding cattle in the field when he comes home at night, has work to do still; he must wait at table, v. 7, 8. When we have been employed in the duties of a religious conversation that will not excuse us from the exercises of devotion; when we have been waiting on God, still we must be waiting on God, wading on him continually. 3. Our principal care here must be to do the duty of our relation, and leave to our Master to give us the comfort of it, when and how he thinks fit. No servant expects that his master should say to him, Go and sit down to meat; it is time enough to do that when we have done our day's work. Let us be in care to finish our work, and to do that well, and then the reward will come in due time. 4. That Christ should be served before us; Make ready wherewith I may sup, and afterward thou shalt eat and drink. Doubting Christians say that they cannot give to Christ the glory of his love as they should, because they have not yet obtained the comfort of it; but this is wrong; first, let Christ have the glory of it, let us attend him with our graces, and then we shall eat and drink in the company of Christ, and there that is a feast. 5. Christ's servants, when they are to wait upon him, must gird themselves, must free themselves from every thing that is entangling and encumbering, and fit themselves with a close application of mind to go on, and go through, with their work; they must gird up the loins of their mind. When we have prepared for Christ's entertainment, have made ready wherewith may sup, we must then
gird ourselves, to attend him. This is expected from servants, and Christ might require it from us, but he does not insist upon it. He was among his disciples, as one that served, and came not, as other masters, to take state, and to be ministered unto, but to minister; witness his washing his disciples’ feet.

6. Christ’s servants do not so much as merit his thanks for any service they do him; “Dost he thank that servant?” Dost he reckon himself indebted to him for it? So, by no means. No good works of ours can merit any thing at the hand of God. We expect God’s favour, not because we have by our services made him a Debtor to us, but because he has by his promises made himself a Debtor to his own honour, and that we may plead with him, but cannot sue for a quantum meruit—according to merit.

7. Whatever we do for Christ, though it should be more perhaps than some other does, yet it is no more than is our duty to do. Though we should do all things that are commanded us, and alas! in many things we come short of that, yet there is no work of supererogation, it is but what we are bound to by that first and great commandment, of loving God with all our heart and soul, which includes the utmost.

8. The best servants of Christ, even when they do the best services, must humbly acknowledge that they are unprofitable servants; though they are not those unprofitable servants that bury their talents, and shall be cast into utter darkness, yet as to Christ, and any advantage that can accrue to him by their services, they are unprofitable: our goodness extendeth not unto God, nor if we are righteous is he the better, Ps. 15. 2. Job 22. 2.—55. 7. God cannot be a Gainer by our services, and therefore cannot be made a Debtor by them. He has no need of us, nor can our services make any addition to his perfections; it becomes us therefore to call ourselves unprofitable servants, but to call his service a profitable service, for God is happy without us, but we are undone without him.

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. 12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: 13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. 14. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. 15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; 16. And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. 17. And Jesus answering said; Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? 18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. 19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

We have here an account of the cure of ten lepers, which we had not in any other of the evangelists. The leprosy was a disease which the Jews supposed to be inflicted for the punishment of some particular sin, and to be, more than other diseases, a mark of God’s displeasure; and therefore Christ, who came to take away sin, and turn away wrath, took particular care to cleanse the lepers that fell in his way. Christ was now in his way to Jerusalem, about the mid-way, where he had little acquaintance, in comparison with what he had either at Jerusalem or in Galilee; he was now in the frontier country, the marches that lay between Samaria and Galilee; he went that road to find out these lepers, and to cure them, for he is found of them that sought him not. Observe,

1. The address of those lepers to Christ; they were ten in a company; for though they were shut out from society with others, yet those that were infected were at liberty to converse with one another, which would be some comfort to them, as giving them an opportunity to compare notes, and to console with one another. Now observe,

2. They stood afar off, knowing that by the law their disease obliged them to keep their distance. A sense of our spiritual leprosy should make us very humble in all our approaches to Christ. Who are we that we should draw near to him that is infinite purity? We are impure.

3. Their request was unanimous, and very important; (v. 13.) They lifted up their voices, being at a distance, and cried, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Those that expect help from Christ, must take him for their Master, and be at his command. If he be Master, he will be Jesus, a Saviour, and not otherwise. They ask not in particular to be cured of their leprosy, but, Have mercy on us; and it is enough to refer ourselves to the compassions of Christ, for they fail not. They had heard the fame of this Jesus, (though he had not been much conversant in that country,) and that was such as encouraged them to make application to him; and if but one of them began in so cheap and easy an address, they would all join.

3. Christ sent them to the priests, to be inspected by him, who was the judge of the leprosy. He did not tell them positively that they should be cured, but bid them go show themselves to the priests, v. 14. This was a trial of their obedience, and it was fit that it should be so tried, as Naaman’s in a like case, Go wash in Jordan. Note, Those that expect Christ’s favours, must take him in his way and method. Some of these lepers perhaps would be ready to quarrel with the prescription; “Let an either cure, or say that he will not, and not send us to the priests on a fool’s errand;” but, overruled by the rest, they all went to the priest. While the ceremonial law was yet in force, Christ took care that it should be observed, and the reputation of it kept up, and due honour paid to the priests in things pertaining to their function; but, probably, he had here a further design, which was to have the priest’s immutable decrees, and the unerring voice of conscience, to guide and direct them. Let not the cure of the cure; and that the priest might be awakened, and others by him, to inquire after one that had such a commanding power over bodily diseases.

4. As they went, they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him, that they were clean. Observe, Then we may expect God to meet us with mercy, when we are brought in the way of duty. If we do what we can, God will not be wanting to do that for us which we cannot. Go, attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; Go show thyself to the priests; and go and open thy case to a faithful minister; and though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means.
5. One of them, and but one, returned, to give thanks; (v. 13.) When he saw that he was healed, instead of going forward to the priest, to be by him declared clean, and so discharged from his confinement, which was all that the rest aimed at, he turned back toward him who was the Author of his cure, whom he wished to have the glory of it, before he received the benefit of it. He appears to have been very hearty and affectionate in his thanksgivings; He fell down at his feet, put himself into the most humble, reverent posture he could, and gave him thanks. Note, we ought to give thanks for the favours Christ bestows upon us, and particularly for recoveries from sickness: and we ought to give speedily in our returns of praise, and not to defer them, lest time wear out the sense of the mercy. It becomes us also to be very humble in our thanksgivings, as well as in our prayers. It becomes us not to think it beneath us to live like ourselves less than the least of God's mercies, when they have received them, as well as when they are in pursuit of them.

6. Christ took notice of this one that had thus distinguished himself, for, it seems, he was a Samaritan, whereas the rest were Jews, v. 16. The Samaritans were separatists from the Jewish church, and had not the pure knowledge and worship of God among them that the Jews had; and yet it was one of them that glorified God, when the Jews forgot, or, when it was moved to them, refused, to do it. Now observe here,

(1.) The particular notice Christ took of him, of the grateful return he made, and the ingratitude of those that were sharers with him in the mercy, that he who was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, was the only one that returned to give glory to God, v. 17, 18. See here, [1.] How rich Christ is in doing good; Were there not ten cleansed? Here was a cure by wholesale, a whole hospital healed with one word's speaking. Note, There is an abundance of healing, cleansing virtue in the blood of Christ, sufficient for all his patients, though every one of them were but one at a time cleansed; we shall have never the less grace for others' sharing it.

[2.] How poor we are in our returns; “Where are the nine? Why did not they return to give thanks?” This intimates that ingratitude is a very common sin. Of the many that receive mercy from God, there are but few, very few, that return to give thanks in a right manner, (Scarcely one in ten,) that render according to the benefit done unto them.

[3.] How those often prove most grateful, from whom it was least expected. A Samaritan gives thanks, and a Jew does not. Thus many who profess revealed religion, are out-done, and quite shamed, by some that are governed only by natural religion, not only in moral virtue, but in piety and devotion. This serves here to aggravate the ingratitude of those Jews, of whom it is said, He had such a good opinion of the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole by his faith, while Christ was II. differenced by the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us, when they are fetched in by the prayers of faith, and returned by the praises of faith.

20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. 22. And he said unto the disciples, The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. 23. And they shall say to you, See here; or, See there: go not after them, nor follow them. 24. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day.

25. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. 26. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. 27. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. 28. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; 29. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. 30. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. 31. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. 32. Remember Lot's wife, 33. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. 34. I tell you, In that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. 35. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 36. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. 37. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

We have here a discourse of Christ's concerning the kingdom of God, that is, the kingdom of the Messiah, which was now shortly to be set up, and of which there was great expectation.

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by the power of Christ, in compassion to their distress, and in answer to their prayer; but he was made whole by his faith, while Christ was II. differenced by the rest. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubled and sweetened to us, when they are fetched in by the prayers of faith, and returned by the praises of faith.

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the kingdom of God should come; forming a notion of it as a spiritual kingdom, which should advance the Jewish nation above the nations of the earth: they were impatient to hear some tidings of its approach; they understood, perhaps, that Christ had taught his disciples to pray for the coming of it, and they had long preached that it was at hand; "Now," say the Pharisees, "when will that glorious view open? When shall we see this long-looked-for kingdom?"

II. Christ's reply to that demand, directed to the Pharisees first, and afterward to his own disciples, who knew better how to understand it; (v. 22,) what he said to both, he saith to us.

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was to be a spiritual kingdom, and not temporal and external. They asked when it would come. "You know not what you ask," saith Christ, "it may come, and you not be aware of it." For it has not an external show, as other kingdoms have; the advance and revolutions of which are taken notice of by the nations of the earth, and fill the newspapers; so they expected this kingdom of God would do. "No," saith Christ, (1.) "It will have a silent entrance, without pomp, without noise; it cometh not with observation; but to such as are spiritual, it is a heavenly display." They desired to have their curiosity satisfied concerning the time of it, to which Christ doth not give them a direct answer, but hints of it, in such a way as to conciliate concerning the nature of it; "It is not for you to know the times of this kingdom; those are secret things which belong not to you: but the great intentions of this kingdom, those are things revealed." When Messiah the Prince comes to set up his kingdom, they shall not say, Lo here, or, Lo there, as when a prince goes in progress to visit his territories, it is in every body's mouth, he is here, or there; but they shall not be conscious of it: Christ will not come with all this talk; it will not be set up in this or that particular place; nor will the court of that kingdom be here or there; nor will it be here or there, as it respects the country men are of, or the place they dwell in, as if that would place them nearer to, or farther from, that kingdom. Those who confine Christianity and the church to this place or that place, cry, Lo here, or, Lo there, as if it were a matter of external view and comparison, as if we could not have the designs of catholic Christianity; so do they who make prosperity and external pomp a mark of the true church. (2.) "It has a spiritual influence; The kingdom of God is within you." It is not of this world; (John 18. 36;) its glory does not strike men's fancies, but affects their spirits, and its power is over their souls and consciences; from them it receives homage, and not from their bodies only. The kingdom of God will not change men's outward condition, but their hearts and lives; then it comes, when it makes those humble and serious and heavenly, that were proud and vain and carnal: when it weans those from the world, that were weeded to the world; and therefore look for the kingdom of God in the revolutions of the heart, not of the civil government. The kingdom of God is among you; so some read it. "You inquire when it will come, and are not aware that it is already begun to be set up in the midst of you. That gospel is preached, it is confirmed by miracles, it is embraced by multitudes, so that it is in your nation, though not in your hearts." Note, It is the folly of many curious inquirers concerning the times to come, that they look for that before them, which is already among them.

2. That the setting up of this kingdom was a work that would meet with a great deal of opposition and interruption, v. 22. The disciples thought they should carry all before them, and expected a constant series of success in their work; but Christ tells them it would be otherwise; "The days will come, before you have finished your testimony, and done your work, when you shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man," (one such a day as we now have,) "of the prosperity and progress of the gospel, and shall not see it. At first, indeed, you will have wonderful success; (so they had, when thousands were added to the church in a day;) "but do not think it will be always so; no, you will be persecuted and scattered, silenced and imprisoned; so that you will not have opportunities of preaching the gospel under fear, as you now have: it will grow cool to it, when they have enjoyed it a while, so that you will not see such harvests of souls gathered in to Christ afterward as at first, nor such multitudes flocking to him as doves to their windows." This looks forward to his disciples in afterages; they must expect much disappointment; the gospel will not be always preached with like liberty and success. Ministers and churches will sometimes operate under inward restraints. Teachers will be removed into corners, and solemn assemblies scattered; then they will wish to see such days of opportunity as they have formerly enjoyed, sabbath-days, sacrament-days, preaching-days, praying-days; those are days of the Son of man, in which we hear from him, and converse with him; the time may come, when we may in vain wish for such days. God teaches us to know the worth of such mercies by the trial of them. What would once be thought to be (?) was a great thing to have; if now we have then we would wish to see such victorious, triumphant days of the Son of man as we have sometimes seen, when he has ridden forth with his bow and his crown, conquering and to conquer, but we cannot see them. Note, We must not think that Christ's church and cause are lost, because not always alike visible and prevailing.

3. That Christ and his kingdom are not to be looked for in that particular place, but his appearance will be general in all places at once; (v. 28, 24;) "They will say to you, See here, or, See there; here is one that will deliver the Jews out of the hands of the oppressing Romans, or there is one that will deliver the Christians out of the hands of the oppressing Jews; here is the Messiah, and there is his prophet. Here in this mountain, or there at Jerusalem, you will find the true church. Go not after them, or, follow them; do not heed such suggestions; the kingdom of God was not designed to be the glory of one people only, but to give light to the Gentiles; for as the lightning that lightens out of one part under heaven, shines all on a sudden irresistibly to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day." (1.) "The judgments that are to destroy the Jewish nation, to lay them waste, and to deliver the christians from them, shall fly like lightnings through the land, shall lay all waste from one end of it to another; and those that are marked for this destruction, can no more avoid it, or oppose it, than they can a flash of lightning." (2.) "The gospel that is to set up Christ's kingdom in the world, shall fly like lightnings through the nations; the kingdom of the Messiah is not to be a local thing, but is to be dispersed far and wide over the whole earth; it shall shine from Jerusalem to all parts about, and that in a moment; the kingdoms of the earth shall be leavened by the gospel, ere they are aware of it." The trophies of Christ's victories shall be erected on the ruins of the devil's
kingdom, even in those countries that could never be subdued by the Roman yoke. The design of the setting up Christ's kingdom, was not to make one nation greater, but to make all nations a same, at least, of all nations; and this point shall be gained, though the nations rage, and the kings of the earth set themselves with all their might against it.

4. That the Messiah must suffer before he must reign; (v. 25.) "First he must suffer many things, many hard things, and be rejected of this generation; and if he be thus treated, his disciples must expect no other usage; they must also suffer for his sake. They thought of having the kingdom of the Messiah set up in external splendour; "No," saith Christ, "we must go by the cross to the crown. The Son of man must suffer many things, pain, and shame, and death, are those many things; he must be rejected of this generation of unbelieving Jews, before he be embraced by another generation of believing Gentiles; that his gospel may have the honour of triumphing over the greatest opposition from those who ought to have given it the greatest assistance; and thus the excellency of the power will appear to be of God, and not of man; for though Israel be not gathered, yet he will be glorious to the ends of the earth."

5. That the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah would be the destruction of the Jewish nation, whom it would find in a deep sleep of security, and drowned in sensuality, as the old world was in the days of Noah, and Sodom in the days of Lot, v. 26, &c. Observe,

(1.) How it had been with sinners formerly, and what posture the judgments of God, which they had been fairly warned of, did at length find them in. Look as far back as the old world, when all flesh had corrupted their ways, and were filled with violence; come a little lower, and think how it was with the men of Sodom, who were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; now observe concerning both these. [1.] That they had fair warning given them of the ruin that was coming upon them for their sins. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the old world, so was Lot to the Sodomites. They gave them timely notice of what would be in the end of their wicked ways, and that it was not far off. [2.] That they did not regard the warning given them, and gave no credit, no heed to it; they were very secure, went on in their business as unconcerned as you could imagine; they did eat, they drank, indulged themselves in their pleasures, and took no care of any thing else, but to make provision for the flesh, counted upon the perpetuity of their present flourishing state, and therefore married wives, and were given in marriage, that their families might be built up; they were all very merry; so were the men of Sodom, and yet very busy too; they bought, they sold, they planted, they built. These were lawful things, but the fault was, they minded these inordinately, and their hearts were set upon riches and pleasures, and they had no heart at all to prepare against the threatening judgments; when they should have been, as the men of Nineveh, fasting and praying, repenting and re-forming, upon warning given them of an approaching judgment, they were going on securely, eating flesh, and drinking wine, when God called to zeal and to mourning. Isa. 22, 12, 13. [3.] That the destruction upon their security and sensuality, till the threatened judgments did come, made them the talk of the day, and Noah entered into the ark, and Lot went out of Sodom, nothing said or done to them served to alarm or awaken them. Note, The stupidity of sinners in a sinful way, though it is as strange as it is without excuse, yet we are not to think it strange, for it is not without example. It is the old way that wicked men have trodden, that have gone slumbering to hell, as if their damnation slumbered while they did it. [4.] That God took care for the preservation of those that were his, who believed and feared, and took the covering of the ark; and that those who trusted their voluntary security, fled to the ark; and Noah entered into the ark, and there he was safe, Lot went out of Sodom, and so went out of harm's way. If some run on heedless and headlong into destruction, that shall be no prejudice to the salvation of them that believe. [5.] That they were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear, and were swallowed up in it, to their unspeakable burning, themselves, which they gave to others; Noah destroyed all the sinners of the old world, fire and brimstone came, and destroyed all the sinners of Sodom. God has many arrows in his quiver, and uses which he will, in making war upon his rebellious subjects, for he can make which he will effectual. But that which is especially intended here, is, to show what a dreadful surprise destruction will be to those who are secure and sensual.

(2.) How it will be with sinners still; (v. 30.) Thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed; when Christ comes to destroy the Jewish nation by the Roman armies, the generality of that nation will be found under such a reign ing security and stupidity as this. They have warning given by Christ now; and will have it repeated to them by the apocalyptic visions of the hither and nearer Saviour's, which Christ set forth to the wise and the foolish nation, and will not long after published to the world, should have awakened them; but it did not, for the hearts of that people were hardened, to their destruction. In like manner, when Jesus Christ shall come to judge the world, at the end of time, sinners will be found in the same secure and careless posture, altogether regardless of the judgment approaching, which will therefore come upon them as a snare; and in like manner the sinners of every age go on securely in their evil ways, and remember not their latter end, nor the account that they must give. Wise to them: that are thus at ease in Zion.

6. That it ought to be the care of his disciples and followers, to distinguish themselves from the unbelieving Jews in that day, and leaving them, their city and country, to themselves, to receive the signal given, according to the direction that should be given; let them retire, as Noah to his ark, and Lot to his Zoor. You would have heaved Jerusalem, as of old Babylon, but she is not healed, and therefore forsake her, flee out of the midst of her, one deliver every man his soul, Jer. 31, 6, 9.

(1.) This flight of theirs from Jerusalem must be considered as the flight of a people, that had been concerned about their worldly affairs; (v. 31.) "He that shall be on the house-top when the alarm is given, let him not come down to take his stuff away; both because he cannot spare so much time, and because the carrying away of his effects will but embower him, and retard his flight. Let him not regard his stuff, at such a time when it will be next to a miracle of mercy if he have his life given him for a prey. It will rather take from him much of what he had by Noah and Lot, to stay to look after it, and perish with them that believe not. It will be their concern to do as Lot and his family were charged to do: Escape for thy life. Save yourselves from this inward generation."

(2.) When they have made their escape, they must not think of returning; (v. 32.) "Remember Lot's wife; and take warning by her not only to flee from this
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Sodom, (for so Jerusalem is become, Isa. 1. 10.) but to persevere in your flight, and do not look back, as she did; be not loath to leave a place marked for destruction, whenever or whatev-er may happen to it, less, I assure you, than to leave you, that is ever so dear to you." Those who have left the Sodom of a natural state, let them go forward, and not so much as look a kind look to-wards it again. Let them not look back, lest they should be tempted to go back; nay, lest be con-" strued a going back in heart, or an evidence that the heart is left behind. Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, and must remain a lasting monu-ment of God's displeasure against all transgressors, who begin in the spirit and end in the flesh.

(8.) There would be no other way of saving their lives than by quitting the Jews, and, if they thought to save themselves by a coalition with them, they would find themselves mistaken; (v. 33.) "Who-" ever shall seek to save his life, by declining from his Christianity, and complying with the Jews, he shall lose it with them, and perish in the common ca-

mony; but whosoever is willing to venture his life-with the Christians, upon the same bottom on which they venture, to take his lot with them in life and in death, he shall preserve his life, for he shall make sure of eternal life, and is in a likelier way at that time to save his life than those who embark in a Jewish bottom, or secure upon their securi-

ties." Note, Those do best for themselves that trust God in the way of duty.

7. That all good Christians should certainly es-cape, but many of them very narrowly, from that destruction, v. 34—36. When God's judgments are laying all waste, he will take an effectual course to preserve those that are his, by remarkable provi-

dences distinguishing between them and others that were not, and so turn the fire from the vials of wrath upon the wicked, v. 35: one taken and the other left; one snatched out of the burning and taken into a place of safety, while the other is left to perish in the common ruin. Note, Though the sword de-
vours one as well as another, and all things seem to come alike to all; yet, sooner or later, it shall be made to appear that the Lord knows them that are his and them that are not, and how to take out the fire which the Lord will lay on Jerusalem: and therefore, when he sends a judgment on purpose to destroy the death of his Son upon those that crucified him, he would take care that none of those who glorified him, and glorified in his cross, shall be taken away by that judgment.

Lastly, That this distinguishing, dividing, discriminating work shall be done in all places, as far as the kingdom of God shall extend, v. 37. Where, Lord? They have been concerned concerning the time, and he would not gratify their curiosity, with any infor-
mation concerning that; they therefore tried him with another question, "Where, Lord? Where shall those be safe, that are taken? Where shall those perish, that are left?" The answer is pro-
verbial, and may be explained so as to answer each side of the question; Wheresoever the body is, the
death will there also gather together. (1.) Whenever the wicked are taken, as marked for perdition, they shall be found out by the judgments of God, as wherever a dead carcass is, the birds of prey will smell it out, and make a prey of it. The Jews hav-
ing made themselves a dead and putrefied carcass, odious to God's holiness and obnoxious to his justice, wherever any of that unbelieving generation, the judgments of God shall fasten upon them, as the carcasses do upon the graves: Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, (Ps. 23. 5.) among them they set their nests among the stars, Obad. 4. The Roman soldiers will hunt the Jews out of all their recesses and fastnesses, and none shall escape. (2.) Where-
ever the godly are, who are marked for preservation, they shall be found happy in the enjoyment of Christ. As the dissolution of the Jewish church shall be ex-
tended to all parts, so shall the constitution of the Christian church. Wherever Christ is, believers will flock to him, and meet in him, as eagles about the prey, without being directed or showed the way, by the instinct of the new nature. Now Christ is where his gospel and his ordinances and church are; for where two or three are gathered in his name, there is he in the midst of them, and thither therefore others will be gathered to him. The kingdom of Christ is to have one particular place for its metropolis, such as Jerusalem was to the Jew-

ish church, to which all Jews were to resort: but, wherever the body is, wherever the gospel is preach-
ed, and ordinances are ministered, thither will pious souls resort, there they will find Christ, and by faith feast upon him. Wherever Christ records his name, he will meet his people, and bless them, John 4. 21, 22, &c. 1 Tim. 3. 15. Many good interpreters under-
stand it of the gathering of the saints together to Christ in the kingdom of glory; "Ask not where the carelessness will be, and how they shall find the way to it, for they shall be under infallible direction; to him who is their living, quickening Head, and the Centre of their unity, to him shall the gathering of the people be."

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have I. The parable of the impor-
tunate widow, designed to teach us to pray in prayer, v. 1. 8. II. The parable of the Pharisee and publican, designed to teach us humility, and humiliation for sin, in prayer v. 9 . 14. III. Christ's favour to little children that were brought unto him, v. 15. 16. The trial of a rich man that had a mind to follow Christ, whether he loved better Christ or his riches; his coming short upon that trial; and Christ's discourse with his disciples upon that occasion, v. 18. 30. IV. Christ's parable of the unjust judge and of the unjust rich man, v. 31. 34. VI. His restoring of sight to a blind man, v. 35 . 43. And these four passages we had before in Matthew and Mark.

1. A ND he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint: 2. Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine ad-

versary. 4. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5. Yet, because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he hear long with them? 8. I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

This parable has its key hanging at the door; the drift and design of it are prefixed. Christ spake it with this intent, to teach us that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, v. 1. It supposes that all God's people are praying people; all God's chil-


work; we ought always to pray, it is that which the duty of every day requires; we must pray, and never grow weary of praying, nor think of leaving him off till it comes to be swallowed up in everlasting prayers. By the which is meant the prayer of the church, which seems particularly designed here, is, to teach us constancy and perseverance in our requests for some spiritual mercies that we are in pursuit of, relating either to ourselves or to the church of God; when we are praying for strength against our spiritual enemies, our lusts and corruptions, which are our worst enemies; we must continue instant in prayer, must pray and not faint, for we must pray, as the church of God doeth likewise in our prayers for the deliverance of the people of God out of the hands of their persecutors and oppressors.

1. Christ shows, by a parable, the power of impor-}tance among men, who will be swayed by that, when nothing else will influence to do that which is just and right. He gives you an instance of an honest cause that succeeded before an unjust judge, not by the equity or compassionableness of it, but purely by dint of impor-}tance. Observe here,

1. That he neither feared God, nor regarded man; he had no manner of concern either for his conscience or for his reputation; he stood in no awe either of the wrath of God against him or of the con-}sideration of men. And, thus it was, he took no care to do his duty either to God or man; he was a perfect stranger both to godliness and honour, and had no notion of either. It is not strange, if those that have cast off the fear of their Creator, be altogether regard-}less of their fellow-creatures; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. Such a preval-}ence of irreligion and immorality is bad in any, but worse in him that is a judge, who has power in his hand, in the use of which he ought to be guided by the principles of religion and justice, and if he be not, instead of doing good with his power he will be in danger of doing hurt. Wickedness in the place of judgment, was one of the sorest evils Solomon saw under the sun, Ex. 33. 16.

2. The distrest case of a poor widow was nec-}essitated to make her appeal to him, being wronged by some one that thought to bear her down with power and terror; she had manifestly right on her side; but, it should seem, in soliciting to have right done her, she tied not herself to the formalities of the law, but made personal application to the judge from day to day at his house, still crying, “avenge me of mine adversary;” that is, “Do me justice against my adversary;” not that she desired to be revenged on him for anything he had done against her, but that he might be obliged to restore what effects he had of hers in his hands, and might be disabled any more to oppress her. Note, Poor widows have often many adversaries, who barbarously take advantage of their weak and helpless state, to invade their rights, and defraud them of what little they have; and magistrates are particularly charged with neglecting the cause of the widow, Jer. 22. 3.) but to judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow, (Isa. 1. 17.) to be their patrons and protectors; then they are as gods, for God is so, Ps. 68. 5.

3. The difficulty and discouragement she met with in her cause; “He would not for a while;” according to his usual practice, he frowned upon her, took no notice of her cause, but connived at and encouraged her adversary, and for what bribe to give him, no great man whom he stood in any awe of, to speak for her, so that he did not at all incline to re-}dress her grievances; and he himself was conscious of the reason of his dilatoriness, and could not but own within himself, that he neither feared God nor regarded man; it is said that a man should know so much amiss of himself, and be in no care to amend it.

4. The gaining of her point by continual dunning of this unjust judge; (v. 5.) “Because this widow troubles me, gives me a continual toil, I will hear her cause, and do her justice; not so much, lest by her clamour against me she bring me into an ill name, as lest by her clamour to me she weary me; for she is resolved that she will give me no rest till it is done, and therefore I will do it, to save myself further trouble; as good at first as at last.” Thus she got justice done her by continual craving; she begged it at his door, followed him in the streets, solicited him in open court, and still her cry was, “avenge me of mine adversary.”

II. He applies this for the encouragement of God’s praying people to pray with faith and fervency, and to persevere therein.

1. He assures them that God will at length be gracious to them; (v. 6.) “Hear what the unjust judge saith; how he owns himself quite overcome by a constant importunity, and from thence inferes, Shall not God avenge his own elect? Observe,

1. What is it that they desire and expect; that God would avenge his own elect. Note, [1.] There are a people in the world that are God’s people, his elect, his own elect, a choice people, a chosen people, set apart to be a peculiar people to himself; if no others do it, they will; and they are his chosen, and in pursuance of the choice he has made of them. [2.] God’s own elect meet with a great deal of trouble and opposition in this world; there are many adversaries that fight against them; Satan is their great adversary. [3.] That which is wanted and waited for, is God’s preserving and protecting of them, and the success which they have in the prosecution of their concerns; their interest in the church of Christ, their privileges, in his church, and of his grace in the heart.

2. What it is that is required of God’s people in order to the obtaining of this; they must cry day and night to him; not that he needs their remon-}strances, or can be moved by their pleadings, but this he has made their duty, and to this he has promised mercy. He ought to be particular in prayer-}ing against our spiritual enemies, as St. Paul was; For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; like this importunate wid-}ow. Lord, mortify this corruption; Lord, arm me against this temptation. We ought to concern our-}selves for the persecuted and oppressed churches, and to pray that God would do them justice, and set them in safety. And herein we must be urgent, we must cry with earnestness; we must cry day and night, as those that believe prayer will be heard at last; we must wrestle with God, as those that know how to value the blessing, and will have no nay. God’s praying people are bid to give him no rest, Isa. 62. 6, 7.

3. What discouragements they may perhaps meet with in their prayers and expectations; he may hear long with them, and may not presently ap-}pear for them, in answer to their prayers. He is μακαριός ἐν υἱοὶ—he exercises patience toward the adversaries of his people, and does not take vengeance on them; and he exercises the patience of his people, and does not plead for them. He bore long with the cry of the sin of the Egyptians that oppressed them, and the wide cry of the sorrow of those that were oppressed.

4. What assurance they have that mercy will come at last, though it be delayed, and how it is supported by what the unjust judge saith; If this widow prevail by being importunate, much more shall God’s elect prevail! For, [1.] This widow was a stranger, nothing related to the judge; but God’s praying people are his own elect, whom he
knows, and loves, and delights in, and has always concerned himself for. [2.] She was but one, but the praying people of God are many, all of whom come to him in faith, and through him, and can rejoice in what they need, Mat. 18. 19. As the saints of heaven surround the throne of glory with united praises, so saints on earth besiege the throne of grace with their united prayers. [3.] She came to a judge that bid her keep her distance; we come to a Father that bids us come boldly to him, and teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. [4.] She came to a judge to obtain her safety; we come to a Father (John 17. 25.) one that regards his own glory and the comfort of his poor creatures, especially those in distress, as widows and fatherless. [5.] She came to this judge purely upon her own account; but God is himself engaged in the cause which we are soliciting; and we can say, Arise, O Lord, plead thine own cause; and what wilt thou do to thy great name? [6.] She had no friend to speak for her, to add force to her petition, and to use interest for her; more than her own; but we have an Advocate with the Father, his own Son, who ever lives to make intercession for us, and has a powerful prevailing interest in heaven. [7.] She had no promise of speedily, nor any encouragement given her to ask; but we have the golden sceptre held out to us, are bid to ask, and it is promised that it shall be given us. [8.] She could not by any means get justice on some certain times; but we may cry to God day and night, at all hours, and therefore may the rather hope to prevail by importunity. [9.] Her importunity was pro- voking to the judge, and she might fear lest it should set him more against her; but our importunity is pleasing to God; the prayer of the upright is his delight, and therefore, we may hope, shall avail much, if it be an effectual fervent prayer. [10.] In her case, that being understood this, they will begin to be weary of waiting for him; (v. 8.) "Nevertheless, though such assurances are given, that God will avenge his own elect, yet, when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" The Son of man will come to avenge his own elect, to plead the cause of persecuted christians against the persecuting Jews; he will come in his own name; he will be the cause of all the one’s comfort. [12.] Thus it supposes that it is the great thing that Jesus Christ looks for. He looks down upon the children of men, and does not ask, Is there innocency but, Is there faith? He inquired concerning the faith of those who applied themselves to him for cures. [3.] It supposes that if there were faith, though ever so little, he would discover it, and find it out. The weakest believer and he that is of little faith is supposed that foretold, that when Christ comes to plead his people’s cause, he will find but little faith in comparison with what one might expect. That is, [1.] In general, he will find but few good people, few that are really and truly good. Many that have the form and fashion of godliness, but few that have faith, that are sincere and honest: nay, he will find but little faith among men; the faithful fail, Ps. 12. 2. 2. Even to the end of the time there will still be occasion for the same complaint; the world will grow no better, no, not when it is drawing towards its period. Bad it is, and bad it will be, and worst of all just before Christ’s coming; the last times will be the most perilous. [2.] In particular, he will find few that have faith concerning his coming. When he comes to avenge his own elect, he looks if there be any faith to help, and to uphold, and wonders that there is none, Isa. 59. 16.—63. 5. It intimates that Christ, both in his particular comings for the relief of his people, and in his general coming at the end of time, may, and will, delay his coming so long as that, First, Wicked people will begin to defy it, and to say, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. 3. 4. They will challenge him to come. And, 2. Secondly, Even his own people will begin to despise of it, and to conclude he will never come, because he has passed their reckoning. God’s time to appear for his people, is, when things are brought to the last extremity, and when Zion begins to say, The Lord has forsaken his people. And, 3. That, when the time appointed comes, it will appear that the unbelieving of man has not made the promise of God of no effect. 9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: 12. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. 13. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14. I tell you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The scope of this parable likewise is prefixed to it, and we are told, (v. 9.) who they were, whom it was levelled at, and for whom it was calculated. He designed it for the conviction of some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. They were such as had, 1. A great conceit of themselves; they trusted in themselves of their own goodness; they exalted themselves as holy as they needed to be, and holier than all their neighbours, and such as might serve for examples to them all. But that was not all, 2. They had a confidence in themselves before God, and not only had a high opinion of their own righteousness, but depended upon the merit of it, whenever they addressed to God, as their plea; they trusted in themselves as being righteous; they thought they had made God their debtor, and might demand anything from him; and, 3. They despised others, and looked upon them with contempt, as not worthy to be compared with them. Now Christ by this parable would show such their folly, and that thereby they shut themselves out from acceptance with God. This is called a parable, though there be nothing of similitude in it; but it is rather a description of the different temper and conduct of those that humbly justify themselves and those that proudly condemn themselves; and their different standing before God. It is matter of fact every day. 1. Here are both these addressing themselves to the duty of prayer at the same place and time; (v. 10.) Two men went up into the temple, for the tem-
ple stood upon a hill,) to pray. It was not the hour of public prayer, but they went thither to offer up their private prayers and devotions, as was usual with good people at that time, when the temple was not only the place, but the medium of worship, and God had promised, in answer to Solomon's request, that, whatever prayer was made in a right manner, in or toward that house, it should therefore the rather be accepted. Christ is our Temple, and to him we make our approach to offer our prayers and sacrifices. The Pharisee and the publican both went to the temple, to pray. Note, Among the worshippers of God, in the visible church, there is a mixture of good and bad, of some that are accepted of God, and some that are not; and so it has been ever since Cain and Abel brought their offering to the same altar. The Pharisee, proud as he was, could not think himself as good as he was, think himself shut out from the benefit of it; but we have reason to think that these went with different views.

1. The Pharisee went to the temple, to pray, because it was a public place, more public than the corners of the streets, and therefore he should have many eyes upon him, who would applaud his devotion, as a very respectable and exemplary act. The character Christ gave of the Pharisees, that all their works they did to be seen of men, gives us occasion for this suspicion. Note, Hypocrites keep up the external performances of religion only to save or gain credit. There are many whom we see every day at the temple, whom, it is to be feared, we shall not see in the great day at Christ's right hand.

2. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa. 56. 7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a construction, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

3. The publican went to the temple, because it was appointed to be a house of prayer for all people, Isa. 56. 7. The Pharisee came to the temple upon a construction, the publican upon business; the Pharisee to make his appearance, the publican to make his request. Now God sees with what disposition and design we come to wait upon him in holy ordinances, and will judge of us accordingly.

IV. The publican's address to God, (for a prayer I cannot call it;) he stood and prayed thus with himself; (v. 11, 12.) standing by himself, he prayed thus, so some read it; he was wholly intent upon himself, had nothing in his eye but self, his own praise, and not God's glory; or, standing in some conspicuous place, where he distinguished himself; or setting himself with a great deal of state and formality he prayed thus. Now that which he is here supposed to have done, we may sometimes saw in him.

1. That he trusted to himself that he was righteous. A great many good things he saith of himself, which we will suppose to be true—he was free from gross and scandalous sins; he was not an extortioner, nor an usurer, not oppressive to debtors or tenants, but fair and kind to all that had dependence upon him; he was not unjust in any of his dealings; he did not do many wrongs; he could say, 'assassins, Whose ox or whose ass have I taken? He was no adulterer, but had possessed his vessel in sanctification and honour. Yet this was not all; he fasted twice in the week, partly as an act of temperance, partly of devotion. The Pharisees and their disciples fasted twice a week, Monday and Thursday; thus he glorified God with his body; yet that was not all; in many things; he could say, 'assassins, Sanctified, according to the law, and so glorified God with his worldly estate; now all this was very well and commendable. Miserable is the condition of those who come short of the righteousness of this Pharisee; yet he was not accepted; and why was he not? (1.) His giving God thanks for this, though in itself a good thing, yet seems to be a mere formality. He does not say, By the grace of God I am that I am, as Paul did, but turns it off with a slight, God, I thank thee; which is intended but for a plausible introduction to a proud, vainglorious ostentation of himself. (2.) He takes his boast of this, and dwells with delight upon this subject, as if he thought the temple was to tell God Almighty how very good he was; and he is ready to say, with those hypocrites that we read of, (Isa. 58. 3.) Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? (3.) He trusted to it as a righteousness, and not only mentioned it, but pleaded it, as if hereby he had merited at the hands of God, or the Pharisees, all kinds of grace. Deutor. (v. 4.) Here is one word of prayer in all he said. He went up to the temple, to pray, but forgot his errand, was so full of himself and his own goodness, that he thought he had need of nothing, no, not of the favour and grace of God, which, it should seem, he did not think worth asking.

2. That he despised others. (1.) He thought meanly of all. 'The sinner himself, I thank thee, but not as other men are. He speaks indefinitely, as if he were better than any. We may have reason to thank God that we are not as some men are, that are notoriously wicked and vile; but to speak at random thus, as if we only were good, and all beside us were reprobates, is to judge by wholesale. (2.) He thought meanly in a particular manner of this publican, whom, with many others, he reproaches, that he sinned in the court of the Gentiles, and whose company he had fallen into as he came to the temple. He knew that he was a publican, and therefore very uncharitably concluded that he was an extortioner, unjust, and all that is nought. Supposed it had been so, and he had known it, what business had he to take notice of it? Could not he say his prayers, (and that was what the Pharisees did,) without reproaching his neighbours? Or was this a part of his God. I thank thee? And was he as much pleased with the publican's badness as with his own goodness? There could not be a plainer evidence, not only of the want of humility and charity, but of reigning pride and malice, than this was.

3. Here is the publican's address to God, which was the reverse of the Pharisee's, as full of humility and humiliation as his was of pride and ostentation; and of repentance for sin, and desire toward God, as his was of confidence in himself; and his own righteousness and sufficiency.

1. He expressed his repentance and humility in what he did; and his gesture, when he addressed himself to his devotions, was expressive of great seriousness and humility, and the proper clothing of the heart. He stood far off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican in a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, kept at a distance, and perhaps, for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Happy he who knew that God might justly be offended with him, and would look upon him with a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

2. He would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, much less his hands, as was usual in prayer. He did lift up his heart to God in the heavens, in holy desires, but, through prevailing shame and humiliation, he did not lift up his eyes in holy confidence after the manner of the Pharisee, who lifteth up his eyes, Ps. 25. 7. He earnestly desired of God to father, or one before him, and, as it were, to make him a superseding witness, and a giving heart. (1.) He stood afar off. The Pharisee stood, but crowded up as high as he could, to the upper end of the court; the publican in a sense of his unworthiness to draw near to God, kept at a distance, and perhaps, for fear of offending the Pharisee, whom he observed to look scornfully upon him, and of disturbing his devotions. Happy he who knew that God might justly be offended with him, and would look upon him with a state of eternal distance from him, and that it was a great favour that God was pleased to admit him thus nigh.

3. He smote upon his breast, in a holy indignation at himself for sin; "Thus would I smite this wicked heart of mine, the poisoned fountain out of which flow all the streams of sin, if I could come to a contemnible rebuke, 2 Sam. 24. 10. David's heart smote him; Sinner, what hast thou done? And then he
unites his heart with penitent remorse; O swetche
mow that I am! Ephraim is said to aimute upon his
thigh, Jer. 31. 19. Great mourners are represented
labouring upon their breasts, Nah. 3. 7. 2. He expressed it in what he said. His prayer
was short; fear and shame hindered him from say-
ing much; sighs and groans swallowed up his words;
but what he said was to the purpose, God, be merci-
ful to me a sinner! And blessed be God, that we
have One who, being God, is made a sinner rather
than we; who, being God, can hear and answer our
prayer, and that we are sure that he who prayed it,
went to his house justified; and so shall we, if we
pray it, as he did, through Jesus Christ; "God be
merciful to me a sinner;" the God of infinite mercy
be merciful to me, for if he be not, I am for ever
undone, for ever miserable. God be merciful to me,
for I have been cruel to myself." (1) He owns
himself unacquainted with, by practice, goodness
before God; Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer
thee? The Pharisee denies himself to be a sinner;
one of his neighbours can charge him, and he sees
no reason to charge himself with any thing amiss;
he is clean, he is pure from sin; but the publican
gives himself no other character than that of a sin-
er, a convicted criminal at God's bar. (2) He has
no dependence but upon the mercy of God; and
the only hope he has is that mercy. The Pharisee
had insisted upon the merit of his fastings and tithes;
but the poor publican disclaims all thought of merit,
and flies to mercy as his city of refuge, and takes hold
of the horn of that altar. "Justice condemns me,
nothing will save me but mercy, mercy." (3) He
carmessily prays for the benefit of that mercy; O God
be merciful to me, be proficuous to me; forgive my sins,
be reconciled to me, take me into thy favour, receive
me graciously; love me freely. He comes as a
beggar for an alms, when he is ready to perish for
hunger. Probably, he repeated this prayer with re-
newed affections, and perhaps said more to the same
purport; made a particular confession of his sins,
and mentioned the particular mercies he wanted, and
waited upon God for; but still this was the burden
of his song, God, be merciful to me a sinner.
IV. Here is the publican's acceptance with God.
We have seen how differently these two addressed
themselves to God; it is now worth while to inquire
how they sped. There were those who would cry
up the Pharisee, and by whom he would go to his
house applauded, and who would look with con-
tempt upon this sneaking, whining publican. But
our Lord Jesus, to whom all hearts are open, all de-
sires known, and from whom no secret is hid, who
is perfectly acquainted with all proceedings in the
court of heaven, assures us that this poor, penitent,
broken-hearted publican went to his house justified,
rather than the other. The Pharisee thought, if one
of them two must be justified, and not the other, that
certainly it must be he, rather than the publican.
"No," saith Christ, "I tell you, I affirm it with the
utmost assurance, and declare it to you with the
utmost confidence, I tell you, it is not they which
are righteous in their own sight, but the publican.
"The proud Pharisee goes away, rejected of God! his
thanksgivings are so far from being accepted, that they
are an abomination; he is not justified, his sins are not pardoned, nor is he deliv-
ered from condemnation: he is not accepted as righteous in God's sight, because he is so righteous
in his own sight; but the publican, upon this humble
address to Heaven, obtains the remission of his sins;
and we know the Pharisee would not set with the
dogs of his flock. God sets with the children of his
family.

The reason given for this, is, because God's glory
is to resist the proud, and give grace to the humble.
1. Proud men, who exalt themselves, are rivals with
God, and therefore they shall certainly be abased.
God, in his discourse with Job, appeals to this proof

that he is God, that he looks upon every one that is
proud, and brings him to low, Job 50. 12. "And
able men, who abuse themselves, are subject to God, and
they shall be exalted. God has preference in store
for those that will take it as a favour, not for those
that demand it as a debt. He shall be exalted into
the love of God, and communion with him; shall be
exalted into a satisfaction in himself, and exalted at
last as high as heaven. See how the punishment
answers the sin. He that exalteth himself shall be
abased. See how the recompense answers the duty; He
that humbleth himself, shall be exalted. See also
the power of God's grace in bringing good out of
evil; the publican had been a great sinner, and out
of the greatness of his sin was brought the greatness
of his repentance; out of the eater came forth meat.
See, on the contrary, the power of Satan's malice in
brining evil out of good. It was good that the Pharisee
was no exception, or unjust; but the devil
made him proud of this, to his ruin.

15. And they brought unto him also in-
fiants, that he would touch them: but when
his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. 16. But Jesus called them unto him, and said,
Suffer little children to come unto me, and
forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom
of God. 17. Verily I say unto you, Who-
soever shall not receive the kingdom of God
as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.

This passage of story we had both in Matthew and
Mark; it very fitly follows here after the story of
the publican, as a confirmation of the truth which
was to be illustrated by that parable, that those shall
be accepted with God, and honoured, who humble
themselves, and for them Christ has blessings in
store, the choicest and best of blessings. Observe
here,

1. Those who are themselves blessed in Christ,
should desire to have their children also blessed in
him, and should hereby testify the true honour they
have for Christ, by their making use of him, and the
true love they have for their children, by their con-
cern about their souls; They brought to him in-
fiants, very young, not able to go, sucking children, as some
think. None are too little, too young, to bring to
Christ, who knows how to show kindness to them
that are not capable of doing service to him.

2. One gracious touch of Christ's will make our
children happy; They brought infants to him, that
he might touch them, in token of the application
of his grace and Spirit to them, for that always makes
way for his blessing, which likewise they expected;
see Isa. 44. 3. I will first pour my Spirit upon thy
seed, and then my blessing upon thine offsprings.

3. It is no strange thing for those who make their
application to Jesus Christ, for themselves or for
their children, to be met with discouragement, even
from those who should countenance and encourage
them; When the disciples saw it, they thought, if
this were admitted, it would bring endless trouble
upon their Master, and therefore they rebuked them,
and frowned upon them. The spouse complained of
the watchmen, Cant. 3. 3.—3. 7.

4. Many whom the disciples rebuke, the Master
upbraids; Jesus called them unto him, when, upon the
disciples' check, they were retiring. They did not
appear from the disciples to the Master, but the
Master took cognizance of their desipled cause.

5. It is the mind of Christ, that little children
should be brought to him, and presented as living
sacrifices to his honour; "Suffer little children
to come to me, and forbid them not; let nothing be done
to hinder them, for they shall be as welcome as any. The promise is to us, and to our seed: and therefore he that has the dispensing of promised blessings, will bid them welcome to him with us.

6. The children of those who belong to the kingdom of God, do likewise belong to that kingdom, as the children of freemen are freemen. If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too; for if the root be holy, the branches are so. 7. So welcome are children to Christ, that those grown people are most welcome to him, who have in them most of the disposition of children; (v. 17.) Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, that is, receive the benefits of it with humility and thankfulness, not pretending to merit them, as the Pharisee did, but gladly owning himself indebted to free grace for them, as the publican did; unless a man be brought to this self-denying frame, he shall in no wise enter into that kingdom. They must receive the kingdom of God as children, receive their estates by descent and inheritance, not by purchase, and call it their Father's gift.

18. And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? 19. And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. 20. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. 21. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 22. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. 23. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. 24. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25. For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. 26. And they that heard it, said, Who then can be saved? 27. And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. 28. Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. 29. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, 30. Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

In these verses we have,

1. Christ's discourse with a ruler, that had a good mind to be directed by him to the way to heaven. In which we may observe,

1. It is a blessed sight to see persons of distinction in the world distinguish themselves from others of their rank, by their concern about their souls and another life. Luke takes notice of it, that he was a ruler; few of the rulers had any esteem for Christ, but here was one that had; whether a church or state-ruler, does not appear, but he was one in authority.

2. The great thing we are every one of us concerned to inquire after, is, what we shall do, to get to heaven; what we shall do, to inherit eternal life. This implies such a belief of an eternal life after this, as atheists and infidels have not; such a concern to make it sure, as a careless, unthinking world have not; and such a willingness to comply with any terms that it may be made sure, as those have not, who are resolvedly devoted to the world and the flesh.

3. Those who would inherit eternal life, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ as their Master, their teaching Master, so it signifies here, οἰκοδομοῦντες, and their ridding Master, and so they shall for certain find him. There is no learning the way to heaven, but in the school of Christ, by those that enter themselves into it, and come in his way.

4. Those who come to Christ as their Master, must believe him to have not only a divine mission, but a divine goodness. Christ would have this ruler know that if he understood himself aright in calling him good, he did, in effect, call him God; and indeed he was so; (v. 19.) "Why callest thou me good? Thou knowest there is none good but one, that is, God; go and do thou that which thou seest me do for God! if so, thou art in the right." 5. Our Master, Christ himself, has not altered the way to heaven from what it was before his coming, but only has made it more plain and easy, and comfortable, and provided for our relief, in case we take any false step. Thou knowest the commandments; Christ came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to establish them. Wouldst thou inherit eternal life? Govern thyself by the commandments.

6. The duties of the second table must be conscientiously observed, in order to our happiness, and we must not think that any acts of devotion, how plausible soever, will atone for the neglect of them. Nor is it enough to keep ourselves free from the gross violations of these commandments, but we must know these commandments, as Christ has explained them in his sermon upon the mount, in their extent and spiritual nature, and so observe them.

7. Men think themselves innocent, because they are ignorant; so this ruler did; He said, All these have I kept from my youth up. 21. He knows no more evil of himself than the Pharisee did, v. 11. He begins in his own strength, and he had continued in it to this day; and that he had not in any instance transgressed. Had he been acquainted with the extent and spiritual nature of the divine law, and with the workings of his own heart; had he been but Christ's disciple a while, and learned of him, he would have said the quite contrary; "All these have I broken from my youth up, in thought, word, and deed."

8. The best things by which we are to try our spiritual state, are, how we stand affected to Christ and to our brethren, to this world and to the other; by these this man was tried. For, (1) If he have a true affection to Christ, he will come and follow him, will attend to his doctrine, and submit to his discipline, whatever it cost him. None shall inherit eternal life, who are not willing to take their lot with him, to be as the Lamb whithersoever he goes. (2) If he have a true affection to his brethren, he will, as there is occasion, distribute to the poor, who are God's receivers of his dues out of our estates. (3) If he think meanly of this world, as he ought, he will not stick at selling what he has, if there be a necessity for it, for the relief of God's poor. (4) If he think highly of the other world, as he ought, he will desire no more than to have treasure in heaven, and will reckon that a sufficient,
abundant recompense for all that he has left or lost, or laid out for God in this world.
9. There are many that have a great deal in them that is very commendable, and yet they perish for lack of some one thing; so this ruler here, he broke with Christ upon this, he liked all his terms very well, but this which would part between him and his interest was not in his heart. And this is a common thing.
10. Thus the people are loath to leave Christ, yet do leave him. After a long struggle between their convictions and their corruptions, their corruptions carry the day at last; they are very sorry that they cannot serve God and mammon both; but if one must be quitted, it shall be their God, not their worldly sin.
II. Christ's discourse with his disciples upon this occasion: in which we may observe,
1. Riches are a great hindrance to many in the way to heaven. Christ took notice of the reluctance and regret with which the rich man broke off from him; he saw that he was very sorrowful, and was sorry for him; but from whence he inferred, How hardly they that have riches, enter into the kingdom of heaven? Of this he says, as little of the world as Peter, and James, and John had, in all probability he would have left it to, follow Christ, as they did; but, having a great estate, it had a great influence upon him, and he chose rather to take his leave of Christ than to lay himself under an obligation to dispose of his estate in charitable uses. Christ asserts the difficulty of the salvation of rich people very emphatically; (v. 25.) He casteth them out of his eyes, much rather than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. It is a proverbial expression, that denotes the thing to be extremely difficult.
2. There is in the hearts of all people such a general affec tion to this world, and the things of it, that, since Christ has required it as necessary to salvation, that we should sit loose to this world, it is reason for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. We must sell all, or break with Christ, who then can be saved? v. 26. They do not find fault with what Christ required, as hard and unreasonable. No, it is very fit that they who expect an eternal happiness in the other world, should be willing to forego all that is dear to them in this world, in expectation of it. But they know how closely the hearts of the most of men cleave to this world, and are ready to despair of their deliverance among the rest of his people; albeit, by their profession, and the example of Christ, these things are possible with God. His grace can work upon the soul so as to alter the bent and bias of it, and give it a contrary ply; and it is he that works in us both to will and to do.
3. There are such difficulties in the way of our salvation as could never be got over but by pure omnipotence, by that grace of God which is almighty, and to which that is possible, which exceeds all created power and wisdom. The things which are impossible with men, (and utterly impossible it is that men should work such a change upon their own spirits as to turn them from the world to God, it is the power of God that worketh this, and brings Jordan baby, these things are possible with God. His grace can work upon the soul so as to alter the bent and bias of it, and give it a contrary ply; and it is he that works in us both to will and to do.
4. There is an aptness in us to speak too much of what we have left and lost, of what we have done and suffered, for Christ. This appears in Peter; (v. 28.) Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. We have forsaken father and mother, and brother, and magnifying his own and his brethren's affection to Christ, in quitting all to follow him. But this we should be so far from boasting of, that we should rather acknowledge it not worth taking notice of, and be ashamed of ourselves that there have been any regret and difficulty in the doing of it, and any hangkerings toward those things afterward.
5. Whatever we have left, or laid out, for Christ, it shall without fail be abundantly made up to us in this world and that to come, notwithstanding our weaknesses and infirmities; (v. 29, 30.) No man has left the comfort of his estate or relations for the kingdom of God's sake, rather than they should hinder him in the performance of his services, in the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, in the pleasures of communion with God and of a good conscience, advantages which, to those that know how to value and improve them, will abundantly counterbalance all their losses. Yet that is not all; in the world to come they shall receive life everlasting, which is the thing that the ruler seemed to have his eye and heart upon.
31. Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33. And they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day he shall rise again. 34. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. Here is,
1. The notice Christ gave his disciples of his sufferings and death approaching, and of the glorious issue of them, which he himself had a perfect sight and foreknowledge of, and thought it necessary to give them warning of, that it might be the less surprise and terror to them.
Two things here are, which we had not in the other evangelists. 1. The sufferings of Christ are here spoken of as the fulfilling of the scriptures, with which consideration Christ reconciled himself to them, and would reconcile them; All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, especially the hardships he should undergo, shall be accomplished. Note, The Spirit of Christ in the Old-Testament prophets, testified by Christ, his sufferings, and the general way he should follow, 1 Pet. 1. 11. This makes the scriptures the word of God, for they had their exact and full accomplishment; and that Jesus Christ was sent of God, for they had their accomplishment in him; this was he that should come, for, whatever was foretold concerning the Messiah, was verified in him; and he would submit to any thing for the fulfilling of scripture, that not one jot or tittle of that should fall to the ground. This makes the offence of the cross to cease, and puts an honour upon it. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, thus it became him. 2. The ignominy and disgrace done to Christ in his sufferings, are here most insisted upon. The other evangelists had said that he should be mocked; but here it is added, He shall be spitefully treated, &c. He shall be loaded with contumely and contempt, shall have all his reproach put upon him. This was that part of his sufferings, by which in a spiritual manner he satisfied God's justice for the injury we had done him in his honour by sin. Here is one particular instance of disgrace done him, that he was spat upon, which had been particularly foretold, Isa. 50. 6. But here, as always, when Christ spake of his sufferings and death, he foretold his resurrection as that which took off both the terror and reproach of his sufferings; The third day he shall rise again.
II. The confusion that the disciples were hereby put into; this was so contrary to the notions they had had of the Messiah and his kingdom, such a balk to their expectations from their Master, and such a breaking of all their measures, that they understood none of these things, v. 34. Their prejudices were so strong, that they would not understand them literally, and by the proximate means; they understood them otherwise, so that they did not understand them at all; it was a mystery, it was a riddle to them, it must be so; but they think it impossible to be reconciled with the glory and honour of the Messiah, and the design of setting up his kingdom. This saying was hid from them, inscrutabilis et absurdis, it was apocrypha to them, they could not receive it: for their part, and that of many others, as well as many of those they had met with, they could never see any thing in it that should be accomplished in the disgrace and death of this Messiah. They were so intent upon those prophecies that spake of his glory, that they overlooked those that spake of his sufferings, which the scribes and doctors of the law should have directed them to take notice of, and should have brought into their creeds and catechisms, as well as the other; but they did not suit their scheme, and therefore were laid aside. Note, therefore it is that people run into mistakes, because they read their Bibles by the halves, and are as partial in the prophets as they are in the law. They are only for the smooth things, Isa. 30. 10. Thus now we are too apt, in reading the prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled, to have our expectations raised of the glorious state of the church in the latter days. But we overlook its wildness, sackcloth-state, and are willing to fancy that is over, and nothing is reserved for us but halcyon days; and then, when tribulation and persecution arise, we do not understand it, neither know we the things that are done; though we are told as plainly as can be, that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

35. And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side, begging: 36. And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. 39. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. 40. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41. Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43. And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Christ came not only to bring light to a dark world, and so to set before us the objects we are to have in view, but also to give sight to blind souls, and by healing the organ to enable them to view them otherwise, so that he cured many of their bodily blindness; we have now an account of one to whom he gave sight near Jericho. Mark gives us an account of one, and names him, whom he cured as he went out of Jericho, Mark 10. 46. Matthew speaks of two, whom he cured as they departed from Jericho, Matt. 20. 30. Luke says it was "ανοικοι, και οπως αναλιγητας εν γεφων,"—when he was near to Jericho, which might be when he was going out of it, as well as when he was coming into it.

Observe, 

I. That poor blind man sat by the way-side, begging, v. 35. It seems, he was not only blind but poor, had nothing to subsist on, nor any relations to maintain him; the fitter emblem of the world of mankind which Christ came to heal and save; they are therefore wretched and miserable, for they are both poor and blind, Rev. 3. 17. He sat begging, for he was blind, and could not work for his living. Note, The blindness of the world in respect to Christ is a further reason why they should not look for any glory or honour from him, but only look for mercy. If the providence of God has any way disabled to get their own bread. Such objects of charity by the way-side ought not to be overlooked by us. Christ here cast a favourable eye upon a common beggar, and though there are cheats among such, yet they must not therefore be all thought such.

II. Hearing the noise of a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. 36. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 37. It is good beginning in Christ's way; and, when we have an opportunity of applying ourselves to him, not to let it slip.

III. His prayer has it in a great deal both of faith and fervency; Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me, v. 38. He owns Christ to be the Son of David, the Messiah promised; he believes him to be Jesus a Saviour; he believes he is able to help and succour him, and earnestly begs his favour "Have mercy on me, pardon my sin, pity my misery." Christ is a merciful King; those that apply themselves to him as the Son of David, shall find him so, and ask enough for themselves when they pray, Have mercy on us; for Christ's mercy includes all.

IV. Those who are in good earnest for Christ's favours and blessings, will not be put by from the pursuit of them, though they may be rebuked, as they who went along, chid him as troublesome to the Master, noisy and impertinent, and bid him hold his peace; but he went on with his petition, nay, the check given him was but as a dam to a full stream, which makes it swell so much the more; he cried the louder, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. Those who would speed in prayer, must be importunate in prayer. This history, in the close of the chapter, speaks the same thing with the parable in the beginning of the chapter, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

V. Christ encourages poor beggars, whom men frown upon, and invites them to come to him, and is ready to entertain them, and bid them welcome; He commanded him to be brought to him. Note, Christ extends his kindness and compassion for the distressed suppliants than any of his followers have. Though Christ was upon his journey, yet he stopped and stood, and commanded him to be brought to him. Those who had checked him must now lend him their hands to lead him to Christ.

VI. Though Christ knows all our wants, he will know them from us; (v. 41.) What will thou, that I shall do unto thee? By presenting our case before God, with a particular representation of our wants and burdens, we teach ourselves to value the mercy we are in pursuit of; and it is necessary that we
should, else we are not fit to receive it. This man
poised out his soul before Christ, when he said,
Lord, that I may receive my sight. Thus particular
should we be in prayer, upon particular occasions.

VII. The prayer of faith, guided by Christ's encourag-
ing promises, and grounded on them shall not be in vain; nay, it shall not only receive an answer, but receive a powerful answer. (2 Cor. vii. 6.)
Christ said, Receive thy sight, thy faith hath made thee whole.
True faith will produce fervency in prayer, and both together will fetch in abundance of the fruits of Christ's favour; and they are then doubly con-
fortable, when they come in that way, when we are
saved by faith.

VIII. The grace of Christ ought to be thankfully acknowledged, to the glory of God, ver. 43. 1. The poor beggar himself, that had his sight restored, followed Christ, glorifying God. Christ made it his business to glorify his Father; and those whom he healed, then pleased him best, when they praised God, as those shall please God best, who praise
Christ, and do him honour; for in confessing that he is Lord, we give glory to God the Father. "It is for
the glory of God if we follow Christ, and those will do, whose eyes are opened. 2. The people that saw it, could not forbear giving praise to God, who had given such power to the Son of man, and by him had conferred such favours on the sons of men.
Note, We must give praise to God for his mercies to others as well as for mercies to ourselves.

CHAP. XIX.

In this chapter, we have, I. The conversion of Zaccheus the publican at Jericho, ver. 1. 10. II. The parable of the prodigal son, and the King, which the King intrusted with his servants, and of his rebellious citizens, ver. 11.... 37. III. Christ's riding in triumph, (such triumph as it was,) into Jerusalem; and his lamentation in prospect of the ruin of that city, ver. 28.... 44. IV. His teaching in the temple, and casting of the buyers and sellers out of it, ver. 45.... 48.

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2. And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3. And he sought to see Jesus, the man who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way. 5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. 6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold. 9. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Many, no doubt, were converted to the faith of

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Christ, of whom no account is kept in the gospels; but the conversion of some, whose case had something in it extraordinary, is recorded, as this of Zac-
cheus. Christ passed through Jericho, ver. 1. That
city was built under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with his presence, for the gospel takes away the
curse. Though it ought not to have been built, yet it was not therefore a sin to live in it when it was
built. (2 Cor. vii. 6.)

I. Who, and what, this Zaccheus was.

His name bespeaks him a Jew. Zacchaeus was a
common name among the Jews; they had a famous rabbin, much about this time, of that name. Ob-
serve,

1. His calling, and the post he was in: He was the chief among the publicans, receiver-general; other publicans were officers under him; he was, as some think, farmer of the customs. We often read of publicans coming to Christ. But here was one that was chief of the publicans in the city, and he was a sinner, though the word here used is in and not among all sorts; Christ came to save even the chief
of sinners, and therefore even the chief of publi-
cans.

2. His circumstances in the world were very con-
siderable; He was rich. The inferior publicans were commonly men of broken fortunes, and low in the world; but he that was chief of the publicans, had raised a good estate. Christ had lately showed how hard it is for rich people to enter into the king-
dom of God, yet presently produces an instance of one rich man that had been lost, and was found, and that not, as the prodigal, by being reduced to want.

11. How he came in Christ's way, and what was the occasion of his acquaintance with him.

1. He had a great curiosity to see Jesus, what kind of a man he was, having heard great talk of him. 2. It is natural to us, to come in sight, if we can, of those whose fame has filled our ears, as being apt to imagine there is something extraordinary in their countenances; at least, he would be able to say hereafter, that he had seen such and such great

men. But the eye is not satisfied with seeing. We should now seek to see Jesus with an eye of faith, to see who he is; we should address ourselves in holy
onesances with this in our eye, We would see Jesus. 2. He could not get his curiosity gratified in
this matter, because he was little, and the crowd was great. Christ did not study to show himself, was not carried on men's shoulders, (as the pope is in procession,) that all men might see him, neither he nor his kingdom came with observation; he did not ride in an open chariot, as princes do, but, as one of
us, he was lost in a crowd; for that was the day of humiliation. Zaccheus was not to take it to the heart, or to be overwhelmed over all about him, so that he could not get a sight of Jesus. Many that are little of stature, have large souls, and are lively in spirit. Who
would not rather be a Zaccheus than a Sanh, though he was higher by head and shoulders than all about him? Let not those that are little of stature, take
thought of adding cubits to it.

Because he could not satisfy his curiosity, he forgot his cravity, as chief of the publicans, and
ran before, like a boy, and climbed up into a sycama-
more-tree, to see him. Note, Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ, will use the proper means for gaining a sight of him, and will break through a
day of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to
take pains to see him. Those that find themselves little, must take all the advantage they can get to
raise themselves to a sight of Christ, and not be
ST. LUKE, XIX.

 ashamed to own that they need them, and all little enough. Let not dwarfs despair, with good help, by helping him, to reach it.

III. The notice Christ took of him, the call he gave him to a further acquaintance, (v. 5.) and the efficacy of that call, v. 6.

1. Christ invited himself to Zaccheus's house, not doubting of his hearty welcome there; nay, wherever Christ comes, as he brings his own entertainment along with him, so he brings his own welcome, he opens the heart, and invites him. Christ invited up into the tree, and saw Zaccheus.

He came to look upon Christ, and resolved to take particular notice of him, but little thought of being taken notice of by Christ. That was an honour too great and too far above his merit, for him to have any thought of. See how Christ prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and outdid his expectations; and see how he encouraged very weak beginnings, and helped them forward. He that had a mind to know Christ, shall be known of him; he that only courted to see him, shall be admitted to converse with him. Note, Those that are faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more. And sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, as Zaccheus did, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and saved; and Christ called him by name, Zaccheus, for he knows his chosen by name; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathaniel did, (John 1. 48.) Whence knowest thou me? But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bid him make haste, and come down. Those that Christ calls, must come down, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any pride or presumption of their own; and they must make haste, and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but haste; he knows it is not a matter that should welcome such a guest to his house. He must come down, for Christ intends this day to bathe at his house, and stay an hour or two with him. Behold, he stands at the door, and knocketh.

2. Zaccheus was overjoyed to have such an honour put upon his house; (v. 6.) He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully: and his receiving of him into his house, was an indication and token of his receiving of him into his heart. Note, When Christ calls to us, we must make haste to answer his calls; and when he comes to us, we must receive him joyfully; Lift up your heads, O ye gates. We may well receive him joyfully, who brings all good along with him, and, when he takes possession of the soul, opens springs of joy there, which shall flow to eternity. How often has Christ said to us, Often to me, when we have, with the spouse, made excuses, Cant. 5. 2. 3. Zaccheus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us. We have not now Christ to entertain in our houses, but we have his disciples, and what is done to them he takes as done to himself.

IV. The offence which the people took at this kind greeting between Christ and Zaccheus. Those narrow-sould, censorious Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a Guest with a man that is a sinner, and to lay a heavy tax upon him; and were not they themselves sinful men? Was it not Christ's errand into the world, to seek and save that which was lost? But Zaccheus they think to be a sinner above all men that dwell in Jericho; such a sinner as was not fit to be conversed with.

Now this was very unjust to blame Christ for going to his house; for, 1. Though he was a publican, and many of the publircans were bad men, it did not therefore follow that they were all so; we must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by common fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is. 2. Though he had been a sinner, it did not follow that he was now as bad as he had been; though they knew his past life to be bad, Christ might know his present frame to be good. God allows room for repentance, and so must we.

3. Though he was now a sinner, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in no danger of getting hurt by a sinner, but in great hopes of doing good to a sinner; whither should the physicians assemble, but at the sick bed?

V. The proofs which Zaccheus gave publicly, that though he had been a sinner, he was now a penitent, and a true convert, v. 8.

He does not expect to be justified by his works as the Pharisee who boasted of what he had done, but by his good works he will, through the grace of God, evidence the sincerity of his faith and repentance: and here he declares what his determination was. He makes this declaration standing, that he might be seen and heard by those who murmured at Christ for coming to his house; with the mouth confession is made of repentance as well as faith. He stood, which denotes his saying it deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people, (they were not to hear it,) but to God. He called him by name, Zaccheus, for he knows his chosen by name; are they not in his book? He might ask, as Nathaniel did, (John 1. 48.) Whence knowest thou me? But before he climbed the sycamore-tree Christ saw him, and knew him. He bid him make haste, and come down. Those that Christ calls, must make haste, and humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any pride or presumption of their own: and they must make haste, and come down, for delays are dangerous. Zaccheus must not hesitate, but haste; he knows it is not a matter that should welcome such a guest to his house. He must come down, for Christ intends this day to bathe at his house, and stay an hour or two with him. Behold, he stands at the door, and knocketh.

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fold." This was the restitution that a thief was to make, Exod. 22. 1. (1.) He seems plainly to own that he had done wrong; his office as a publican, gave him opportunity to do wrong, imposing upon the merchants, to curry favour with the government. True with him all, and with himself, the whole is neral guilt before God, but will particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them. (2.) That he had done wrong by false accusation; this was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly, Luke 3. 14. They did not thus go forward, and every man's guilt will be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill-will. (3.) He promises to restore four-fold, as far as he could recollect or find by his books that he had wronged any man. He does not say, "If I be sued, and compelled to it, I will make restitution;" (some are honest when they cannot help it;) but he will do it voluntarily. It shall be made, may be added, Note, his words are convinced of having done wrong, cannot evidence the sincerity of their repentance but by making restitution. Observe, He does not think that his giving of half his estate to the poor, will atone for the wrong he has done; God hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and we must first do justly and then love mercy. It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which is our own, and yet pretend to give that which our own which we have not come honestly by, nor that our own which is not so, when all our debts are paid, and restitution made for wrong done.

VI. Christ's approbation and acceptance of Zac- cheus's conversion, by which also he cleared himself from any imputation in going to be a Guest with him, v. 19, 10.

1. Zaccheus is declared to be now a happy man; now he is turned from sin to God, now he has bid Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest charitable good man; This day is salvation come to this house, Now that he is converted, he is, in effect, saved, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his; Christ is come to his house, and where Christ comes, he brings salvation with him, and it will be. He brings eternal salvation to all that own him as Zaccheus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation this day comes to his house. (1.) When Zaccheus becomes a convert, he will be, more than he had been, a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a son of Abraham indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord. He is greedy of good, and values his own house, and brings a curse upon it; (Hab. 2, 9.) but he that is charitable to the poor, does a kindness to his own house, and brings a blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least, Ps. 112. 3. (2.) When Zaccheus is brought to Christ himself, his family also become related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to them. Zaccheus is not only a Jew, and therefore interested in God's covenant with Abraham, that blessing of Abraham, which, comes upon the publicans, upon the Gentiles, through faith, that God will be a God to them and to their children; and therefore, when he believes, salvation comes to his house, as to the gardener's, to whom it was said, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house, Acts 16. 31. Zaccheus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen; they are put upon a level, Matt. 18. 17. And as such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so; but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become rectus in curia—upright in court, as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been a publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

2. What Christ had done to make him, in particu lar, a happy man, was congratual to the great design and intention of his coming into the world; (v. 10.) with the same argument he had before justified his conversing with publicans, Matt. 9. 13. There he pleaded, that he came to call sinners to repentance; now that he came to seek and save that which was lost; as Zacc. 13. the lost thing. Ob serve, (1.) The deplorable case of the sons of men; they were lost; but here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. Note, The whole world of mankind, by the fall, is become a lost world, lost, as a city is lost when it is revoluted to the rebels; as a traveller is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness; as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable; or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him. (2.) The gracious design of the Son of God; he came to seek and save, to seek in order to saving. He came from heaven to earth, (a long journey!) to seek that which was lost, (which had wandered and gone astray,) and to bring it back; (Matt. 18. 11, 12.) and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up, to bring those to themselves, that were lost to God and all goodness. Observe, Christ came into this lost world, to seek and save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. In prosecution of that design, he sought, took all probable means, to effect that salvation. He seeks those that were not worth seeking to; he seeks those that sought him not, and asked not for him, as Zaccheus here.

11. And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. 15. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20. And another came, saying, Lord, behold here is thy pound,
which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou sliadt not sow. 22. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23. Wherefore then gavest thou not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24. And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. 25. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26. For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he shall be taken away from him. 27. But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Our Lord Jesus is now upon his way to Jerusalem, to his last passover, when he was to suffer and die; now here we are told,

I. How the expectations of his friends were raised upon this occasion; They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear, v. 11. The Pharisees expected about this time, (ch. 17. 20.) and it seems, so did Christ’s own disciples; but they both had a mistaken notion of it. The Pharisees thought that it must be introduced by some other temporal prince or potentate. The disciples thought that their Master should introduce it, but in the pomp and power, which, with the power he had to work miracles, they knew he could clothe himself with in a short time, whenever he pleased. Jerusalem, they concluded, must be the seat of his kingdom, and therefore now that he is going directly thither, they doubt not but in a little time to see him upon the throne there. Note, Even good men are subject to mistakes concerning the kingdom of Christ, and to form wrong notions of it, and are ready to think that should immediately appear, which is reserved for hereafter.

II. How their expectations were checked, and the mistakes rectified upon which they were founded; and this he does in three things.

1. They expected that he should appear in his glory now presently, but he tells them that he must not yet appear, but that he must first be endowed with a great power, while yet. He is like a certain nobleman, υπερηφανος — a certain man of high birth, (so Dr. Hammond,) for he is the Lord from heaven, and is entitled by birth to the kingdom; but he goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. Christ must go to heaven, to sit down at the right hand of the Father there, and to receive from him honour and glory, before the Spirit was poured out, by which his kingdom was to be set up on earth, and before a church was to be set up for him in the Gentile world. He must receive the kingdom, and then return. Christ returned when the Spirit was poured out; when Jerusalem was destroyed, by which time that generation, both of friends and enemies, which he had personally conversed with, was wholly worn off by death, and gone to give up their account. But his chief return here meant, is, that at the great day, which we are yet in expectation of. That they which they thought should immediately appear, Christ tells them not to appear, till this same Jesus, which is taken from us, shall in like manner come again; see Acts 1. 11.

2. They expected that his apostles and immediate attendants should be advanced to dignity and honour; that they should all be made princes and peers, privy-counsellors and judges, and have all the pomp and perfections of the court, and of the town; but Christ bade them tell, that instead of that, he designed them to be made servers, and must expect no other preferment in this world than that of the trading end of the town; he would set them up with a stock under their hands, that they might employ it themselves, in serving him and the interest of his kingdom among men. That is the true honour of a christian and a minister, which if we be as we ought to be truly ambitious of, we shall be able to look upon all temporal honours with a holy contempt. The apostles had dreamed of sitting on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom, enjoying ease after their present toil, and honour after the present contempt put upon them, and were pleasing themselves with this dream; but Christ tells them that which, if they understood it aright, would fill them with care, and concern, and seriousness of those aspiring ones which they filled their heads with.

(1.) They have a great work to do now; their Master leaves them to receive his kingdom, and, at parting, he gives each of them a pound, which, the margin of our common Bibles tells us, amounts in our money to three pounds and half a crown; this signifies the same thing with the talents in the parallel parable, (Matt. 25.) all the gifts with which Christ’s apostles were endued, and the advances and capacities which they had, of serving the interest of Christ in the world, and others, both ministers and christians, like them in a lower degree. But perhaps it is in the parable thus represented, to make them the more humble: their honour in this world is only that of traders, and that the act of firstlings, who have vast stocks to begin upon, but that of poor traders, who must take a great deal of care and pains to make anything of what they have.

He gave these pounds to his servants, not to buy rich liveries, much less robes, and a splendid equipage, for themselves to appear in as they expected, but with this charge, Qeexo aZvov iroAaniev (so it might much better be translated,) Trade till I come. Πραγματευονται— Be busy. So the word properly signifies; “You are sent forth to preach the gospel, to set up a church for Christ in the world, to bring the nations to the obedience of faith, and to build them up in it; Ye shall receive power to do this, for ye shall be filled with the Holy Ghost,” Acts 1. 8. The Greek word πνευμα, which is here translated Spirit, instead of saying, Ἡγιαστής η Θεός the Holy Ghost, then he delivered them ten pounds. “Now,” saith he, “mind your business, and make a business of it: set about it in good earnest, and stick to it; lay yourselves to do all the good you can to the souls of men, and to gather them in to Christ. Note,

[1.] All christians have business to do for Christ in this world, and ministers especially: this is not the law of the land, to be idle.

[2.] Those that are called to business for Christ, he furnishes with gifts necessary for their business; and, on the other hand, from these to whom he gives power he expects service. He delivers the pounds with this charge, Go work, go trade. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man, to further, 1 Cor. 12. 7. And as ever one has received the gifts, so let him minister the same, 1 Pet. 4.
10. [3.] We must continue to mind our business till our Master comes, whatever difficulties or oppositions we may meet with in it; those only that endure to the end, shall be saved.

(2.) They have a great account to make shortly. These servants are called to him, to show what use they made of the gifts they were dignified with, what service they had done for Christ, and what fruits of the souls of men, that he might know what every man had gained by trading. Note, [1.] They that trade diligently and faithfully in the service of Christ, shall be gainers; we cannot say so of the business of the world, many a labouring tradersman has been a loser, but those that trade for Christ, shall be gainers; though Israel be not gathered, yet they will be glorious. [2.] The conversion of souls is the truest, and very truest, the only true, and indubitable gain, clear gain to Jesus Christ. Ministers are but factors for him, and to him they must give account what fish they have inclosed in the gospel-net; what guests they have prevailed with, to come to the wedding-supper; that is, what they have gained by trading. Now in the account given up, observe, First, The good account which was given by some of the servants, and the master's approbation of them, which was received, v. 19.

1. They had both made considerable improvements, but not both alike; one had gained ten pounds, by his trading, and another five. Those that are diligent and faithful in serving Christ, are commonly blessed in being made blessings to the places where they live. They shall see the travail of their soul, and not labour in vain. And yet, all that are alike faithful, are not alike successful, and perhaps though they were both faithful, it is intimated that one of them took more pains, and applied himself more closely to his business, than the other, and sped accordingly. Blessed Paul was surely this servant that gained ten pounds, double to what any of the rest did, for he laboured more abundantly than they all, and fully preached the gospel of Christ.

2. They both acknowledged their obligations to their Master, for intrusting them with these abilities and opportunities to do him service; Lord, it is not my industry, but thy pound, that has gained ten pounds. Note, God must have all the glory of all our gains; not unto us, but unto him, must be the praise. Ps. 115. 1. Paul, who gained the ten pounds, acknowledges, "I laboured, yet not I. By the grace of God, I am what I am, and what I do; and his grace was not in vain," 1 Cor. 15. 10. He that gains, gains, but of what God had done by him, Rom. 15. 18.

3. They were both commended for their fidelity and industry; Well done, thou good servant, v. 17. And to the other he said likewise, v. 19. Note, They who do that which is good, shall have praise of the same. Do well, and Christ will say to thee, Well done; and if he saith Well done, the matter is not great who saith otherwise. See Gen. 4. 7. Now therefore, any improvement they had made; "Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, and didst not say, 4 As good so still as go to trade with one pound, what can one do with so small a stock?" but didst humbly and honestly apply thyself to the improvement of that, have thou authority over ten cities." Note, Those are in a fair way to rise, who are content to begin low. He that has used the office of a deacon well, furroweth to the plough; he that has used a little faithfully, and is hereby promised the apostles; (1.) That, when they have taken pains to plant many churches, they shall have the satisfaction and honour of presiding in them, and governing among them; they shall have great respect paid them, and have a great interest in the love and esteem of good Christians. He that keepest the fig-tree, shall eat the fruit thereof; and he that laboureth in the word and doctrine, shall be counted worthy of double honour. (2.) That, when they have served their generation according to the will of Christ, though they pass through this world despised and trampled upon, and perhaps pass out of it under disgrace and persecution, as the apostles did, yet in the other world they shall reign as kings, and sit on thrones in glory; of one of his thrones, shall have power over the nations, Rev. 2. 26. The happiness of heaven will be a much greater advancement to a good minister or Christian, than it would be to a poor tradesman, that with much ado had cleared ten pounds, to be made governor of ten cities. He that had gained but five pounds, had dominion over five cities. This intimates that there is no degree so low but he that shall have true, I say not, to be like full, but not like larger. And the degrees of glory there, will be according to the degrees of usefulness here.

Secondly, The bad account that was given by one of them, and the sentence passed upon him, for his slothfulness and unfaithfulness, v. 20, &c.

1. He owned that he had not traded with the pound with which he was intrusted; (v. 20.) "Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an austere man, rigid and severe, and will exact thy pound: it is true, I have not made it more, but withal I have not made it less; I have kept it safe laid up in a napkin." This represents the carelessness of those who have gifts, but never lay out themselves to do good with them; it is all one to them, whether the interests of Christ's kingdom sink or swim, go backward or forward; for their parts, they will take no care about it, no pains, be at no expenses, run no hazard; those are the men who are called "slothful," and would have thought it is enough to say that they have done no hurt in the world, but did no good.

2. He justified himself in his omission, with a plea that made the matter worse and not better; (v. 21.) I feared thee, because thou art an austere man, rigid and severe, and will exact thy pound. Thou takest up that thou laist not down. He thought that his master put a hardship upon his servants, when he required and expected the improvement of their pounds, and that it was reaping where he did not sow, whereas really it was reaping where he had sown, and, as the husbandman, expects in proportion to what he had sown. He had no reason to fear his master's austerity, nor blame his expectations, but this was a mere shaming; a frivolous, groundless excuse for his idleness, which he did and durst not do for. Note, The pleas of slothful professors, when they come to be examined, will be found more to their shame than in their justification.

3. His excuse is turned upon him; (v. 22.) Out of thine own mouth wilt I judge thee, thou wicked servant. He will be condemned by his crime, but self-condemned by his plea. "If thou didst look upon it as hard, that I should expect the profits of thy trading with me, thou mightest have been the greater to the service; yet, if thou hadst any regard to my interest, thou mightest have put it into the bank, into some of the funds, that I might have had, not only mine own, but mine own with unroy, which, though a less advantage, would have been some." If he durst not trade, for fear of losing the principal, and so be made accountable to his lord for it, though it was lost, which he pretends, yet that he did not give the greater excuse for his not trading, which would have been sure. Note, Whatever may be the pretences of slothful professors, in excuse for their slothfulness, the true reason of it is a reigning indifference, to the interests of Christ and his kingdom, and their coldness therein. They care not whether religion gets ground or loses ground, so they can be left at ease.

4. His pound is taken from him, v. 24. It is fit
that those should lose their gifts, who will not use their gifts; and that those who have dealt falsely should be no longer trusted. Those who will not serve their Master with what he bestows upon them, why should they be suffered to serve themselves with it? *Note,* from the round.

5. It is given to him that had got the ten pounds. When this was objected against by the standers-by, because he had so much already, (Lord, he has ten pounds, v. 25.) it is answered, (v. 26.) *Unto every one that hath shall be given.* It is the rule of justice, (1.) That those should be most encouraged, who have been most industrious, and that they who have laid themselves most to do good, should have their opportunities of doing good enlarged, and be put into a higher and more extensive sphere of usefulness. To him that hath gotten shall more be given, that he may be in a capacity to get more.

(2.) That those who have their gifts, as if they had them not, who have them to no purpose, who do no good with them, should be deprived of them. Those who endeavour to increase the grace they have, God will increase it; those who neglect it, and suffer it to decline, can expect no other than that God should do so too. This needful warning Christ gives to his disciples, lest, while they were gaping for honours on earth, they should neglect their business, and so come short of their happiness in heaven.

3. Another thing they expected was, that, when the kingdom of God should appear, the body of the Jewish nation should immediately fall in with it, and submit to it, and all their aversions to Christ and his gospel should immediately vanish; but Christ tells them that, after his departure, the generality of them would persist in their obstinacy and rebellion, and it would be their ruin. This is showed here.

(1.) In the message which his citizens sent after him, v. 14. They not only opposed him, while he was in obscurity, but, when he was gone into glory, to be invested in his kingdom, then they continued their enmity to him, protested against his dominion, and said, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* [1.] This was fulfilled in the prevailing infidelity of the Jews after the ascension of Christ, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom; they would not submit their necks to his yoke, nor touch the top of his golden sceptre. They said, *Let us break his bands in sunder,* Ps. 2. 1—3. Acts 4. 26. [2.] It speaks the language of all unbelievers; they could be content that Christ should save them, but they would not have him to reign over them; whereas Christ is a Saviour to those only to whom he is a Prince, and who are willing to obey him.

(2.) In the sentence passed upon them at his return; (v. 27.) *Those mine enemies bring hither.* When his faithful subjects are preferred and rewarded, then he will take vengeance on his enemies; and particularly on the Jewish nation, the doom of which is here read. When Christ had set up his government, thereby taking a share in the gospel ministry, then he comes to reckon with the Jews; then it is remembered against them, that they had particularly disclaimed and protested against his kingly office, when they said, *We have no king but Caesar,* nor would own him for their King; they appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar they shall look; *When Caesar shall be their ruin.* Then the kingdom of God was prepared, when the Jews were warned on those irreconcilable enemies to Christ and his government; they were brought forth, and slain before him. Never was so much slaughter made in any war as in the wars of the Jews. That nation lived to see Christianity victorious in the Gentile world, in spite of their enmity and opposition to it, and then it was taken away as dross. The wrath of Christ came upon them to the uttermost, (1 Thess. 2. 15, 16,) and their destruction recondemned very much to the honour of Christ and the peace of the church. But this is applicable to all others who persist in their infidelity, and will undoubtedly perish in the same fate. [Note, (1.) Utter ruin will certainly be the portion of all Christ's enemies; in the day of vengeance they shall all be brought forth, and slain before him. *Bring them hither,* to be made a spectacle to saints and angels; see Josh. 10. 22, 24. *Bring them hither,* that they may see the glory and happiness of Christ and his followers, whom they hated and persecuted. *Bring them hither,* to have their frivolous pleas overruled, and to testify sentence according to their merits. Bring them, and slay them before me, as Agag before Samuel. The Saviour whom they have slighted, will stand by, and see them slain, and not interpose on their behalf.

[2.] Those that will not have Christ to reign over them, shall be reputed and dealt with as his enemies. We are ready to think that none are Christ's enemies but persecutors of Christianity, or scoffers at last; but you see that those will be accounted so, that dislike the terms of salvation, will not submit to Christ's yoke, but will be their own masters. Note, Whoever will not be ruled by the grace of Christ, will inevitably be ruined by the wrath of Christ.
salem, which we had before in Matthew and Mark; let us therefore here only observe,
I. Jesus Christ was forward and willing to suffer and die for us. He went forward, bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, knowing very well the things that should befall him there, and yet he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem, v. 28. He was the foremost of the company, as if he longed to be upon the spot, to see the time, all the more upon action. Was he so forward to suffer and die for us, and shall we draw back from any service we are capable of doing for him?
II. It was no ways inconsistent, either with Christ's humility, or with his present state of humiliation, to make a public entry into Jerusalem a little before he died. Thus he made himself to be the more taken notice of, that the ignominy of his death might appear the greater.
III. Christ is entitled to a dominion over all the creatures, and may use them when and as he pleases. No man has a property in his estate against Christ, but that his title is prior and superior. Christ sent to fetch an ass and her colt from their owner's and master's crib, when he had occasion for their service, and they are used by the beasts of the forest are his, and the tame beasts too.
IV. Christ has all men's hearts both under his eye and in his hand. He could influence those to whom the ass and the colt belonged, to consent to their taking them away; as soon as they are sure to please him, he will have occasion for them.
V. Those that go on Christ's errands, are sure to be furnished with what they want. That was sent, found what he told them they should find, and the owners willing to part with them. It is a comfort to Christ's messengers, that what they are sent for, if indeed the Lord has occasion for it, they shall bring it.
VI. The disciples of Christ, who fetch that for him from others, which he has occasion for, and which they have not, should not think that enough, but, whatever they have themselves, wherewith he may be served and honoured, they should be ready to serve him with it. Many can be willing to attend Christ at other people's expense, who care not at being at any charge upon themselves; but those disciples not only fetched the ass's colt for him, but cast their own garments upon the colt, and were willing that those should be used for his trappings.
VII. Christ's triumphs are the matter of the disciples' joy and praise. The Lord that came to Jerusalem, God put it of a sudden into the hearts of the whole multitude of the disciples, not to the twelve only, but abundance more, that were disciples at large, to rejoice and praise God; (v. 37.) and their spreading of their clothes in the way, (v. 36.) was a common expression of joy, as at the feast of tabernacles. Observe, 1. What was the matter or occasion of their joy and praise. They praised God for the high favour they had, and the miracles Christ had wrought, especially the raising of Lazarus, which is particularly mentioned, John 12. 17, 18. That brought others to mind, for fresh miracles and mercies should revive the remembrance of the former. 2. How they expressed their joy and praise; (v. 38.) Blessed be the King that comes in the name of the Lord; Christ is the King, he comes in the name of the Lord, clothed with the power and authority, commissioned from heaven to give law, and treat of peace; blessed be he. Let us praise him, let God prosper him. He is blessed for ever, and we will speak well of him. Peace in heaven. Let the God of heaven send peace and success to his undertaking, and then there will be glory in the highest. It will redound to the glory of the most high God; and the angels, the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, will give him the glory of it. Compare this song of the saints on earth with that of the angels; (ch. 2. 14.) they both agree to give glory to God in the highest, there the praises of both centre; the angels say, On earth peace, rejoicing in the benefit which men on earth have by Christ; the saints say, Peace in heaven, rejoicing in the benefit which the angels have by Christ; such is the communion we have with the holy angels, that, as they rejoice in the peace on earth, so we rejoice in the peace in heaven, the peace God makes in his high place, (John 25. 2.) and both in Christ, who hath reconciled all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven.
VIII. Christ's triumphs, and his disciples' joyful praises of them, are the vexation of proud Pharisees, that are enemies to him and his kingdom. Then were some Pharisees among the multitude, who were so far from joining with them, that they were enraged at them, and Christ being a famous Example of humility, they thought that he would not admit such acclamations as these, and therefore expected that he should rebuke his disciples, v. 39. But it is the honour of Christ, that, as he despirises the conceit of the proud, so he accepts the praises of the humble.
IX. When other men praise Christ or no, he will, and shall, and must, be praised; (v. 46.) If these should hold their peace, and not speak the praises of the Messiah's kingdom, the stones would immediately cry out, rather than that Christ should not be praised; which was, in effect, literally fulfilled, when, upon men's reviling Christ upon the cross, instead of praising him, and his own disciples' sinking into a profound silence, the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. Pharisees would silence the praises of Christ, but they cannot gain their point; for as God can out of stones raise up children into Abraham, so he can out of the mouths of those children perfect praise.

41. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. 44. And shall lay thee even when the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. 45. And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; 46. Saying unto them. It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.
47. And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him; 48. And could not find what they might do: for all the people were attentive to hear him.

The great Ambassador from heaven is here making his public entry into Jerusalem, not to be respected there, but to be rejected; he knew what a nest of vipers he was throwing himself into; and yet, see here two instances of his love to that place, and his concern for it.
1. The tears he shed for the approaching ruin of the city; (v. 41.) When he was come near, he be-
held the city, and wept over it. Probably, it was when he was coming down the descent of the hill from the mount of Olives, where he had a full view of the city, the large extent of it, and the many stately structures in it, and his eye affected his heart, and his heart his eye again. See here, 1. What a tender spirit Christ was; he wept the day after he read that he laughed, but we often find him in tears. In this very place his father David wept, and those that were with him, though he and they were men of war. There are cases in which it is no disparagement to the stoutest of men, to melt into tears. 2. That Jesus Christ wept in the midst of his triumphs, wept when all about him were rejoicing, to show how little he knew of the applications of the people. Thus he would teach us to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejoiced not. If Providence do not stain the beauty of our triumphs, we may ourselves see cause to sully it with our sorrows. 3. That he wept over Jerusalem. Note, There are cities to be wept over, and none to be more lamented than Jerusalem, that had been the holy city, and the joy of the whole earth, if it be degenerated. But why did Christ weep at the sight of Jerusalem? Was it because “Yonder is the city in which I must be betrayed and bound, scourged and spit upon, condemned and crucified”? No, he himself gives us the reason of his tears.

(1.) Jerusalem has not improved the day of her opportunity. It was an ancient and a good maxim, and is so still: “If thou hast known, even then at least in this day, thou wouldst yet but now, while the gospel is preached to thee, and salvation offered thee by it; if thou wouldst at length beoth thyself, and understand the things that belong to thy peace, the making of thy peace with God, and the securing of thine own spiritual and eternal welfare—but thou dost not know them.” Jerusalem was thus. And “many shall cry,” speaking of the apostles; “If thou hast known what things were hid from thee, so some take it; like that God of prophet had heartened unto me, Ps. 81. 13. Isa. 48. 18. Or, if thou hadst known, well; like that of the figure, ch. 13. 9. How happy had it been for thee! Or, “If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have wept for thyself, and I should have no occasion to weep for thee, which I reproach rather.” So that he saith lays all the blame of Jerusalem’s imperious ruin upon herself. Note, [1.] There are things which belong to our peace, which we are all concerned to know and understand; the way how peace is made, the offers made of peace, the terms on which we may have the benefit of peace. The things that belong to our peace, are those things that relate to our present and future welfare; these we must know with application. [2.] There is a time of visitation, when those things which belong to our peace, may be known by us, and known to good purpose. When we enjoy the means of grace in great plenty, as powerfully preached to us, when the Spirit strives with us, and our own consciences are startled and awakened, then is the time of visitation, when we are disposed to take advantage of them. Those that have long neglected the time of their visitation, if at length, if at last, in this their day, their eyes be opened, and they behin their own selves, all will he well yet. Those shall not be refused, that come into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. [4.] It is the amazing folly of multitudes that enjoy the means of grace, and it will be of fatal consequence to them, that they stop to know the day of their readjustments. The things of their peace are revealed to them, but are not minded or regarded by them; they hide their eyes from them, as if they were not worth taking notice of. They are not aware of the accepted time and the day of salvation, and so let it slip and perish through mere carelessness. None are so blind as those that will not see; nor have any the things of their peace more certainly hid from their eyes, than those that turn their back upon them. [5.] The sin and folly of those that persist in a contempt of gospel-grace, are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and should be so to us. He looks with weeping eyes upon lost souls, that continue impenitent, that have had an opportunity of the gospel; he had rather that they would turn and live than go on and die, for he is not willing that any should perish.

(2.) Jerusalem cannot escape the day of her desolation. The things of her peace are now in a manner hid from her eyes; they will be shortly. Not but that after this the gospel was preached to them by the apostles; all the house of Israel were called to know assuredly that Christ was their Peace, (Act. 2. 36.) and multitudes were convinced and converted. But as to the body of the nation and the leading part of it, it was sealed up under unbelief, God had given them the spirit of slumber, Rom. 11. 8. They were so prejudiced and enraged against the gospel, and those few that did embrace it then, that nothing less than a miracle of divine grace (like that which converted Paul) would work upon them; and it could not be expected that such a miracle should be wrought, and so they were justly given up to judicial blindness and hardness. The peaceable things are not hid from the eyes of particular persons; but it is too late to think now of the nation of the Jews as such, becoming a christian nation, by embracing Christ, and therefore they are marked for ruin, which Christ here foresees and foretells, as the certain consequence of their rejecting Christ. Note, Neglecting the great salvation often brings temporal judgments upon a people; it did so upon Jerusalem in less than forty years after this; when all that Christ here foretold was exactly fulfilled. [1.] The Romans besieged the city, cast a great deal of it, compassed it round, and hewed the foundations of their inhabitants into stones. Josephus relates, that Titus ran up a wall in a very short time, which surrounded the city, and cut off all hopes of escaping. [2.] They laid it even with the ground. Titus commanded his soldiers to dig the city, and the whole compass of it was levelled, except three towers; see Josephus’s history of the wars of the Jews, ch. 7. 7. Also, in the same place, ever. 1. and others. The city, the walls, the houses, the citizens were laid even with the ground, (thy children within thee,) by the cruel slaughters that were made of them: and there was scarcely one stone left upon another. This was for their crucifying of Christ, this was because they knew not the day of their visitation. Let other cities and nations take warning.}

II. The zeal he showed for the present purifying of the temple. Though it must be destroyed ere long, it does not therefore follow, that no care must be taken of it in the mean time.

1. Christ cleared it of those who profaned it. He went straight to the temple, and began to cast out the buyers and sellers, v. 45. Hereby (though he was represented as an Enemy to the temple, and that was the argument of his charge before the high priest) he made it to appear that he had a truer love for the temple than they who had had such a veneration for its corban, its treasury, as a sacred thing; for its purity was more its glory than its wealth was. Christ gave a reason for his dislodging of the temple-merchants, v. 46. The temple is a house of prayer set apart for communion with God: the buyers and sellers must be expelled because they rob the temple of its spiritual gains they made there; which was by no means to be suffered, for it would be a distraction to those who came there to pray.

2. He put it to the best use that ever it was put to, for he taught daily in the temple, v. 47. Note, It is not enough that the corruption of a church be purged out, but the preaching of the gospel must be
encouraged. Now, when Christ preached in the temple, observe here.

(1.) How spiteful the church-rulers were against him; how industrious to seek an opportunity, or pretext rather, to do him a mischief; (v. 47.) The chief priests and scribes, and the chief of the people, the great sanhedrim, that should have attended him, and summoned the people to attend him, they sought to destroy him, and put him to death.

(3.) How respectful the common people were to him; they were very attentive to hear him; he spent most of his time in the country, and did not then preach in the temple, but, when he did, the people paid him great respect, attended on his preaching with diligence, and let no opportunity slip of hearing him; attended to it with care, and could not be wearied. Some read, All the people, as they heard him, took his part; and so it comes in very properly, as a reason why his enemies could not find what they might do against him; they saw the people ready to fly in their faces if they offered him any violence. Till his hour was come, his interest in the common people protected him; but when his hour was come, the chief priests' influence upon the common people delivered him up.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, we have, 1. Christ's answer to the chief priests' question concerning his authority, v. 1. 8. 2. Christ went out into the vineyard, and taught the people, and the twelve, and the Pharisees, and the rulers of the people, and the wise and honest elders, v. 9. 19. III. Christ's answer to the question proposed to him concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar, v. 20. 26. IV. His vindication of that great fundamental doctrine of the Jewish and Christian institutes, the resurrection of the dead and the future state, from the foolish cavils of the Sadducees, v. 27. 38. V. His puzzling of the scribes with a question concerning the Messiah's being the son of David, v. 39. 44. VI. The taking away the law of Moses, to take hold of the scribes, v. 45. 47. All which passages we had before in Matthew and Mark, and therefore need not enlarge upon them here, unless on those particulars which we had not there.

1. AND it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him, with the elders, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, By what authority does thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? 2. And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: 3. The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? 4. And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? 5. But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. 6. And they answered, That they could not tell whence it was. 7. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

In this passage of story nothing is added here to what we had in the other evangelists; but only in the first verse, which is here taken for granted.

1. That he was now teaching the people in the temple, and preaching the gospel. Note, Christ was a Preacher of his own gospel. He not only purchased the salvation for us, but published it to us, which is a great confirmation of the truth of the gospel, and gives abundant encouragement to us to receive it, for it is a sign that the heart of Christ was much upon it, to have it received. This likewise

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What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him, when they see him. 14. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. 15. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? 16. He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid. 17. And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner? 18. Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. 19. And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

Christ spake this parable against those who were resolved not to own his authority, though the evidence of it was ever so full and convincing; and it comes very reasonably to show by what quarrelling his authority they forfeited their own. Their disowning of the lord of their vineyard, was a defiance of their lease of the vineyard, and a giving up all their title.

I. The parable has nothing added here to what we had before in Matthew and Mark. The scope of it is to show that the Jewish nation, by persecuting the prophets, and at length Christ himself, had provoked God to take away from them all their church privileges, and to abandon them to ruin. It teaches us,

1. That those who enjoy the privileges of the visible church, are as tenants and farmers that have a vineyard to look after, and rents to pay for it. God, by setting up revealed religion and instituted orders in the world, hath implanted a vineyard, which he lets out to these people among whom his tabernacle is, v. 9. And they have vineyard-work to do, needful and constant work, but pleasant and profitable. Whereas man was, for sin, condemned to till the ground, they that have a place in the church, are restored to that which was Adam's work in innocency, to dress the garden, and to keep it, for the church is a paradise, and Christ the Tree of life in it. They have also vineyard-fruits to present to the Lord of the vineyard. There are rents to be paid, and services to be done, which, though bearing no proportion to the value of the premises, yet must be done, and must be paid.

2. That the work of God's ministers is to call upon those who enjoy the privileges of the church to bring forth fruit accordingly. They are God's rent-gatherers, to put the husbandmen in mind of their arrears, or rather to put them in mind that they have a Landlord who expects to hear from them, and to receive some acknowledgment of their dependence on him, and obligation to him, v. 10. The Old-Testament prophets were sent on this errand to the Jewish Church, to demand from them the duty and obedience that belonging to God.

3. That it has often been the lot of God's faithful servants to be wretchedly abused by his own tenants; they have been beaten and treated shamefully by those that resolved to send them empty away. They that are resolved not to do their duty to God, cannot be called upon to do it. Some of the best men in the world have had the hardest usage from it, for their best services.

4. That God sent his Son into the world to carry on the same work that the prophets were employed in, to gather the fruits of the vineyard for God; and one would have thought that he should have been received with joy; but, as Christ saith, they rejected his ministers, Thus said the Lord; but Christ as a Son, among his own, Verily I say unto you. Putting such an honour as this upon them, to send him, one would have thought, should have been upon them.

5. That these who reject Christ's ministers, would reject Christ himself, if he should come to them; for it has been tried, and found, that the persecutors and murderers of his ministers were the persecutors and murderers of himself. They said, This is the Heir, come let us kill him. When they slew the servants, there were other servants sent; *But if we can but be the death of the son, there is never another son to be sent, and then we shall be no longer molested with these demands; we may have a quiet possession of the vineyard for ourselves.* The Pharisees promised themselves, that if they could get Christ out of the way, they should for ever ride masters in the Jewish Church; and therefore they took the bold step, they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

6. That the putting of Christ to death, filled up the measure of the Jewish iniquity, and brought upon them a day of doom without remedy. No other could be expected than that God should destroy those wicked husbandmen. They began in not paying their rent, but then proceeded to beat and kill the servants, and at length their young Master himself. Note, Those that live in the neglect of their duty to God, know not what degrees of sin and destruction they are running themselves into.

II. To the application of the parable is added here, which we had not before, their deprecation of the doom included in it; (v. 16.) When they heard it, they said, God forbid, Masters—Let not this be done; so it should be read; though they could not but own that for such a sin such a punishment was just, and what might be expected, yet they could not bear to hear of it. Note, It is an instance of the folly and stupidity of sinners, that they proceed and commit their sin with the greater delight at the time they have a foresight and dread of the destruction that is at the end of those ways. And see what a cheat they put upon themselves, to think to avoid it by a cold God forbid, when they do nothing toward the preventing of it; but will this make the threatening of no effect? No, they shall know whose word shall stand, God's or theirs.

1. When Christ had answered, in answer to this childish deprecation of their ruin.

2. He beheld them. That is taken notice of only by the evangelist, v. 17. He looked upon them with pity and compassion, grieved to see them cheat themselves thus to their own ruin. He beheld them, to see if they would blush at their own folly, or if he could discern in their countenances any show of relenting. He observed what Christ saith, "What is this that is written? How can you escape the judgment of God, when you cannot prevent the extermination of him whom you despise and reject? The word of God hath said it, that the Stone which the builders rejected, is become the Head of the corner." The Lord Jesus will be exalted to the Father's right hand, he has all judgment and all power committed to him as the Corner-stone of the Church, and if so, his enemies can expect no other than to be destroyed; for even those that slily
him, that stumble at him, and are offended in him, they shall be broken, it will be their ruin; but those that not only reject him, but hate and persecute him, as the Jews did, he will fall upon them, and crush them to pieces, will grind them to powder. The condemnation of spurious persecutors will be much sorrier than that of careless unbelievers.

Lastly, We are told how the chief priests and scribes were exasperated by this parable; (v. 19.) They perceived that he spake this parable against them; and so he did. A guilty conscience needs no accuser; but they, instead of yielding to the convictions of conscience, fell into a rage at him who awakened that sleeping lion in their bosoms, and sought to lay hands on him. Their corruptions rebelled against their convictions, and got the victory. And it was because they had not any fear of God or of his wrath before their eyes, but only because they feared the people, that they did not now fly in his face, and take him by the throat. They were just ready to make his words good; This is the heir, come let us kill him. Note, When the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, the fairest warnings both of the sin they are about to commit, and of the consequences of it, make no impression upon them. Christ tells them, that instead of killing the Son of God they would kill him; upon which they should have said, What, is thy servant a dog? But they do, in effect, say this, 'Kindness we will; murder we will not.' And though they deprecate the punishment of the sin, in the next breath they are projecting the commission of it.

20. And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor. 21. And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: 22. Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no? 23. But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? 24. Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar's. 25. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's. 26. And they could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.

We have here Christ's evading a snare which his enemies laid for him, by proposing a question to him about tribute. We had this passage before, in both Matthew and Mark. Here;

I. The mischief designed him, and that is more fully related here than before. The plot was to deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor, v. 20. They could not themselves put him to death by course of law, nor otherwise than by a popular tumult, which they could not depend upon. And since they cannot be his judges, they will willingly condense to be his prosecutors and accusers, and will make their force to form him an example, to hope to gain their point, if they could but incense the governor against him. Note, It has been the common artifice of persecuting Church-rulers, to make the secular powers the tools of their malice, and oblige the kings of the earth to do their drudgery, who, if they had not been instigated, would have pitied their neighbours alive by them, as Pilate did Christ. It is the chief priests and the scribes represented Christ to him. But thus Christ's word must be fulfilled by their cursed policies, that he should be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles.

II. The persons they employed. Matthew and Mark told us that they were disciples of the Pharisees, with some Herodians. Here it is added, They were spies, which should feign themselves just men. Note, It is the chief priests and the scribes, not the common people, that are always the principal instruments of indirect and insidious envy. The devil can transform himself into an angel of light, and a Pharisee appear in the garb, and speak the language, of a disciple of Christ. A spy must go in disguise. These spies must take on them to have a value for Christ's judgment, and to depend upon it as an oracle, and therefore must desire his advice in a case of conscience. Note, Ministers are concerned to stand upon their guard against some that feign themselves to be just men, and to be wise as serpents, when they are in the midst of a generation of vipers and scorpions.

III. The question they proposed, with which they hoped to ensnare him. 1. Their preface is very courteous; Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, v. 21. They thought to flatter him in this behalf, and to induce him to answer, if they might deceive him with him, and so to gain their point. They that are proud, and love to be commended, will be brought to do any thing for those that will flatter them, and speak kindly to them; but they were much mistaken who thought thus to impose upon the humble Jesus. He was not deceived by the testimony of such hypocrites, nor thought himself honoured by being thus flattered. 2. His answer is true that he said, It is true that he knew the hearts of all, and knew theirs, and the seven abominations that were there, though they spoke fair. It was certain that he taught the way of God truly; but he knew that they were unworthy to be taught by him, who came to take hold of his words, not to be taken hold of by them. 2. Their case is very nice; Is it lawful for us, (that is added here in Luke,) "to give tribute to Caesar," to be paid to him? 3. Their free-born seed of Abraham, us that pay the Lord's tribute, may we give tribute to Caesar? Their pride and covetousness made them loath to pay taxes, and then they would have it a question, whether it was lawful or no. Now if Christ should say that it was lawful, the people would take it ill, who expected that he who set up to be the Messiah, should in the first place free them from the Roman yoke, and stand by them in denying tribute to Caesar. But if he should say that it was not lawful as they expected he would, (for if he had not been of that mind, they thought he could not have been so much the Darling of the people as he was,) then they should have something to accuse him of, to the governor, which was what they wanted.

IV. His evading the snare which they laid for him; He perceived their craftiness, v. 23. Note, Those that are most crafty in their designs against Christ and his gospel, cannot with all their art conceal them from his cognizance. He can see through the most political disguises, and so break through the most dangerous snare; for surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird. He did not give them a direct answer, but reproved them for offering to impose upon him: (Why tempt ye me?) and called for a piece of money, current money with the merchants; (What, will ye give?) and asked them whose money it was; whose stamp it bore; who coined it. They owned, It is Caesar's money. Why then, saith Christ, you should first have
asked whether it was lawful to *say* and receive Caesar's money among yourselves, and to admit that to be the instrument of your commerce. But you having granted that by a common consent, are concluded by your own act, and, no doubt, you ought to give tribute to him who furnished you with this convenience for your trade, protects you in it, and lends you the sanction of his authority for the value of your money. You must therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. In civil things you ought to submit to the civil powers, and so, if Caesar protects you in your civil rights by laws and the administration of justice, you ought to pay him tribute; but in sacred things God only is your King, you are not bound to be of Caesar's religion; you must render to God the things that are God's, must worship and adore him only, and not any golden image that Caesar sets up; and we must worship and adore him in such a way as he has appointed, and not according to the inventions of Caesar. It is God only that has authority to say, *My son give me thy heart.*

V. The confusion they were hereby put into, v. 25. 1. The snare is broken; they could not take hold of his words before the people. They could not fasten upon any thing wherewith to incense either the governor or the people against him. 2. Christ is honoured; even the wrath of man is made to praise him. They marvelled at his answer, it was so discreet and unexceptionable, and such an evidence of that wisdom and sincerity which make the face to shine. 3. Their mouths are stopped; they held their peace. They had nothing to object, and durst ask him nothing else, lest he should shame and expose them.

27. Then came to him certain of the Sadducees, which deny that there is any resurrection; and they asked him, 28. Saying, Master, Moses wrote unto us, If any man's brother die, having a wife, and he die without children, that his brother should take his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. 29. There were therefore seven brethren: and the first took a wife, and died without children. 30. And the second took her to wife, and he died childless. 31. And the third took her; and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died. 32. Last of all the woman died also. 33. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife of them is she? for seven had her to wife. 34. And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage, and the children of resurrection marry, and are not given in marriage. 35. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: 36. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. 37. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him. This discourse with the Sadducees we and before, just as it is here, only that the description Christ gives of the future state is somewhat more full and large here. Observe here,

I. In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, that have endeavoured to subvert the fundamental principles of revealed religion. As there are deists now, who call themselves free-thinkers, but are really false-thinkers; so there were Sadducees in our Saviour's time, who bantered the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; and they hardened the world to come, though they were plainly revealed in the Old Testament, and were articles of the Jewish faith. The Sadducees deny that there is any resurrection, any future state; so matters may signify; not only no return of the body to life, but no continuance of the soul in life; no world of spirits, no state of recompense and retribution for what was done in this world, and all religion falls to the ground.

II. It is common for those that design to undermine any truth of God, to perplex it, and load it with difficulties. So these Sadducees here did; when they would weaken people's faith in the doctrine of the resurrection, they put a question upon the supposition of it, which they thought could not answer to, otherwise by another way of satisfaction. The case perhaps was matter of fact, however it might be so, of a woman that had seven husbands. Now in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? Whereas it was not at all material whose she was, for when death puts an end to that relation, it is not to be resumed again.

III. There is a great difference between the children of the world and the children of God in heaven; a vast unlikelihood between this world and that world; and we wrong ourselves, and wrong the truth of Christ, when we form our notions of that world of spirits by our present enjoyments in this world of sense.

1. The children of men in this world marry, and are given in marriage, in °διον ἀδελφοῖς—the children of this age, this generation, both good and bad, marry themselves, and give their children in marriage. Much of our business in this world, is, to raise and build up families, and to provide for them. Much of our pleasure in this world is in our relations, our wives, and children; nature inclines to it. Marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life, here in this state where we carry bodies about with us. It is likewise a remedy against fornication, it is the fountain of life, and of generation, and in the powers of our nature. But it is a brutish, and under direction and control. The children of this world are dying, and going off the stage, and therefore they marry, and give their children in marriage, that they may furnish the world of mankind with needful recruits, that, as one generation passeth away, another may come, and that they may have some of their offspring to leave the fruit of their labours to; especially the chosen of God in future ages may be introduced, for it is a goodly seed that is sought by marriage, (Mal. 2, 15.) a seed to serve the Lord, that shall be a generation to him.

2. The world to come is quite another thing; it is called that world, by way of emphasis and eminency. Note, There are more worlds, and a present world, and an invisible world; and it is the concern of every one of us to compare worlds, this world, and that world; and give the preference in our thoughts and cares to that which deserves them. Now observe,

(1.) Who shall be the inhabitants of that world? they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain it, that is, that are interested in Christ's merit, who purchased it for us, and have a holy meekness for it wrought in them by the Spirit, whose business it is to prepare us for it. They have not a legal worthi
ness, upon the account of any thing in them or done by them, but an evangelical worthiness upon the account of the inestimable price which Christ paid for the redemption of the purchased possession. It is a worthiness imputed, by which we are glorified, as well as justified, by which we are justified; 

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41. now for the children of that family.

40. It is understood, but there is another life after this, and there were eminent discoveries made of this truth in the early ages of the church; (v. 57, 58.) Moses showed this, as it was showed to Moses at the bush, and he hath showed it to us, when he calleth the Lord, as the Lord calleth himself, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were brought to our world, they were departed out of it many years before, and their bodies were turned into dust in the cave of Machpelah; how then could God say, not I was, but I am, the God of Abraham? It is absurd that the living God and Fountain of life should continue related to them as their God, if there were no more of them in being than what hay in that cave, undistinguished from common dust; must therefore conclude that they were then in being in another world, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Luke here adds, For all live unto him, that is, all who, like them, are true believers; though they are dead, yet they do live; their souls which return to God that gave them, (Fecd. 12, 7.) live to him as the Father of spirits; and their bodies shall live again at the end of time by the power of God; for he calleth things that are not as though they were, because he is the God that quickeneth the dead, Rem. 4, 17. But there is more in it yet; when God called himself the God of these patriarchs, he meant that he was their Felicity and Portion, a God all-sufficient to them, (Gen. 17, 1.) their exceeding great Reward, Gen. 15, 1. Now it is plain by their story, that he never did that for them in this world, which would answer the true intent and full extent of that great undertaking, and therefore there must be another life after this, in which he will do that for them that will amount to a discharge in full of that promise—that he would be to them a God; which he is able to do, for all live to him, and he hath withal to make every soul happy that lives to him; enough for all, enough for each.

40. Then certain of the scribes answering said, Master, thou hast well said. 40. And after that they durst not ask him any question at all. 41. And he said unto them. How say they that Christ is David's son? 42. And David himself saith in the book of psalms, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, 43. Till I make thine enemies thy foot-stool. 44. David therefore calleth him Lord; how is he then his son? 45. Then, in the audience of all the people, he said unto his disciples, 46. Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; 47. Which devour widows' houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation.

The scribes were students in the law, and expositors of the use of it to the people; men in reputation for wisdom and honour, the generality of them, were enemies to Christ and his gospel; now here we have some of them attending him, and for things we
have in these verses concerning them, which we had before.

I. We have them here commanding the reply which Christ made to the Saducees concerning the resurrection; (v. 39.) Certain of the scribes said, Master, thou hast short even of Christ had the testimony of many of his adversaries, that he said well; and therefore the scribes were his enemies, because he would not conform to the traditions of the elders; but yet when he vindicated the fundamental practices of religion, and appeared in defence of them, even the scribes commended his performance, and owned that he said well. Many that call themselves Christians, and be no Christians, for they are not worshippers of Christ, but of them that crucified him. Let them have them here struck with an awe of Christ, and of his wisdom and authority; (v. 40.) They durst not ask him any questions at all, because they saw that he was too hard for all that contended with him. His own disciples, though weak, yet being willing to receive his doctrine, durst ask him any question; but the Saducees, who contradicted and cavilled at his doctrine, durst ask him none.

III. We have them here puzzled and run aground with a question concerning the Messiah, v. 41. It was plain by many scriptures, that Christ was to be the Son of David; even the blind man knew that, (ch. 18. 39.) and yet it was plain that David called the Messiah his Lord, (v. 42, 44.) his Owner, and Ruler, and Benefactor; The Lord said to my Lord. God said it to the Messiah, Ps. 2. 7. Now if he be his Son, why doth he call him his Lord? If he be his Lord, why do we call him his Son? This he left them to consider of, but they could not reconcile this seeming contradiction; thanks be to God, we can; that Christ, as God, was David's Lord, but Christ, as Man, was David's Son. He was both the Root and the Offspring of David, Rev. 22. 16. By his human nature he was the Offspring of David, Luke 1. 31. This by his being nature he was the Root of David, from whom he had his being and life, and all the supplies of grace.

IV. We have them here described in their characters, and a public caution given to the disciples to take heed of them, v. 45—47. This we had, just as it is here, Mark 12. 38. and more largely, Matth. 23. Christ bid his disciples beware of the scribes, and the false teachers of the people. Luke 11. 43. Ye bring sin by them, of learning their way, and going into their measures; beware of such a spirit as they are governed by. Be not you such in the christian church, as they are in the Jewish church. 2. "Take heed of being brought into trouble by them;" in the same sense that he had said, (Matt. 10. 17.) "Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils; beware of the scribes, for they do so. Beware of them, for,"

(1.) "They are fraud and haughty; they desire to walk about the streets in long robes, as those that are above business, (for men of business went with their loins girt up,) and as those that take state, and take place." Cedant arma togae—Let arms yield to the gown. They loved in their hearts to have one of their chance to sit among them in the market, that many might see what respect was paid them; and were very proud of the precedence that was given them in all places of conourse. They loved the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts, and when they were placed in them, looked upon themselves with great conceit, and upon all about them with a great contempt. I shoult.

(2.) "They are covetous and oppressive, and make their religion a cloak and cover for it." They devour widows' houses, get their estates into their hands, and then by some trick or other make them their own; or, they live upon them, and eat up what they have. And widows are an easy prey to them, because they are apt to be deluded by their specious pretences; for a show they make long prayers, perhaps long prayers with the widows when they are in sorrow, as if they had not only a fictitious but a fictious concern for them, and thus endeavour to insinuate themselves further into the hearts and effects into their hands. Such devout men may surely be trusted with untold gold; but they will give such an account of it as they think fit.

Christ reads them their doom in a few words; These shall receive a more abundant judgment; a double damnation, both for their abuse of the poor widows, whose houses they devoured, and for abuse of religion, and particularly of prayer which they had made use of as a pretence for the more plausible and effectual carrying on of their worldly and wicked projects; for assembled jitty is double iniquity.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, I. The notice Christ took, and the approbation he gave, of a poor widow that cast two mites into the treasury, v. 1. 4. II. A prediction of future events, in answer to his disciples' inquiries concerning them, v. 5. 7. 1. Of what should happen between that and the destruction of Jerusalem. II. 2. of Christ, before, and after his discovery, and particularly of probation which they had made use of as a pretence for the more plausible and effectual carrying on of their worldly and wicked projects; for assembled jitty is double iniquity.

1. AND he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, That this poor widow had cast in more than they all. 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

This short passage of story we had before in Mark. It is thus recorded twice, to teach us,

1. That charity to the poor is a main matter in religion; our Lord Jesus took all occasions to commend it, and recommend it. He had just mentioned the barbarity of the scribes, who devoured poor widows; (ch. 20.) and perhaps this is designed as an aggravation of it, that the poor widows were the best benefactors to the public funds, which the scribes had the disposal of.

2. That Jesus Christ has his eye upon us, to observe what we give to the poor, and what we contribute to works of piety and charity. Christ, though intent upon his preaching, looked up, to see what gifts were cast into the treasury, v. 1. He observes whether we give largely and liberally, in proportion to what we have, or whether we be sneaking and pathy themselves; he observes whether we give charitably and with a willing mind, or grudgingly and with reluctance. This should make us afraid of coming short of our duty in this matter; men may be deceived with excuses which Christ knows to be frivolous; and this should encourage us to be abundant in it, without desiring that men should know it; it is enough that Christ does; he sees in secret, and will reward openly.

3. That Christ observes and accepts the charity of the poor in a particular manner. Those that have nothing to give, may yet do a great deal in charity, by ministering to the poor, and helping them, and begging for them, that cannot help themselves, or beg for themselves. But here was con-
that was herself poor, and yet gave what little she had to the treasury. It was but two mites, which make a farthing; but Christ magnified it as a piece of charity exceeding all the rest; She has cast in more than they all. Christ does not blame her for indiscretion, in giving what she wanted herself, nor for vanity in giving among the rich to the treasury; but commended her liberality, and her willingness to part with what little she had for the glory of God; which proceeded from a belief of, and dependence upon, God’s providence to take care of her. Jehovah—Jireh—the Lord will provide.

4. That, whatever may be called the offerings of God, we ought to have a respect for, and to our power, yea, and beyond our power, to contribute cheerfully to. These have cast in unto the offerings of God. What is given to the support of the ministry and the gospel, to the spreading and propagating of religion, the education of youth, the release of prisoners, the relief of widows and strangers, and the maintenance of poor families, is given to the offerings of God, and it shall be so accepted and recompensed.

5. And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, 6. As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. 7. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? And what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? 8. And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. 9. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. 10. Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 11. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. 12. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up unto the synagogues, and into prisons, and to被打碎支票, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. 13. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: 15. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. 16. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. 17. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. 18. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. 19. In your patience possess ye your souls.

See here,

1. With what admiration some spake of the external pomp and magnificence of the temple, and they were some of Christ’s own disciples too; and they took notice of it to him, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, v. 5. The outside, was built up with goodly stones, and within it was beautified and adorned. The masters of the work were offered up for that purpose, and were hung up in it. They thought their Master should be as much affected with those things as they were, and should as much regret the destruction of them as they did. When we speak of the temple, it should be of the presence of God in it, and of the ordinance of God administered in it, and the communion which his people have with him. It is a poor thing, when we speak of the church, to let our discourse dwell upon its pomp, and revenues, and the dignities and powers of its officers and rulers; for the king’s daughter is all glorious within.

II. With what contempt Christ spake of them, and with what assurance of their being all made desolate very shortly; (v. 6.) As for those things which you behold, those dear things which you are so much in love with, behold, the days will come, and some now living may live to see them, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another. This building, which seems so beautiful, that one would think none could, for pity, pull it down, and which seems so strong, that one would think none should be able to pull it down, shall yet be utterly ruined: and this shall be done as soon as ever the spiritual temple of the gospel-church (the substance of that shadow) begins to flourish in the world. Did we but foresee the blasting, and withering of all external glory, we should not set our hearts upon it as we do, that cannot see, or will not look, so far before them.

III. With what curiosity those about him inquire concerning the time when this great desolation should be; (v. 7.) Master, when shall these things be? It is natural to us to covet to know future things and the time of them, which it is not for us to know; when we are more concerned to ask what is our duty in the prospect of these things, and how we may prepare for them. This it is for us to know. They inquire what sign there shall be, when these things shall come to pass. They ask not for a present sign, to confirm the prediction itself, and to induce them to believe it, (Christ’s word was enough for that,) but what the future signs will be of the approaching accomplishment of the prediction, by which they may have a sensible assurance of the times Christ had taught them to observe.

IV. With what clearness and fulness Christ answers their inquiries, as far as was necessary to direct them in their duty; for all knowledge is desirable as far as it is in order to practice. 1. They must expect to hear of false christs and false prophets appearing, and false prophecies given out; (v. 8.) Many shall come in my name, he does not say, as many of the name of Jesus, though there were some deceivers who pretended commissions from him, (as Acts 19. 13.) but usurping the title and character of the Messiah. Many pretended to be the deliverers of the Jewish church and nation from the Romans, and to fix the time when the deliverance should be wrought, by which multitudes were drawn into a snare, to their ruin. They shall say, ver. 22, 23, I am he, or, I am, as if they would assume that they spoke from a divine commission. Of this, how he made himself known, when he came to deliver Israel out of Egypt, I am; and to encourage people to follow them, they added, The time draws near, when the kingdom shall be restored to Israel, and if they will follow him, they shall share in it.

Now as to this, he gives them a needful caution; (1.) Take heed that ye be not deceived; do not ye imagine that I shall myself come again in external glory, to take possession of the throne of kingdoms.
No, ye must not expect any such thing, for my kingdom is not of this world.” When they asked solicitously, and eagerly, Master, when shall these things be? the first word Christ said, was, Take heed that ye be not deceived. Note, Those that are most incitative in the things of God, (though it is very good to be so;) therefore shall be most being pos'd upon, and have most need to be upon their guard. [2.] "Go ye not after them, ye know the Messiah is come, and ye are not to look for any other; and therefore do not so much as hearken after them, nor have any thing to do with them.” If we are sure that Jesus is the Christ, and his doctrine the gospel of God, we must be dead to all times, and all other things, and every prophesy, that shall be done. 2. They must expect to hear of great commotions in the nations, and many terrible judgments inflicted upon the Jews and their neighbours. (1.) There shall be bloody wars; (v. 10.) Nation shall rise against nation; one part of the Jewish nation against another, or rather the whole against the Romans. Encouraged by the false Christians, they shall wickedly endeavour to throw off the Roman yoke, by taking up arms against the Roman powers; when they had rejected the liberty with which Christ would have made them free, the were left to themselves, to grasp at their civil liberty in ways that were sinful, and therefore could not be successful. (2.) There shall be earthquakes, great earthquakes, in divers places, which shall not only frighten people, but shall also make a vast destruction of very many in the ruins of them. (3.) There shall be famines and pestilences, the common effects of war, which destroy the fruits of the earth, and, by exposing men to ill weather and reducing them to ill diet, occasion infectious diseases. God has various ways of punishing a provoking people. The four sorts of judgments which the Old Testament prophets so often speak'd of, are threatened by the New Testament prophets too; for though spiritual judgments are more commonly inflicted in gospel-times, yet God makes use of temporal judgments also. (4.) There shall be fearful sights, and great signs from heaven, uncommon appearances in the clouds, comets and blazing stars, which frighten the ordinary sort of beholders, and have always been looked upon as omens of something bad. Now as to these, the case is, he gives them, is," Be not terrified. Others will be frightened at them, but be not ye frightened, v. 2. As to the fearful sights, let them not be fearful to you, who look above the visible heavens to the throne of God's government in the highest heavens. Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the heathen are dismayed at them, Jer. 10. 2. And as to the famines and pestilences, you fall into the hands of God, who has promised to those who are his, that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied, and that he will keep them from the noisome pestilence; trust therefore in him, and be not afraid. Nay, when you hear of wars, when without are fightings and within are fears, yet be not you terrified; you know the worst that any of these judgments can do you, and therefore be not afraid of them; yet your interest to make the best of that which is, for all your fears cannot alter it, these things must first come to pass, there is no remedy, it will be your wisdom to make yourselves easy by accommodating yourselves to them.” [2.] "There is worse behind, flatter not yourselves with a fancy that you will soon be at the end of these troubles, no, nor so soon as you think. If, the end is not by and by, not suddenly. Be not terrified, for if you begin so quickly to be discouraged, how will you bear up under what is yet before you?" 3. They must expect to be themselves for signs and wonders in Israel; their being persecuted would be a prognostic of the destruction of the city and temple, which he had now foretold. Nay, this should be the first sign of their ruin coming; “Before all these, they shall lay their hands on you. The judgment shall begin at the house of God; you must smart first, for warning to them, that if they think of considering, they may consider. If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry? See 1 Pet. 4. 17, 18. But that is not all; this must be considered not only as the suffering of the persecuted, but as the sin of the persecutors. Before God's judgments are brought upon them, they shall fill up the measure of their iniquity by laying their hands on you.” Note, The ruin of a people is often by the sins of oppressors, and not by the sins of the oppressed, and nothing introduces a surer and surer ruin than the sin of persecution. This is a sign that God's wrath is coming upon a people to the uttermost, when their wrath against the servants of God comes to the uttermost. Now as to this, (1.) Christ tells them what hard things they should suffer for his name's sake, much to the same purport with what he had told them when he first called them to follow him, Matth. 10. They should know the wages of it, that they might sit down and count the cost. St. Paul, who was the greatest labourer and sufferer of them all, not being now among them, was told by himself what great things he should suffer for Christ's name's sake, (Acts 9. 16.) so necessary is it that all who will live godly in Christ must be ready to suffer persecution. The Christians having themselves separated from the Jews, and still retaining an equal veneration with them for the Old Testament, and all the essentials of their religion, and differing only in ceremony, might expect fair quarter with them; but Christ bids them not expect it; "No, they shall be the most forward to persecute you.” [1.] "They shall use their own church laws against you; they shall deliver you up to the synagogues to be scourged there, and excommunicate with their anathemas.” [2.] "They shall incense the magistrates against you; they shall deliver you into prisons, that you may be brought before kings and rulers for your name's sake, and be punished by them.” [3.] "Your own relations will betray you, (v. 16.) your parents, brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; so that you will not know the day and hour of your visitation.” [4.] "Your religion will be made a capital crime, and you will be called to resist unto blood; some of you shall cause to be put to death; so far must you be from expecting honour and wealth, that you must expect nothing but death in its most frightful shapes, death in all its dreadful pomp. Nay,” [5.] "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. This is worse than death itself, and was fulfilled when the apostles were not only appointed to death, but made a spectacle to the world, and counted as the fith of the world, and the scoffing of all things, which every body laugheth, 1 Cor. 4. 19, 13. They were hated of all men, that is of, all bad men, who could not bear the light of the gospel, (because it discovered their evil deeds,) and therefore hated them. They were brought in that light, dwell in their faces, and would have pulled them to pieces. The wicked world, which hated to be reformed, hated Christ the great Reformer, and all that were his, for his sake. The rulers of the Jewish church, knowing very well that, if the gospel obtained among the Jews, their usurped, abused power was at an end, raised all their forces against it, put it into an ill name, filled people's minds with prejudices against it, and so made the preachers and professors of it odious to the mob. (2.) He encourages them to bear up under their trials, and to go on in their work, notwithstanding the opposition they would meet with.
[1.] God will bring glory both to himself and them out of their sufferings; (v. 13.) "It shall turn to you for a testimony. Your being thus set up for a mark, and publicly persecuted, will make you and your doctrine and miracles the more taken notice of, and inquired into; your being brought before kings and rulers, will give you an opportunity of preaching the gospel to them, who otherwise would never have come within hearing of it; your suffering such severe things, and being so hated by the worst of men, of the most vicious lives, will be a testimony that you are good, else you would not have such bad men your enemies; your courage and cheerfulness and constancy under your sufferings will be a testimony for you, that you believe what you preach, and that you are supported by a divine power, and the Spirit of God and glory rests upon you."

[2.] "God will stand by you, and own you, and give you, in a mouth and wisdom his advocates, and you shall be well furnished with instructions, v. 14, 15. Instead of setting your hearts on work to contrive an answer to informations, indictments, articles, accusations and interrogatories, that will be exhibited against you in the ecclesiastical and civil courts, on the contrary, settle it in your hearts, impress it upon them, take pains with them to persuade them, and before what ye shall answer, do not depend upon gaining your case, but upon your own prudence and policy, and do not distrust or despair of the immediate and extraordinary aids of the divine grace. Think not to bring yourselves off in the cause of Christ, as you would in a cause of your own, by your own parts and application, with the common assistance of divine providence, but promise yourselves, for I promise you, the special assistance of divine grace; I shall give you a mouth and wisdom."

This proves Christ to be God, for it is God's prerogative to give wisdom, and he it is that made man's mouth. Note, First, A mouth and wisdom together completely fit a man both for services and sufferings; wisdom to know what to say, and a mouth wherewith to say it as it should be said. It is a great happiness to have both matter and words to put into it, to have in your heart a treasure of wisdom, and in your mouth a ready opening for the communication of it. Secondly, Those that plead Christ's cause, may depend upon him to give them a mouth and wisdom, which way soever they are called to plead it, especially when they are brought before magistrates for his name's sake. It is not said that he will send an angel from heaven to answer for them, though he could do that, but that he will send one that will enable them to make answer for themselves; which puts a great honour upon them, which requires them to use the gifts and graces Christ furnishes them with, and redounds the more to the glory of God, who stills the enemy and the avenger out of the mouths of babes and sucklings. Thirdly, When Christ gives to his witnesses a mouth and wisdom, they are enabled to say that the mouths of them and themselves, which all their adversaries are not able to gainsay or resist, and that they are silent and put to confusion. This was remarkably fulfilled presently after the pouring out of the Spirit, by whom Christ gave his disciples this mouth and wisdom, when the apostles were brought before the priests and rulers, and answered them so as to make them ashamed, Acts 4, 5, and 6.

[3.] "You shall suffer no real damage by all the厉害 things they shall put upon you; (v. 18.) There shall not a hair of your head perish. If they cut off the heads of their lossy con veil, yet not a lose their heads, and yet not lose a hair! It is a proverbial expression, denoting the greatest indemnity and security imaginable; it is frequently used, both in the Old Testament and New, in that sense. Some think that it refers to the preservation of the lives of all the Christians that were among the Jews, when they were cut off by the Romans; historians tell us that not one christian perished in that desolation. Others reconcile it with the deaths of multitudes in the cause of Christ, and take it figuratively in the same sense that Christ saith, He that losteth his life for my sake, shall find it. "Not a hair of your head shall perish but," First, "I shall take cognizance of it." To this end he had said, (v. 10.) The hairs of your head are all numbered; and an account is kept of them that none of them shall perish but he will miss it. Secondly, "It shall be upon a valuable consideration." We do not reckon that lost or perish, which is laid out for good purposes, and will turn to a good account. If we drop the body itself for Christ's name's sake, it does not perish, but is well bestowed. Thirdly, "It shall be abundantly recompensed; when you come to balance profit and loss, you will find that there is nothing perished, but, on the contrary, that you have great gain in present comforts, especially in the joys of a life eternal." So that though we may be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end.

[4.] "It is therefore your duty and interest, in the midst of your own sufferings and those of the nation, to maintenance a holy sincerity and serenity of mind, which will keep you always at peace, and, at the same time, will not make you enter into the spirit of this world; and shall not be destroyed and lost for ever, but that they be not disconcerted now, nor our possession of them disturbed and interrupted. Possess your souls, be your own men, keep up the authority and dominion of reason, and keep under the tumults of passion, that neither grief nor fear may tyrannize over you, or turn you out of the possession and enjoyment of yourselves."

In difficult times, when we can keep possession of nothing else, then let us make that sure which will be made sure, and that lasting possession of our own souls. Secondly, It is by patience, christian patience, that we keep possession of our own souls. "In suffering times, set patience upon the guard for the preserving of your souls; by it keep your souls composed and in a good frame, and keep out all those impressions which would ruffle you and put you out of temper.

20. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. 21. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them that are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. 22. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. 23. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. 24. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon
the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring: 26. Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

Having given them an idea of the times for about thirty-eight years next ensuing, he here comes to show them what all those things would issue in at last, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the utter distress of it. 1. That, 1. And the destroying it be a little day of judgment; a type and figure of Christ's second coming, which was not so fully spoken of here as in the parallel place, (Matt. 24.) yet glanced at; for the destruction of Jerusalem would be as it were the destruction of the world to those whose hearts were bound up in it.

I. He tells them that they should see Jerusalem being cast down with a roar, by way of comparison to the Roman armies; and when they saw that, they might conclude that its desolation was nigh, for in that the siege would infallibly end, though it might be a long siege. Note, As in mercy, so in judgment, when God begins, he will make an end.

II. He warns them, upon this signal given, to shift for their own safety; (v. 21.) "Then let them which are in Judea, quit the country and flee to the mountains." (of Jerusalem,) "Depart out, before the city be closely shut up, and" (as we say now) "before the trenches be opened; and let not them that are in the countries and villages about, enter into the city, thinking to be safe there. Do you abandon a city and country which you see God has abandoned and given up to ruin. Come out of her, my people." He foretells the terrible havoc that should be made upon the Jewish nation; (v. 22.) "Those are the days of vengeance so often spoken of by the Old Testament prophets, which would complete the ruin of that provoking people; all their predictions must now be fulfilled; and the blood of the Old Testament martyrs must now be required. All things that are written, must be fulfilled at length. After days of patience long abused, there will come days of vengeance; for reproaches are not pardons. The greater the sin, the greater the deserts; the inflicting cause of it, is wrath upon this people, the wrath of God; that will kindle this devouring, consuming fire. 2. By the particular terror it would be to women with child, and poor mothers that are nurses. Flee to them, not only because they are most subject to frights, and least able to shift for their own safety, but because it will be a very great terror to them in the midst of their misery. 3. By the general confusion that should be all the nation over. There will be great distress in the land, for men will not know what course to take, nor how to help themselves.

IV. He describes the issue of the struggles between the Jews and the Romans, and what they would amount to at last; in short, 1. Multitudes of them shall fall by the edge of the sword. It is confirmed that in those wars of the Jews there fell by the sword above eleven hundred thousand. And the siege of Jerusalem was, in effect, a military execution. 2. The rest shall be led away captive, not into one nation, as when they were conquered by the Chaldeans which gave them an opportunity of keeping together, but into all nations, which made it impossible for them to correspond with each other, much less to incorporate. 3. Jerusalem itself shall be trodden down of the Gentiles. The Romans, when they had made themselves masters of it, laid it quite waste, as a rebellious and bad city, hurtful to kings and provinices, and therefore hateful to them.

He describes the great frights that people should generally be in. Many frightful sights shall be in the evening, and in the morning, and in the midday of the heavens, in this lower world, the earth with the waves roaring, with terrible storms and tempests, such as had not been known, and above the ordinary workings of natural causes. The effect of this shall be universal confusion and consternation upon the earth, distress of nations with fierceness, v. 25.

Dr. Hammond understands by the nations, the several governments or tetrarchies of the Jewish nation, which they were to be divided into for a worse, and looking after those things which are coming to the last extremity. Men's hearts shall fail them for fear, (v. 26.) and upon; men being quite exanimated, dispirited, un-souled, dying away for fear. Thus they are killed all the day long, by whom Christ's apostles were so, (Rom. 8. 36.) that is, they are all the day long in fear of being killed; sinking under that which lies upon them, and feeling themselves to be for some worse, and looking after those things which are coming upon the world? when judgment begins at the house of God, it will not end there; it shall be as if all the world were falling in pieces; and where can any be secure then? The flowers of heaven shall be shaken, and then the pillars of the earth cannot but tremble.

Thus shall the present Jewish policy, religion, laws, and government, be all entirely dissolved by a series of unparalleled calamities, attended with the greatest confusion. So Dr. Clarke. But our Saviour makes use of these figurative expressions, because at the end of time they shall be literally accomplished, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their powers not only shaken, but broken, and the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up, 2 Pet. 3. 10, 12. As that day was all terror and destruction to the unbelieving Jews, so to the believing Jews also, in the destruction of Jerusalem, even the converted Jews, and many of the Gentiles too, were still hankering, till they were destroyed; so that it might justly be looked upon as a coming of the Son of man, in power and great glory; yet not visibly, but in the clouds; for in executing such judgments as these, clouds and darkness are round about him. Now this was, 1. An evidence of the first coming of Christ, as when he came to the Jews, and to the unbelieving Jews shall be convicted, when it is too late, that Jesus was the Messiah; they that would not see him coming in the power of his grace to save them, shall be made to see him coming in the power of his wrath to destroy them; those that would not have him to reign over them, shall have him to triumph over them. 2. It was an earnest of his second coming. Then in the terrors of that day of shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud, and all the terrors of the last day. They shall see a specimen of it, a faint resemblance of it. If this be so terrible what will that be?

VII. He encourages all the faithful disciples to bear the terrors of that day; (v. 28.) "When these things begin to come to pass, when Je-
rusan is besieged, and every thing is concurring to the destruction of the Jews, then do you look up, when others are looking down, look heavenward, in faith, hope, and prayer, and lift up your heads with cheerfulness and confidence, for your redemption draws nigh." 1. When Christ came to destroy the Jews, he came to redeem the christians that were persecuted and oppressed by them; then had the churches rest. 2. When he comes to judge the world at the last day, he will redeem all that are his from all their grievances. And the foresight of that day is as pleasant to all good christians as it is terrible to the wicked and ungodly. Their death itself is so; when they see that day approaching, they can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption draws nigh, their removal to their Redeemer.

VIII. Here is one word of prediction, that looks further than the destruction of the Jewish nation, which is not easily understood; we have it, v. 24. that Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 1. Some others explain it of what is past; so Dr. Hammond. The Gentiles, who have conquered Jerusalem, shall keep possession of it, and shall be purely Gentile, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled, till a great part of the Gentile world be become christian, and then after Jerusalem is rebuilt by Adrian the emperor, with an exclusion of all the Jews from it, many of the Jews shall turn christians, shall join with the Gentile christians, to set up a church in Jerusalem, which shall flourish there for a long time.

2. Others understand it of what is yet to come; so Dr. Whitby. Jerusalem shall be possessed by the Gentiles, of one sort or other, for the most part, till the time comes when the nations that yet remain infidels shall embrace the christian faith, when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christs kingdoms, and then all the Jews shall be converted. Jerusalem shall be inhabited by them, and neither they nor their city any longer trodden down by the Gentiles.

29. And he spake to them a parable: Behold, the fig-tree, and all the trees; 30. When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. 32. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. 33. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my word shall not pass away. 34. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. 35. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. 37. And in the day-time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. 38. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

Here, in the close of this discourse, I. Christ appoints his disciples to observe the signs of the times, which they might judge by, if they had an eye to the foregoing directions, as concerning the things to come, and the approach of the day of judgment. 2. His disciples are to judge of the approach of summer by the budding forth of the trees, v. 29—31. As in the kingdom of nature there is a chain of causes, so in the kingdom of providence there is a consequence of one event upon another. When we see a nation filling up the measure of their iniquity, we may conclude that their ruin is nigh: when we see the ruin of persecuting powers hastening on, we may from thence infer that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand, that, when the opposition given to it is removed, it shall gain ground. As we may lawfully prognosticate the change of the seasons, when second causes have begun to work, so we may in the disposal of events, expect something uncommon, when God is already raised up out of his holy habitation; (Zech. 2. 13.) then stand still and see his salvation.

II. He charges them to look upon those things as nearer than they think, for distant, (for then they would not make a due impression on them,) but as sure and very near. The destruction of the Jewish nation, 1. Was near; (v. 32.) This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. There were some now alive, that should see it; some that now heard the prediction of it. 2. It was sure, the sentence was irreversible, it was a consumption determined, the decree was gone forth; (v. 33.) of Heaven and earth shall pass away, sooner than any word of mine: nay, they certainly shall pass away, but my words shall not; whether they take hold or no, they will take effect, and not one of them fall to the ground, 1 Sam. 3. 19.

III. He cautions them against security and sensuality, by which they would disfist themselves for the trying times that were coming on, and make them to be a great surprise and terror to them; (v. 34, 35.) Take heed to yourselves. This is the word, command given to all Christ's disciples, "Take heed to yourselves, that you be not overpowered by temptations, nor betrayed by your own corruptions." Note, We cannot be safe, if we be secure. It concerns us at all times, but especially at some times, to be very cautious. See here, 1. What our danger is—that the day of death and judgment should come upon us unawares, when we do not expect it, and are not prepared for it; lest as some were called to meet our Lord, that be found the furthest thing from our thoughts, which ought always to be laid nearest our hearts, lest it come upon us as a snare; for so it will come upon the most of men, who dwell upon the earth, and mind earthy things only, and have no converse with heaven; to them it will be as a snare; see Ecc. 9. 12. It will be a terror and a destruction to them; it will put them into an impossible fix; it will hold them fast for a doom yet more frightful. 2. What our duty is, in consideration of this danger; we must take heed lest our hearts be overchargd, lest they be burdened and overloaded, and so disfigured and disabled to do what must be done in preparation for death and judgment.

Two things we must watch against, lest our hearts be overcharged with them. (1.) The indulging of the appetites of the body, and allowing of ourselves great and many excesses. Take heed lest you be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, the immoderate use of meat and drink, which burden the heart not only with the guilt thereof contracted, but by the ill influence which such disorders of the body have upon the mind; they make men dull and lifeless to their duty, dead and listless in their duty; they stupefy the conscience, and make the mind unaffected with those things that are most affecting. (2.) The inordinate pu-
suit of the good things of this world. The heart is overcharged with the cares of life. The former is the snare of those that are given to their pleasures: this is the snare of the men of business, that will be rich. We have no right to aim on high ends, not only lest at the end when death comes, but lest at the time, our hearts should be thus overcharged. Our caution against sin, and our care of our own souls, must be constant.

IV. He counsels them to prepare and get ready for this great day, v. 36. Here see, 1. What should be our aim—that we may be accounted worthy to escape all those things, that, when the judgments of God are abroad, we may be preserved from the malignity of them, that either we may not be involved in the common calamity, or it may not be that to us, that it is to others; that in the day of death we may escape the sting of it, which is the wrath of God, and the damnation of hell. Yet we must aim not only to escape that, but to stand before the Son of man; not only to stand acquitted before him as our Judge, (Ps. 1. 5.) to have boldness in the day of Christ, (that is supposed in our escaping all those things,) but to stand before him, to attend on him as our Master, to stand continually before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple, (Rev. 7. 14.) always to behold his face, as the angels, Mat. 18. 10. The saints are here said to be accounted worthy, as before, ch. 20. 35. God, by that he will render of his grace in them, makes them meet for this happiness, and by the good will of his grace toward them, accounts them worthy of it: but, as Grotius here saith, a great part of our worthiness lies in an acknowledgment of our own unworthiness. 2. What should be our actions in these aims; Watch therefore, and pray always. Watching and praying must go together; Neh. 4. 9. Those that would escape the wrath of God, in them, and make sure of the joys to come, must watch and pray, and must do it always, must make it the constant business of their lives, (1.) To keep a guard upon themselves; "Watch against sin, watch to every duty, and to the improvement of every opportunity of doing good. Be awake, and keep awake, in expectation of your Lord's coming, that you may be in a right state before him, and make him welcome." (2.) To keep up their communion with God; "Pray always; be always in an habitual disposition to that duty; keep up stated times for it, abound in it; pray upon all occasions." Those shall be accounted worthy to live a life of praise in the other world, that live a life of prayer in this world.

In the two last verses we have an account how Christ disposed of himself during those three or four days betwixt his riding in triumph into Jerusalem, and the night in which he was betrayed.

[1.] He was all day teaching in the temple. Christ preached on week-days as well as sabbath-days. He was an indefatigable Preacher, he preached in the face of opposition, and in the midst of those that he knew sought occasion against him.

[2.] He went out with his Apostles to a friend's house, in the mount of Olives, about a mile out of the town. It is probable that he had some friends in the city, that would gladly have lodged him, but he was willing to retire in the evening out of the noise of the town, that he might have more time for secret devotion, now that his hour was at hand.

[3.] Early in the morning he was in the temple as usual, we have he had a morning-lecture for them that were willing to attend it; and the people were forward to hear one that they saw forward to preach; (v. 38.) They all came early in the morning, flocking to the temple, like doves to their windows, to hear him, though the chief-priests and scribes did all they could to prejudice against him. Sometimes the taste and relish which serious, honest, plain people have of good preaching, are more to be valued and judged by than the opinion of the witty and learned; and those in authority.

CHAP. XXII.

All the evangelists, whatever they omit, give us a particular account of the death and resurrection of Christ, because he died for our sins, and rose for our justification: this evangelist, as fully as any, and with many circumstances and passages added, which we had not before. In this chapter we have, 1. The plot to take Jesus, and Judas's coming into it, v. 1—6. 2. Christ's eating of the passover with his disciples, v. 7—18. 3. The beginning of the Lord's supper, v. 19, 20. 4. Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper, upon several heads, v. 21—38. 5. His agony in the garden, v. 39—46. 6. The apprehended christs, and by the assistance of Judas, v. 47—53. 7. Peter's denying of him, v. 54—62. 8. The indignities done to Christ by those that had him in custody, and his trial and condemnation in the ecclesiastical court, v. 63—71.

1. Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the passover. 2. And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him, for they feared the people. 3. Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. 4. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them. 5. And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money. 6. And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

The year of the redeemed is now come, which had been from eternity fixed in the divine counsels, and long looked for by them that waited for the consolation of Israel; after the revolutions of many ages, it is at length come, Isa. 63. 4. And it is observable, it is in the very first month of that year that the redemption is wrought out, so much in haste was the Redeemer to perform his undertaking, so he strengthened his will, and made it welcome. It was in the same month, and at the same time of the month, (in the beginning of months, Exod. 12. 2.) that God by Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, that the Antitype might answer the type. Christ is here delivered up, when the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, v. 1. About as long before that feast as they began to make preparation for it, here was preparation a making for our Passover's being offered for us.

1. Here we have his sworn enemies contriving it; (v. 2.) the chief priests, men of sanctity, and the scribes, men of learning, seeking how they might kill him, either by force or fraud: could they have had their will, it had been soon done, but they feared the people, and the more, for what they now saw of their diligent attendance upon his preaching.

2. A notorious disciple joining in with them, and coming to their assistance, Judas surnamed Iscariot; he is here said to be of the number of the twelve, that dignified, distinguished number. One would wonder that Christ, who knew all men, should take a traitor into that number; and that one of that number, who could not but know Christ, should be so base as to betray him; but Christ had wise and holy ends in taking Judas to be a disciple, and how he knew Christ so well, yet came to betray him, we are here told, v. 3. Satan entered into Judas. It was the devil's work, who thought hereby to ruin Christ's undertaking, to have broken his head; but it proved only the bruising of his heel. Whoever betrays Christ, or his truths, or ways, it
is Satan that puts him upon it. Judas knew how desirous the chief priests were to get Christ into their hands, and that they could not do it safely without the assistance of some that knew his retirements, as he did. He therefore went himself, and made the motion to them, v. 4. Note, It is hard to say whether more mischief is done to Christ's kingdom by the power and policy of its open enemies, or by the treachery and self-seeking of its pretended friends: nay, without the latter its enemies could not gain their point as they do. When you see Judas comming with the chief priests, be sure some mischief is in hatching; it is for no good that they are laying their heads together.

The issue of the treaty between them is, 1. That Judas must betray Christ to them, must bring them to a place where they might seize him without danger of tumult—and this they would be glad of. 2. They must give him a sum of money for doing it—and that he would be glad of. (v. 5.) They covetted to give him money. When the bargain was made, Judas sought opportunity to betray him. Probably he slyly enquired of Peter and John, who were more intimate with their Master than he was, where he would be at such a time, and whither he would retire after the passover, and they were not able enough to suspect him. Somehow or other, in a little time, he gained the advantage he sought, and fixed the time and place where it might be done, in the absence of the multitude and without tumult.

7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water: follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the good man of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? 12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 14. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. 17. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18. For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. 19. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. What a hopeful prospect had we of Christ's doing a great deal of good by his preaching in the temple, during the feast of unleavened bread which continued seven days, when the people were every morning, and early in the morning, so attentive to hear him! But here is a step put to it. He must enter upon work of another kind; in that, however, he shall do more good than in the former. How then does Christ's nor his church's suffering days are their idol, empty days.

Now here we have,

1. The preparation that was made for Christ's eating the passover with his disciples, upon the very day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed, according to the law, v. 7. Christ was made under the law, and observed the ordinances of it, particularly that of the passover and its tokens, in like manner to observe his gospel-institutions, particularly that of the Lord's supper, and not to neglect them. It is probable that he went to the temple to preach in the morning, when he sent Peter and John another way into the city to prepare the passover. Those who have attendants about them, to do their secular business for them in a great measure, must not think that their servants can perform them a like service; but Christ seems to employ themselves more in spiritual business, or service to the public. He directed those whom he employed, whether they should go; (v. 9, 10.) they must follow a man bearing a pitcher of water, and he must be their guide to the house. Christ could have described the house to them, probably it was a house they knew, and he might have said no more than, Go to such and such a house, or to a house in such a street, with such a sign, &c. But he directed them thus, to teach them to depend upon the conduct of Providence, and to follow that, step by step. They went, not knowing whether they went, but whom they followed. Being come to the house, they must desire the master of the house to show them a room, (v. 11.) and he will readily do it, v. 12. Whether it was a friend's house, or a public house, does not appear; but the disciples found their guide, and the house and the room, just as he had said to them; (v. 13.) for they need not fear a disappointment, who go upon Christ's word; according to the orders given them, they got every thing in readiness for the passover, v. 11.

11. The solemnizing of the passover, according to the law. When the hour was come that they should go to supper, he sat down, it is likely, at the head of the table, where was made. It is not related here, that Judas not excepted; for it is possible that they whose hearts are filled with Satan, and all manner of wickedness, may yet continue a plausible profession of religion, and be found in the performance of its external services. And while it is in the heart, and does not break out into any external things scandals, such cannot be denied the external privileges of their external profession. Though Judas had already been made known as a traitor, and it not being publicly known, Christ admits him to sit down with the rest at the passover. Now observe,

1. How Christ bids this passover welcome, to teach us in like manner to welcome his passover, the Lord's supper, and to come to it with an appetite; (v. 13.) "With desire have desired, I have most earnestly desired, to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He knew it was to be the profession to his sufferings, and therefore he desired it, because it was in order to his Father's glory and man's redemption. He delighted to do even this part of the will of God concerning him as Mediator. Shall we be backward to any service for him who was so forward in the work of our salvation? See the love he had to his disciples; he desired to eat it with them, that he and they might have a little
time together; themselves and none besides, for private conversation, which they could not have in Jerusalem, but on this occasion. He was now about to leave them, but was very desirous to eat this passover with them before he suffered, as if the comfort of that would carry him the more cheerfully through his sufferings, and make them the easier to him. Note. Our Passover, by faith with Jesus Christ, will be an excellent preparation for sufferings, and trials, and death itself.

2. How Christ in it takes his leave of all passoverers, thereby signifying his abrogating of all the ordinances of the ceremonial law, of which that of the passover was one of the earliest and one of the most eminent; (Ex. 12.) I will not any more eat thereof, nor shall it be eaten any more by my people, saith the Lord among his disciples, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom God." (1.) It was fulfilled when Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And therefore that type and shadow was laid aside, because now in the kingdom of God the substance was come, which superseded them. (2.) It was fulfilled in the Lord's supper, an ordinance of the gospel-kingdom, in which the passover has its accomplishment, and which the disciples, after the pouring out of the Spirit, frequently celebrate, as we find, Acts 2. 42, 46. They ate of it, and Christ might be said to eat with them because of the spiritual communion they had with him in that ordinance. He is said to sup with them, and they with him, Rev. 3. 20. But, (3.) This illustrates the accomplishment of that commemoration of the Last Supper will be in the kingdom of glory, when all God's spiritual Israel shall be released from the bondage of death and sin, and be put in possession of the land of promise.

What he had said of his eating of the paschal lamb, he repeats concerning his drinking of the passover-wine; the cup of blessing, or of thanksgiving, in which all the company pledged the Master of the feast, at the close of the passover supper. This cup, he took, according to the custom, and gave thanks for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the preservation of their first-born, and then said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves, v. 17. This is not said afterward of the sacramental cup; that being, probably, of much more legal and value, being the New Testament in his blood, he might have put into one's hand, to teach them to make a particular application of it to their own souls; but as for the paschal-cup which is to be abolished, it is enough to say, " Take it, and divide it among yourselves, do what you will with it, for we shall have no more occasion for it, v. 18. I will not drink it any more drunk of, till the kingdom of God shall come, till the Spirit be poured out, and then you shall in the Lord's supper, as the elect of God, take a much more glorious redemption; of which both the deliverance out of Egypt and the passover-commemoration of it were types and figures. The kingdom of God is now so near being set up, that you will not need to eat or drink any more till it comes."

Christ the next day, opened it. As Christ with a great deal of pleasantness, took leave of all the legal feasts (which fell of course with the command) but the evangelical ones, both spiritual and sacramental; so many good Christians, when they are called to remove from the church militant to that which is triumphant, cheerfully exchange even their spiritual repasts, much more their sacramental ones.

III. The institution of the Lord's supper, v. 19, 20. The passover and the deliverance out of Egypt were typical and prophetic signs of a Christ to come, who should by dying deliver us from sin and death, and the tyranny of Satan; but they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, a much greater deliverance shall eclipse the lustre of that, and therefore the Lord's supper is instituted to be a commemoration of the sign or memorial of a Christ already come, that he might by dying deliver us; and it is his death that is in a special manner set before us in that ordinance.

1. The breaking of Christ's body, as a sacrifice for us, is here commemorated by the breaking of bread: and the sacrifices under the law were called the bread of life; (Lev. 21. 6, 8, 17.) This is my body which is given for you; and there is a feast upon that sacrifice instituted, in which we have to apply it to ourselves, and to take the benefit and comfort of it; this bread that was given for us, is given to us to be food to our souls, for nothing can be more nourishing and satisfying to our souls than the doctrine of Christ's making atonement for sin, and the assurance of our interest in that atonement; this bread that was broken and given for us, to satisfy for the guilt of our sins, is broken and given to us, to satisfy the desire of our souls. And this we do in remembrance of what he did for us, when he died for us, and for a memorial of what we do, in making ourselves partakers of him, and joining ourselves to him in this everlasting covenant; like the stone Joshua set up for a memorial, Josh. 24. 27.

2. The shedding of Christ's blood, by which the atonement was made, (for the blood made atonement for the soul, Lev. 17. 11.) as represented by the wine in the cup; and that cup of wine is a sign and token of the New Testament, or new covenant, made with us. It commemorates the purchase of the covenant by the blood of Christ, and confirms the promises of the covenant, which are all Yea and Amen in him. This will be revising and refreshing to our souls, as wine that makes glad the heart. In all our commemorations of the shedding of Christ's blood, we must have an eye to it as shed for us; we need it, we take hold of it, we hope to have benefit by it; who loved me, and gave himself for me. And in all our regards to the New Testament, we must have an eye to the blood of Christ which gave life and being to it, and seals to us all the promises of it. Had it not been for the blood of Christ, we had never had the New Testament; and had it not been for the New Testament, we had never known the meaning of Christ's blood shed.

21. But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. 22. And truly the Son of man goeth as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!. 23. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. 24. And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. 25. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called Benefactors. 26. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth. 28. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: 29. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath ap-
pointed unto me; 30. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 31. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. 33. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. 34. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me. 35. And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, Nothing. 36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip; and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. 37. For I say unto you, That this that is written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end. 38. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

We have here Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper, much of which is new here; and in St. John's gospel we shall find more that is new still. We should take example from him, to entertain and edify our family and friends with such discourse at table as is good, and to the use of edifying, which may minister grace to the hearers; but especially after we have been at the Lord's table, by Christian conference to keep one another in a suitable frame. The matters Christ here discoursed of, were of weight, and to the present purpose.

1. He discoursed with them concerning him that should betray him, who was now present.

1. He signifies to them that the traitor was now among them, and one of them, v. 21. By the placing of this after the institution of the Lord's supper, which in Matthew and Mark is placed before it, it seems plain that Judas did receive the Lord's supper, did eat of that bread, and drink of that cup; for after the solemnity was over, Christ said, Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the table. There have been those that have eaten bread with Christ, and yet have betrayed him.

2. He foretells that the treason would take effect; (v. 22.) Truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined; goes to the place where he will be betrayed; for he is delivered up by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, else Judas could not have delivered him up. Christ was not driven to his sufferings, but cheerfully went to them. He said, Lo, I come.

3. He threatens the traitor; Woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. Note, Neither the patience of the saints under their sufferings, nor the counsel of God concerning their suffering, will be any excuse for those that have any hand in their sufferings, or that persecute them. Though God has determined that Christ shall be betrayed, and he himself was cheerfully submitted to it, yet Judas's sin or punishment is not at all the less.

4. He frightens the rest of the disciples into a suspicion of themselves, by saying that it was one of them, and not naming which; (v. 23.) They began to enquire among themselves, to interrogate themselves, to put the question to themselves, who it was that should do this thing, that could be so base as to go a Master. The inquiry was not, Is it you? or Is it such a one? but, Is it I?

11. Concerning the strife that was among them for precedence or some eminency. See what the dispute was; Which of them should be accounted the greatest? Such and so many contests among the disciples for dignity and dominion before the Spirit was poured upon them, were a sad presage of the like strifes for, and affections of supremacy, in the churches, after the Spirit should be provoked to depart from them. How inconsistent is this with that in the very beginning! There they were exercising, whereby could be the truster, and here which should be the prince. Could such an instance of humanity, and such an instance of pride and vanity, be found in the same men, so near together? This is like sweet waters and bitter, proceeding at the same place out of the same fountain. What a self-contradiction is the deceitful heart of man!

2. See what Christ said to this dispute. He was not sharp upon them, as might have been expected, (he having so often reproved them, for this very thing,) but mildly showed them the sin and folly of it.

(1.) This was to make themselves like the kings of the Gentiles, that affect worldly pomp, and with worldly power, v. 25. They exercise lordship over their subjects, and are ever and anon striving to exercise lordship too over the princes, that set about them, though as good as themselves, if they think them not so flattering as themselves. Note, the exercising of lordship better becomes the kings of the Gentiles than the ministers of Christ. But observe, They that exercise authority, and take upon themselves to bear sway, and give law, they are called Benefactors—Eunýwv: they call themselves so, and so their flatterers call them, and those that set themselves to serve their interests. It is pretended, that they have been benefactors and ministers, that account they should be admitted to have rule; nay, that in exercising authority they are benefactors: however they really serve themselves, they would be thought to serve their country. One of the Ptolemies was surnamed Euergetes—The Benefactor. Now our Saviour, by taking notice of this, intimates, [1.] That to do good is much more honourable than to look great; for these princes that were the terror of the mighty, would not be called so, but rather the benefactors of the needy; so that, by their own confession, a benefactor to his country is much more valued than a ruler of his country.

[2.] That to do good is the surest way to be great, else they that aimed to be rulers would not have been so solicitous to be called Benefactors: this therefore he would have his disciples believe, that their greatest honour would be to do all the good they could in the world. They would indeed be benefactors to the world, by bringing the gospel to it. Let them not sacrifice themselves upon that title, which they would indeed be entitled to, and then they need not strive which should be the greatest, for they would all be greater; greater blessings to mankind than the kings of the earth, that exercise lordship over them. If they have that which is confessedly the greater honour of being benefactors, let them despise the lesser, of being rulers.

(2.) It was to make themselves unlike the disciples of Christ, and unlike Christ himself; (v. 26, 27.) Ye shall not rule any otherwise than by power of
truth and grace, but that you should serve." When church-rulers affect external pomp and power, and bear up themselves by secular interests and influences, they debase their office, and it is an instance of degeneracy like that of Israel when they would have a king like the nations that were round about them, whereas the Lord was their King.

See here, [1.] What is the rule Christ gave to his disciples; He that is greater among you, that is servior. The honours of preceidency are due upon the account of his age, let him be as the younger, both in point of lowness of place, (let him condescend to sit with the younger, and be free and familiar with them,) and in point of labour and work. We say, Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores.—Let the young work, and the aged receive their honours. But let the elder take pains as well as the younger; their age and honour, instead of weakening them to take their case, bind them to double work. And he that is chief, the eýmarch,—the president of the college or assembly, let him be as that serves. 2. eýmarch— as the deacon, let him stoop to the meanest and most toilsome services for the public good, if there be an occasion.

[2.] What was the example which himself gave to this rule; Whether is greater, he that sitteth at the head or he that is attended on? Now Christ was among his disciples, just like one that waited at table; he was so far from taking state, or taking his case, by commanding their attendance upon him, that he was ready to do any office of kindness and service for them; witness his washing of their feet. Shall they take upon them the form of princes, who call themselves the followers of him that took upon him the form of a servant? (3.) They ought not to strive for worldly honour and grandeur, because he had better honours in reserve for them, of another nature, a kingdom, a feast, a throne, for each of them, wherein they should be all share and share alike, and should have no occasion to strive for precedence, v. 28—30. Where observe,

[1.] The commendation Christ gives of the disciples for their faithfulness to him; and this was honour enough for them, they needed not to strive for any greater. It is spoken with an air of encomium and applause; "Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, ye are they who have stood by me, and stuck to me, when others have deserted me, and turned their backs upon me." Christ here applies the metaphor of the church to the disciples, and was denominated the head and centre of men, reproached and reviled, and endured the contradiction of sinners. But his disciples continued with him, and were afflicted in all his afflictions. It was but little help that they could give him, or service that they could do him; but however, he took it kindly that they continued with him, and he here owns their kindness, though it was by the assistance of his own grace that they did continue. Christ's dispation of his disciples is full of love and tenderness, when he could find them guilty of many mistakes and weaknesses, they were very dull and very forgetful, and often blinded, yet their Master had passed all by, and forgotten it, does not upbraid them with their infirmities, but gives them this memorable testimonial, Ye are they who have continued with me. Thus does he praise at parting, to show how willingly he is to sustain him, as one whose hearts he knows to be upright within them.

[2.] The recompense he designed them for their fidelity; I appoint, iâ¡i@...
he is permitted to make his strongest onset upon thee only, thou wilt be most violently assaulted; but I entreat thee for thee, that thy faith fail not, that it may not totally and finally fail. Note, (1.) If faith be kept up in an hour of temptation, though we may fall, yet we shall not be utterly cast down. Faith will quench Satan's fiery darts. (2.) Though there may be many failings in the faith of true believers, yet there shall be not a total and final failure of their faith. It is their seed, their root remaining in them, even the faith of Jesus Christ. (3.) It is owing to the care, prayers, and intercession of Jesus Christ that the faith of his disciples, though sometimes sadly shaken, yet is not sunk. If they were left to themselves, they would fail; but they are kept by the power of God, and the prayer of Christ. The intercession of Christ is not only general, for all that believe, but for particular believers, I have prayed for thee, which is an encouragement for us to pray for one another, and an engagement upon us for the prayers of others too.

3. The charge he gives to Peter to help others as he should himself be helped of God; "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren; when thou art recovered by the grace of God, and brought to repentance, do what thou canst to recover others; when thou hast found thy faith kept from failing, labour to confirm the faith of others, and to establish them. He, who himself is recovered, encourages others to hope that they also shall find mercy." Note, (1.) Those that are fallen into sin, must be converted from it; those that have turned aside, must return; those that have left their first love, must do their first works. (2.) Those that through grace are converted from sin, must do what they can to strengthen their brethren that stand, and to prevent their falling; see Ps. 51. 12. 13.

4. Peter's declared resolution to cleave to Christ, whatever it cost him; (v. 33.) Lord, I am ready to go with thee; both into prison and to death. This was a great word, and yet I believe no more than he thought at this time, and thought he should make good too. Judas never protested thus against denying Christ, though often warned of it; for his heart was as fully set in him to the evil as Peter's was truly set in him to the good; but he does sincerely desire and design to follow him, whatsoever he goes, and whatsoever he leads them, though into a prison, though out of the world.

5. Christ's express prediction of his denying him thrice; (v. 34.) "I tell thee, Peter, (thou dost not know thine own heart, but must be left to thyself a little, that thou mayst know it, and mayest never trust to it again,) the cock shall not crow this day, before thou art wise that thou knowest me." Note, Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and knows the evil that is in us, and will be done by us, which we ourselves do not suspect. It is well for us that Christ knows where we are weak better than we do, and therefore where to come in with grace sufficient; that he knows how for a temptation will prevail, and therefore when to say, Hitherto shall it come no further. it found mercy with God, it found mercy with God.

IV. Concerning the condition of all the disciples.

1. He appeals to them concerning what had been, v. 35. He had owned that they had been faithful servants to him, v. 28. Now he expects, at parting, that they should acknowledge that he had been a kind and careful Master to them ever since they left all to follow him; When I sent you without purse, lacked you any thing? (1.) He owns that he had sent them out with very poor and bare provision, bare-foot, and no money in their purses, because they were not to go far, nor be out long; and he would thus teach them to depend upon the providence of God, and, under that, upon the kindness of their friends. If God thus sends us out into the world, let us remember that better than we have thus begun low. (2.) Yet he will have them own that, notwithstanding this, they had lacked nothing; they then lived as plentifully and comfortably as ever; and they readily acknowledged it; "We have nothing, Lord, I have all, and asoond." Note, (1.) It is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and the observe how we have got through the world, and the difficulties, both past and present, with which we are now charged, and how we may do the same. (2.) Christ is a good Master, and his service a good service; for though his servants may sometimes be brought low, yet he will help them; and though he try them, yet will not he leave them. Jehovah-jireh. [3.] We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful, if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had not all the circumstances of difficulties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contribution, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned, to their Master's honour, that it was sufficient, they had wanted nothing. 2. He gives them notice of a very great change of their circumstances now approaching. For, (1.) He that was their Master now enters upon his service in a manner that he had often foretold; (v. 35.) Now that which is written, must be fulfilled in me, that among the rest, he was numbered among the transgressors; he must suffer and die as a malefactor, and in company with some of the vilest of malefactors. This is that which is yet to be accomplished, after all the rest, and then the things concerning me, the things written concerning me, will have an end; then I shall show the end of them, (v. 37.) It is some sort of suffering Christ, that their sufferings were foretold, and determined in the counsels of heaven, and will shortly determine in the joys of heaven. They were written concerning them, and they will have an end, and will end well, everlasting well. (2.) They must therefore expect troubles, and must not think now to have such an easy fair life as they had had; no, the scene will alter. They must now suffer some sufferings with their Master; and when he is gone, they must expect to suffer like him. The servant is not better than his Lord. [1.] They must not now expect that their friends would be so kind and generous to them as they had been; and therefore, He that has a purse, let him take it, for he may have occasion for it, and for all the good husbandry he can use. [2.] They must now expect that their enemies would be more fierce upon them than they had been, and they would need magazines and stores; He that has no sword wherewith to defend himself against robbers and assassins, (2 Cor. 11. 26.) will find a great want of it, and will be ready to wish, some time or other, that he had sold his garment, and bought one. This is intended only to show that the times will be very pernicious, so that no man would think himself safe if he had not a sword by his side. But the sword of the Spirit, which is the sword which the disciples of Christ must furnish themselves with. Christ having suffered for us, we must arm ourselves with the same mind, (1 Pet. 4. 1.) arm ourselves with an expectation of trouble, that it may not be a surprise to us, and with a holy resignation to the will of God in it, that there may be no contradiction in us to it: and then we are better prepared than if we had sold a coat to buy a sword. The disciples hereupon inquire what they should do against the expectations of him among them two swords, (v. 38.) of which one was Peter's. The Galileans generally travelled with swords. Christ wore none himself, but he was not against his disciples wearing of them. But how little he would have them depend upon that, he intimates when he saith,
It is enough; which, some think, is spoken ironically: "Two swords among twelve men, you are bravely armed indeed, when our enemies are now coming out against us in great multitudes, and every one a sword. Yet two swords are sufficient for those who need none, having God himself to be the Shield of their help and the Sword of their excellency, Deut. 32. 29.

39. And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. 40. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. 41. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed. 42. Saying, Father, if thou wilt, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. 43. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 44. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

45. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow. 46. And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

We have here the awful story of Christ’s agony in the garden, just before he was betrayed, which was largely related by the other evangelists. In it Christ accommodated himself to that part of his undertaking which he was now entering upon—the making of his soul an offering for sin. He afflicted his own soul with grief for the sin he was to satisfy for, and an apprehension of the wrath of God to which man had by sin made himself obnoxious, which he was pleased as a Sacrifice to admit the impurities of the sins of all men from hence, being the surest token of its acceptance. In it Christ entered the lists with the powers of darkness, gave them all the advantages they could desire, and yet conquered them.

That which we have here in this story, which we had before, is. 1. That, when Christ went out, though it was in the night, and a long walk, yet his disciples followed him, eleven of them, for Judas had given them the slip. Having continued with him hitherto in his temptations, they would not leave him now. 2. That he went to the place where he was wont to be private, which intimates that Christ accustomed himself to retirement, was often alone, to teach us to be so, for freedom of converse with God and our own hearts. Though Christ had no convenience for retirement but a garden, yet he retired, to that place, so that in our practice after, we have been at the Lord’s table; we have then work to do, which requires us to be private. 3. That he exhorted his disciples to pray that though the approaching trial could not be avoided, yet that they might not in it enter into temptation to sin; that when they were in the greatest fright and danger, yet they might not have any inclination to desert Christ, nor take a step towards it; "Pray that ye may be kept from sin." 4. That he withdrew from them, and prayed himself; they had their errands at the throne of grace, and he had his, and therefore it was fit that they should pray separately, as sometimes, when they had joint errands, they prayed together. He withdrew about a stone’s cast further into the garden, which some reckon about fifty or sixty paces, and there he knelted down, (so it is here,) upon the bare ground; but the other evangelists say, that afterward he fell on his face, and there prayed, and if it were the will of God, this cup of suffering, this is My cup, to be endured;" Man. This was the language of that innocent dread of suffering, which, being really and truly from God, he could not but have in his nature. 5. That he, knowing it to be his Father’s will that he should suffer and die, and that, as the matter was now settled, it was necessary for our redemption and salvation, presently withdrew that petition, did not insist upon it, but resigned himself to his heavenly Father’s will; "Nevertheless not my will be done; not the will of my human nature, but the will of God as it is written concerning me in the volume of the book, which I delight to do, let that be done," Ps. 40. 7, 8. 6. That his disciples were asleep when he was at prayer, and when they should have been themselves praying, v. 45. When he rose from prayer, he found them sleeping; unconcerned in his sorrows; but see what a favourable construction is here put upon it, which we had not in the other evangelists—they were sleeping for sorrow. The great sorrows they were in upon the mournful farewell’s their Master had been this evening giving them, had exhausted their spirits, and made them very dull and heavy, which (it being now late) disposed them to sleep. 7. This was like the ship-master’s hours to his children’s infirmities, and if there be one cause better than another, charitably impute them to that. 7. That when he awakened them, then he exhorted them to pray; (v. 46.) "Why sleep ye? Why do you allow yourselves to sleep? Rise and pray. Shake off your drowsiness, that ye may be fit to pray, and pray for grace, that ye may be able to shake off your drowsiness." This was like the ship-master’s hours to his children’s infirmities, and if there be one cause better than another, charitably impute them to that. 8. If God proportion the shoulders to the burden, we shall have no reason to complain, whatever he is pleased to lay upon us. David owns this a sufficient answer to his prayer, in the day of trouble, that God strengthened him with strength in his soul, and so does the Son of David, Ps. 138. 3. 3. The angels ministered to the children of Israel, as was shown in the wilderness of sin, but this angel, whose name we do not know, could have had legions of them to rescue him; nay, this one could have done it, could have chased and conquered the whole band of men that came to take him; but he made use of his ministration only to strengthen him; and the very visit which this angel made him in his grief, when his enemies were awake and his friends asleep, was such a Seasonable for the using of the class of grace, as was very good for strengthening to him. Yet this was not all; he, probably, said something to him, to strengthen him; put him in mind that his sufferings were in order to his Father’s glory, to his own glory, and to the salvation of those that were given him, represented to him the joy set before him, the seed he should see; with
these and the like suggestions he encouraged him to go on cheerfully; and what is comforting, is strengthen- ing. Perhaps he did something to strengthen him, wiped away his sweat and tears, perhaps ministered some cordial to him, as after his temptation, or, if may be, took him by the arm, and helped him off the ground, or bore him up when he was ready to faint away; and in these services of the angel, the holy Spirit was not a little putting strength into him; for so the word signifies. If pleased the Lord to bruise him indeed; yet did he plead against him with his great power? No, but he put strength in him, (Job 23. 6.) as he had promised, Ps. 89. 21. 1 sa. 49. 8.—50. 7.

II. That, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, v. 44. As his sorrow and trouble grew upon him, he grew more importunate in prayer; not that there was before any coldness or indifference in his prayers, but there was now a greater velocity of them, which was expressed in his voice and gesture; Note, Prayer, though never out of season, is in a special manner seasonable when we are in an agony; and the stronger our agonies are, the more lively and frequent our prayers should be. Now it was that Christ offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared, (Heb. 5. 7.) and in his fear sweated, as Jacob with a strange fear, Gen. 32. 10.

III. That, in this agony, his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Sweat came in with sin, and was a branch of the curse, Gen. 3. 19. And therefore when Christ was made Sin and a Curse for us, he underwent a grievous sweat, that in the sweat of his face we might eat bread, and that he might sanctify and sweeten all our trials to us. It is some dispute among the critics, whether this sweat is only compared to drops of blood, being much thicker than drops of sweat commonly are, the pores of the body being more than ordinarily opened; or, that real blood out of the capillary veins mingled with it, so that it was in colour like blood, and might truly be called a bloody sweat; the matter is not great. Some reckon this one of the times when Christ shed his blood for us, for white unto the garment of blood there is no remission. Every pore was as it were a bleeding wound, and his blood stained all his raiment. This showed the travail of his soul. He was now abroad in the open air, in a cool season, upon the cold ground, far in the night, which, one would think, had been enough to strike in a sweat; yet now he breaks out into a sweat, which bespeaks the extremity of the agony he was in.

47. And while he yet spake, beheld a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49. When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50. And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. 51. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. 52. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53. When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Satan, finding himself baffled in his attempt to terrify our Lord Jesus, and so to put him out of the possession of his own soul, betakes himself (according to his usual method) to force and arms, and brings a party into the field to seize him, and Satan was in them. Here is, I. The marking of him by Judas. Here a nume- rous party appears, and Judas at the head of them, for he was guide to them that took Jesus; they knew not where to find him, but he brought them to the place: when they were there, they knew not which was he; but Judas told them that whomever he should kiss, that same was he; so he drew near to him to kiss him, according to the wanted freedom and familiarity which our Lord Jesus admitted his disciples to. Luke takes notice of the question Christ asked him, which we have not in the other evangelists; Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? What! Is that the signal? v. 48. Must the Son of man be betrayed, as if anything could be concealed from him, and a plot carried on against him unknown to him? Must one of his own disciples betray him, as if he had been a hard Master to them, or deserved ill at their hands? Must he be betrayed by one of his friends? Is there no instrument of treachery? Was there not a lesser–talk so desecrated and abused? Note, Nothing can be a greater affront or grief to the Lord Jesus, than to be betrayed, and betrayed with a kiss, by those that profess relation to him, and an affection for him. Those do so, who, under pretence of zeal for his honour, persecute his servants, who, under the cloak of a seeming affection for the honour of free-grace, blow to the root of holiness and strictness of conversation. Many instances there are of Christ's being betrayed with a kiss, by those who, under the form of godliness, fight against the power of it. It were well if their own consciences would put this question to them, which Christ here puts to Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? And will he not resent it? Will he not revenge it?

II. The effort which his disciples made for his protection; they saw what was to follow, that those armed men were come to seize him, they said, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword? Thou didst allow us to have two swords, shall we now make use of them? Never was there more occasion; and to what purpose should we have them, if we do not use them?" They asked the question, as if they would not have drawn the sword without commission from their Master, but they were in too much haste and too much heart to stay for an answer. But Peter, aiming at the head of one of the servants of the High Priest, missed his blow, and cut off his right ear. As Christ by throwing them to the ground, that came to take him, showed what he could have done, so Peter, by this exploit, showed what he could have done too in so good a cause if he had left. The other evangelists tell us what was the check Christ gave to Peter for it. Luke here tells us, 1. How Christ excused the blow: Suffer ye thus far, v. 51. Dr. Whitby thinks he said this to his enemies who came to take him, to qualify them, that they might not be provoked by it to fall upon the disciples, whom he had undertaken the preservation of; "Pass by this injury and affront, it was without warrant from me, and there shall not be another blow struck." Though Christ had struck them down, and struck them dead, yet he speaks them fair, and as it were, beseas their pardon for an assault made upon them by one of his followers, to teach us to give good words even to our enemies. 2. How he cured the wound,
which was more than amends sufficient for the injury; He touched his car and healed him; fastened his car on again, that he might not so much as go away stigmatized, though he well deserved it. Christ hereby gave them a proof, (1.) Of his power. He that could heal, could destroy if he pleased, which should have obliged them in interest to submit to him. Had they returned the blow upon Peter, he would immediately have healed him; and what could not a small read human, but had sufficient, and a Surgeon to it, immediately to help the sick and wounded? (2.) Of his mercy and goodness. Christ here gave an illustrious example to his own rule of doing good to them that hate us, as afterward he did of praying for them that despitfully use us. Those who render good for evil, do as Christ did. One would have thought that this generous piece of kind-ness should have overcome them, that such cases heaped on their heads, should have melted them, that they could not have bound him as a Malefactor, who had approved himself such a Benefactor; but their hearts were hardened.

11. Christ's expostulation with the officers of the detachment that came to apprehend him, to show what an absurd thing it was for them to make all this confusion about the relation of the things done. He was as said to the multitude; Luke tells us that it was said to the chief priests and captains of the temple, who commanded the several orders of the priests, and therefore are here put between the chief priests and the elders, so that they were all ecclesiastics, retainers to the temple, who were employed in this odious piece of service; and some of the first rank too disengaged themselves so far as to be seen in it.

Now see here,

1. How Christ reasons with them concerning their proceedings. What occasion was there for them to come out in the dead of the night, and with swords and staves? (1.) They knew that he was one that would not resist, or raise the mob against them, he never had done any thing like that. Why then are we come out against a thief? (2.) They knew he was one that would not be absent, for he was daily with them in the temple, in the midst of them, and never sought to conceal himself, nor did they offer to lay hands on him. Before his hour was come, it was folly for them to think to take him; and when his hour was come, it was folly for them to make all this ado to take him.

2. How he reconciles himself to their proceed-ings, and gives them not before; "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness. How hard seeing it may seem that I should be thus exposed, I submit, for so it is determined; this is the hour allowed you to have your will against me, there is an hour appointed me to reckon for it. Now the power of darkness, Satan, ruler of the darkness of this world, is permitted to do his worst, to bruise the heel of the seed of the woman, and I resolve to acquiesce; let him do his worst. The Lord shall laugh at him, for he sees that his day, his hour, is coming," Ps. 57. 13. Let this quiet us under the prevalence of the church's enemies; let it quiet us in a dying hour, that, (1.) It is but an hour that is permitted for the triumph of our adversary, a short time, a limited time. (2.) It is their hour, which is appointed them, and in which they are permitted to try their strength, this hour may be the hour of their drift and, and darkness must give way to light, and the power of darkness be made to trussle to the Prince of light. Christ was willing to wait for his triumphs till his warfare was accomplished, and we must be s too,

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. 56. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. 58. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. 59. And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him; for he is a Galilean. 60. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. 61. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

We have here the melancholy story of Peter's denying his Master, at the time when he was arraigned before the High Priest, with those that were of the cabal, that were ready to receive the prey, and to prepare the evidence of his arraignment, as soon as it was day, before the great Sanhedrim, v. 66. But notice is not taken here, as was in the other evangelists, of Christ's being now upon his examination before the High Priest, only of his being brought into the High Priest's house, v. 54. But the manner of expression is observable; they took him, and led him, and brought him, which methinks is like that concerning Saul, (1 Sam. 15. 13.) He is gone about, and passed on, and gone down; and intimates that, even when they had seized their prey, they were in confusion, and, for fear of the people, or, rather, struck with inward terror upon what they had seen and heard, they took him the furthest way about, or, rather, knew not which way they hurried him, such a hurry were they in in their own bsesns. Now observe,

I. Peter's falling. 1. It began in sneaking. He followed Christ when he was led away prisoner, that was well, and showed a concern for his Master; but he followed afar off; that he might be out of danger. He thought to trim the matter; to follow Christ, and so to satisfy his conscience, but to follow afar off, and so to save his reputation, and sleep in a whole skin. 2. It proceeded in keeping his distance and that he was in a trance of the servants, when he should have been at his Master's elbow. The servants kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and sat down together, to talk over their night-expedition. Probably, Malchus was among them, and Peter sat down among them, as if he had been one of them, at least would be thought to be so. 3. His fall itself was, disclaiming all acquaintance with him, and the more strongly to show him, disowning him because he was now in distress and danger, he charged by a sorry, simple maid that belonged to the house, with being a retainer to this Jesus, about whom there was now so much noise. She looked wistily upon him as he sat by the fire, only because he was a stranger, and one whom she had not seen before, and concluding that at this time of night there were no neutrals there, and knowing him not to be any of the retinue of the High Priest, she concludes
him to be one of the retinue of this Jesus, or perhaps she had been some time or other looking about her in the temple, and seen Jesus there, and Peter with himogenous about him, and remembered him; and this man was with him, saith she. And Peter, as he had not the courage to own the charge, so he had not the wit and presence of mind to turn it off, as he might have done many ways, and therefore flat and plain denies it; *Woman, I know him not.*

4. His fail was repeated a second time; (v. 58.) *After a little while, before he had time to recollect himself, he was bold enough to own him, and said,* "Even thou art one of them, silly saith the wittiest here among the High Priest's servants." *Not I, saith Peter, Man, I am not.* And a third time, about the space of an hour after, (for, saith the tempter, "When he is down, with him; let us follow the blow, till we get him past recovery," *) another confidently affirms, sternly asserts itself;*, "Of a truth this fellow also was with him," let him deny it if he can, for you may all perceive he is a Galilean.* But he that has once told a lie, is strongly tempted to persist in it; the beginning of that sin is as the setting forth of water.* Peter now not only denies that he is a disciple of Christ, but that he knows any thing of him;* (v. 60.) *"Man, I know not what thou sayest; I never heard of this Jesus."*  

II. Peter's getting up again. See how happily he recovered himself, or, rather, the grace of God recovered him from his breach of faith.  

1. The cock crew, just as he was the third time denying that he knew Christ; and this startled him, and put him upon thinking. *Note, Small accidents may have great influences.*  

2. The Lord turned, and looked upon him. This circumstance we had not in the other evangelists, but it is a very remarkable one. Christ is here called to his memory his words, which he had often spoken. *Lord, consider well the dignity, power, and grace, appearing in this.* Observe, Though Christ had now his back upon Peter, and was upon his trial, (when, one would think, he had something else to mind,) yet he knew all that Peter said. *Note, Christ takes more notice of what we say and do than we think he does; when Peter disowned Christ, yet Christ did not disown him, though he might justly have cast him off, and never looked upon him more; but he might as well have disowned himself. It is well for us that Christ does not deal with us as we deal with him. Christ looked upon Peter, not doubting but that Peter would soon be aware of it, for he knew that, though he had denied him with his lips, yet his eye would still be toward him. Observe, Though Peter had now been guilty of a very great offence, and which was very provoking, yet Christ would not call him to it, lest he should shame him or expose him; he only gave him a look which none but Peter would understand the meaning of, and it had a great deal in it. (1.) It was a convincing look. Peter said that he did not know Christ. *Christ turned, and looked upon him, as if he should say, *Dost thou not know, Peter? Look me in the face, and tell me so." (2.) It was a chiding look. We may suppose that he looked upon him, and frowned, or some way signified his displeasure. *Let us think with what an angry countenance Christ justly looks upon us when we have sinned.*  

(3.) It was an expostulating, upbraiding look; "What, Peter, art thou that dost owne me now, when thou shouldst come and witness for me? What, thou a disciple? Thou that wast the most forward to confess me to be the Son of God, and didst solemnly promise thou wouldest never disown me?" (4.) It was a tender look; he looked upon him with tenderness; *Poor Peter, how weak is thine heart! How art thou fallen and undone if I do not help thee!" (5.) It was a directing look. Christ guided him with his eye, gave him a wink to go out from that sorry company, to retire, and bathe himself a little, and then he would soon see what he had to do. (6.) It was a significant look; it signified the conveying of grace to Peter's heart, to enable him to repent; the crowing of the cock would not have brought him to repentance without this look, nor will the external means without special, efficacious grace. Power went along with this look, to change the heart of Peter, and to bring him to himself, to his right mind.  

3. Peter remembered the words of the Lord. *Note, The grace of God works in and by the word of God, brings that to mind, and sets that home upon the conscience, and so gives the soul the happy turn.* *Table et lege—Take it up and read.*  

4. Then Peter went out, and wept bitterly. One look from Christ melted him into tears of godly sorrow for sin. The candle was newly put out, and then a little thing lighted it again. Christ looked upon the chief priests, and made no impression upon them as he did on Peter, who had the divine seed remaining in him to work upon. It was not the look from Christ, but the grace of God with it, that recovered Peter, and brought him to rights.  

65. And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. 64. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophesy, who is it that smote thee? 65. And many other things blasphemously speake they against him. 66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into their council, saying, 67. Art thou the Christ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: 66. And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. 69. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. 70. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. 71. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.  

We are here told, as before in the other gospels, I. How our Lord Jesus was abused by the servants of the High Priest. *The object gathered themselves together against him, the rude and barbarous servants. They that held Jesus, that had him in custody till the court sat, they mocked him, and smote him,* (v. 63.) *they would not allow him to repose himself one minute, though he had had no sleep all night, nor to compose himself though he was hurried to his trial, and no time given him to prepare for it. They made sport with him; this sorrowful night to them shall be a merry night to them; and the blessed Jesus, like Samson, is made the Fool in the play. They hood-winked him, and then, according to the common play that young people have among them, they struck him on the face, and continued to do so till he named the person that smote him, (v. 64.) intending thereby an affront to his prophetic office, and that knowledge of secret things, which he was said to have. We are not told that he said any thing, but bore every thing; hell was let loose, and he suffered it to do its worst. A greater indignity could not be done to the blessed Jesus, yet this was but one instance of many; for, (v. 65.) many other things blasphemously spoken against him. They that
condemned him for a Blasphemer, were themselves the vilest blasphemers that ever were.

II. How he was accused and condemned by the great sanhedrin, consisting of the elders of the people, the chief priests and the scribes, who were all up betimes, and got together as soon as it was day, about five of the clock in the morning, to prosecute this matter. They were working this evil upon their beds, and, as soon as ever the morning was light, fourteen of them came, who were called fourteen of the council. They would not have been up so early for any good work.

It is but a short account that we have here of his trial in the ecclesiastical court.

1. They ask him, "Art thou the Christ?" He was generally believed by his followers to be the Christ, but they could not prove it upon him that he had ever said so to them — in so many words, and therefore urge him to own it to them, v. 67. If they had asked him this question with a willingness to admit that he was the Christ, and to receive him accordingly, if he could give sufficient proof of his being so, it had been well, and might have been for ever well with them; but they asked it with a resolution not to believe him, but a design to ensnare him.

2. He justly complained of their unfair and unjust manner of treating him. They all, as Jews, professed to expect the Messiah, and now they expected him at this time; no other appeared, or had appeared, that pretended to be the Messiah, he had no competitor, nor was he likely to have any; he had given amazing proofs of a divine power going along with him, which made his claims very well worthy of a free and impartial inquiry; it had been but just for these leaders of the people, to have taken him into their council, and examined him there as a Candidate for the Messiahship, not at the bar as a Criminal; "But," saith he, (1.) "If I tell you that I am the Christ, and give you ever such convincing proofs of it, you are resolved that you will not believe. Why should the cause be brought on before you who have already prejudged it, and are resolved, right or wrong, to run it down, and to condemn it?" (2.) "If I ask you what you have to object against the proofs I produce, you will not answer me." Here he refers to their silence when he put a question to them, which would have led them to own his authority, ch. 20. 5—7. They were neither fair judges, nor fair disputants; but, when they were pinched with an argument, would rather be silent than own their conviction: "You will neither answer me, nor let me go; if I be not the Christ, you ought to answer this, and many worse things will be brought against me, and you ought to let me go; but you will do neither."

He referred them to his second coming, for the full proof of his being the Christ, to their confusion, since they would not now admit the proof of it, to their conviction; (v. 69.) "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit, and be seen to sit, on the right hand of the power of God, and then you will not need to ask whether Christ or no."

4. Hence they inferred that he set up himself as the Son of God, and asked him whether he were so or no; (v. 7.) "Art thou then the Son of God?" He called himself the Son of man, referring to Daniel's vision of the Son of man that came near before the Ancient of days, Dan. 7. 13, 14. But they understood so much as to know that if he was that Son of man, it must be the Son of God. And art thou so? By this it appears to have been the faith of the Jewish church, that the Messiah should be both Son of man, and Son of God.

5. He owns himself to be the Son of God; Ye say that I am; that is, "I am, as ye say." Compare Mark 14. 62. Jesus said, I am. This confirms Christ's testimony concerning himself, that he was the Son of God, that he stood to it, when he knew he should suffer for standing to it.

6. Upon this they ground his condemnation; (v. 71.) "What need we any further witness?" It was true, they needed not any further witness to prove that he said he was the Son of God, they had it from his own mouth; but did they not need proof that he was not so, before they condemned him as a Blasphemer for saying that he was so? Had they no apprehension that it was possible he might be so, and then what horrid guilt they should bring upon themselves in putting him to death? No, they know not, neither will they understand. They cannot think it possible that he should be the Messiah, though ever so evidently clothed with divine power and grace, if he appear not, as they expect, in worldly pomp and grandeur. Their eyes being blinded with the admiration of that, they rush on in this dangerous prosecution, as the horse into the battle.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter carries on and concludes the history of Christ's sufferings and death. We have here, I. His arraignment before Pilate the Roman governor, v. 1—6. II. His examination before Herod, who was tetrarch of Galilee, under the Romans likewise, v. 6—12. III. Pilate's struggle with the people to release Jesus, his repeated testimonies concerning his innocency, but his yielding at length to their importunity, and condemning him to be crucified, v. 13—25. IV. An account of what passed as they led him to be crucified, and his discourse to the people that followed, v. 26—31. V. An account of what passed at the place of execution, and the indignities done him there, v. 32—35. VI. The computation of the money of the revenue was taken up on the cross, v. 39—43. VII. The death of Christ, and the prodigies that attended it, v. 44—49. VIII. His burial, v. 50—56.

1. And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. 3. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him, and said, Thou sayest it. 4. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. 5. And they were more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. 6. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. 7. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time. 8. And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. 9. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing. 10. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. 11. And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate. 12. And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.
Our Lord Jesus was condemned as a Blasphemer in the spiritual court, but it was the most imputable malice that could be that that court was actuated by; for when they had condemned him, they knew they could not put him to death, and therefore took another course, to accuse him before Pilate. The whole multitude of them arose, when they saw they could go no further with him in their court, and led him unto Pilate, though it was no judgment day, no asizes or sessions, and they demand justice against him, not as a Blasphemer, (that was no crime that he took cognizance of,) but as one disaffected to the Roman government; which they in their hearts did not deny, but they pretended a, if it was found, that they themselves were much more conformable with it than he was; only it would serve the turn and answer the purpose of their malice: and it is observable, that that which was the pretended crime, for which they employed the Roman powers to destroy Christ, was the real crime, for which the Roman powers not long after destroyed them.

11. Here is the indictment drawn up against him, (v. 2.) which they pretended a, if for Caesar, only to ingratiate themselves with Pilate, but it was all malice against Christ, and nothing else. They misrepresented him, (1.) As making the people rebel against Caesar. It was true, and Pilate knew it, that there was a general uneasiness in the people under the Roman yoke, and they wanted nothing but an opportunity to shake it off; now they would have Pilate, as their Cesar, to give them that opportunity, that general discontent, which, if the truth was known, they themselves were the fathers and abettors of: We have found him perverting the nation; as if converting them to God's government were perverting them from the civil government; whereas nothing tends more to make men good subjects than making them Christ's faithful followers. Christ had particularly taught, nor offered to form a community against Caesar; yet that is it they charged him with, that he said, He himself is Christ a king. He did say that he was Christ, and if so, then a king, but not such a king as was ever likely to give disturbance to Caesar. When his followers would have made him a king, (John 6. 15.) he declined it, though by the many miracles he wrought he made it appear that if he would have set up in competition with Caesar, or in temporal power, no offer would have been too hard for him.

2. His pleading to the indictment; Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? v. 3. To which he answered, Thou sayest it; that is, It is as thou sayest, that I am entitled to the government of the Jewish nation; but in rivalry with the scribes and Pharisees, who tyrannize over them in matters of religion, not in rivalry with the Cesar, whose government they would have given him too hard for him, his kingdom is wholly spiritual, and will not interfere with Caesar's jurisdiction. Or, Thou sayest it; but canst thou prove it? What evidence hast thou for it? All that know him, know the contrary, that he never pretended to be the King of the Jews, in opposition to Caesar as supreme, or to the governors that were sent by him, but the contrary.

3. Pilate's declaration of his innocence; (v. 4.) He said to the chief priests, and the people that seemd to join with them in the prosecution, I find no fault in this man. What breaches of your law he may have been guilty of, I am not concerned to inquire, but I find nothing proved upon him, that makes him obnoxious to our court. 4. The continued fury and outrage of the prescutors, v. 5. Instead of being moderated by Pilate's declaration of his innocence, and considering, as they ought to do, whether they were not bringing the guilt of innocent blood upon themselves, they were the more exasperated; more exceeding here. We do not find that they have any particular fact to produce, much less any evidence to prove it; but they resolve to carry it with noise and confidence, and say it, though they cannot prove it; He stirr'd up the people to rebel against Caesar, teaching through- out all Judæa. Pilate did stir up the people, but it was not to any thing fictitious or seditionial, but to every thing that was virtuous and praise-worthy. He did teach, but they could not charge him with teaching any doctrine that tended to disturb the public peace, or make the government uneasy or jealous.

11. They accuse him before Herod. Pilate remov'd him and his cause to Herod's court. The accusers mentioned Galilee, the northern part of Canaan. Why, saith Pilate, is he of that country? Is he a Galilæan? v. 6. Yes, said they, that is his head-quarters; there he has spent most of his time. Let us send him to Herod then, saith Pilate, for Herod is now in town, and it is but fit he should have cognizance of his cause, since he belongs to Herod's jurisdiction. Pilate was very willing to have it considered and desir'd to rid his hands of it, and that seems to be the true reason for sending him to Herod. But God ordered it so for the more evident fulfilling of the scripture, as appears Acts 4. 26. 27. where that of David, (Ps. 2. 2.) The kings of the earth and the rulers set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, is expressly said to be fulfilled in Herod and Pontius Pilate. Herod and Pilate was always very willing to have the examining of him; (v. 8.) When he saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad, and perhaps the more glad because he saw him a prisoner, saw him in bonds. He had heard many things of him in Galilee, where his miracles had for a great while been all the talk of the country; and he longed to see him, not for any affection he had for him or his doctrine, but purely out of curiosity; and it was only to gratify that, that he was sent to have him examined; and the thing that would serve him to talk of as long as he lived. In order to this, he questioned with him in many things, that at length he might bring him to something in which he might show his power. Perhaps he pumped him concerning things secret, or things to come, or concerning his curing of diseases. But Jesus answered him nothing; nor would he gratify him so much as with the repetition of one miracle. The prince, that asked a miracle for the relief of his necessity, was never denied; but this proud prince, that asked a miracle merely for the gratifying of his curiosity, is denied; he might have seen Christ and his wondrous works many a time in Galilee, and would not, and therefore it is justly said, Now he would see them, and shall not; they are hid from his eyes, because he knew not the day of his visitation. Now was it to be seen that he had him in bonds, he might command a miracle, but miracles must not be made cheap, nor Omniscience be at the beck of the greatest potentate.

3. His prosecutors appeared against him before Herod, for they were restless in the prosecution; They stood and vehemently accused him, (v. 10.) importunately and boldly, so the word signifies. They make as if they would have condemned Galilee too with his seditions notions. Note, it is no new thing for good men and good ministers, and who are real and useful friends to the civil government,
to be falsely accused as factious and seditical, and enemies to government.

4. Herod was very abusive to him; He, with his men of war, his attendants and officers, and great men, set him at naught. They made nothing of him; so the word is. Horrid wickedness! To make nothing of him who made all things. They laughed at him as a Fool; for they knew he had wrought many miracles to befriend others, and why would he not now work one to befriend himself? Or, they laughed at him as one that had lost his power, and was become weak as other men. Herod, who had been acquainted with John Baptist, and had more knowledge of Christ too, than Pilate had, was more abusive to Christ than Pilate was; for knowledge without grace, does but make men the more ingeniously wicked. Herod arrayed Christ in a gorgeous robe, some gaudy, painted clothes, as a mock-king; and so he taught Pilate’s soldiers afterwards to do him the same indignity. He was ringleader in that abuse.

5. Herod returned him to Pilate, and it proved an occasion of the making of them friends, they having been for some time before at variance. Herod could not get sight of a miracle, but would not condemn him neither as a malefactor, and therefore sent him again to Pilate, (v. 11.) and so returned Pilate’s civility and respect in sending the Prisoner to him; and this mutual obligation, with the messages that passed between them on this occasion, brought them to a better understanding one of another than there had been of late between them, v. 12. They had been at enmity between themselves, probably upon Pilate’s killing the Galileans, who were Herod’s subjects, (Luke 13. 1.) or some other such matter of controversy as usually occurs among princes and great men. Observe how those that quarrelled with one another, yet could unite against Christ; as Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, though divided among themselves, were confederate against the Israel of God, Ps. 83. 7. Christ is the great Peace-Maker; both Pilate and Herod owned his innocence, and their agreeing in that cured their disagreeing in other things.

13. And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14. Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me as one that perverted the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him: 15. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent him to you: and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him. 16. I will therefore chastise him, and release him. 17. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.) 18. And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: 19. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) 20. Pilate, therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. 21. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. 22. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. 23. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. 24. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. 25. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, when they had de- sired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

II. We have here the blessed Jesus run down by the mob, and hurried to the cross in the storm of a popular hatred, and then raised by the malice and artifice of the chief priests, as agents for the prince of the power of the air.

I. Pilate solemnly protests that he believes he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. And if he did believe so, he ought immediately to have discharged him, and not only so, but to have protected him from the fury of the priests and rabble, and to have bound his prosecutors to their good behaviour for their insulent conduct. But, being himself a bad man, he had no kindness for Christ; and having made himself otherwise odious, was afraid of displeasing either the emperor or the people; and therefore, for want of integrity, he called together the chief priests, and rulers and people, whom he should have dispersed, as a ritious and seditious assemblie, and forbid them to come near him,) and will he be what they have to say, to whom he should have turned a deaf ear, for he plainly saw what spirit actuated them; (v. 14.) “You have brought” (saith he) “this man to me, and because I have a respect for you, I have examined him before you, and have heard all you have to allege against him, and I can make nothing of it, I find no fault in him, you cannot prove the things whereof you accuse him.

II. He appeals to Herod concerning him; (v. 15.) “I sent you to him, who is supposed to have known more of him than I have done, and he has sent him back, not convicted of any thing, nor under any mark of his displeasure; in his opinion, his crimes are not capital. He has laughed at him as a weak Man, but has not stigmatized him as a dangerous man.” He thought Bedlam a fitter place for him than Tyburn.

III. His purposes to release him, if they will but consent to it. He ought not to have done it without ask- ing leave of them, Fiat justitia, utest cælum—Let justice have its course, though the heavens should be desolated. But the fear of man brings many into this snare, that, whereas justice should take place, though heaven and earth come together, they will do an unjust thing, against their consciences, rather than pull an old house about their ears. Pilate declares him innocent, and therefore has a mind to release the people. He will release him under the notion of a Malefactor, because of necessity he must release one; (v. 17.) so that whereas he ought to have been released by an act of justice, and thanks to nobody, he would have him released by an act of grace, and not be beholden to the people for it. 2. He will chastise him, and release him. If no fault be to be found in him, why should he be chastised? This is his way in scourging as in crucifying an innocent man; nor would it be justified by pretending that this would satisfy the clamours of the people, and make him the Object of their pity, who was now to be the Object of their envy. We must not do evil that good may come.

IV. The people chose rather to have Barabbas released; a wretched fellow, that had nothing to recommend him to their favour but the darkiness of his crimes: he was imprisoned for a sedition made in the city, and for murder, (of all crimes among men the least pardonable,) yet this was the criminal that was preferred before Christ; (v. 18, 19.) Away with
this man, and release unto us Barabbas. And no
wonder that such a man is the favourite and darling
of such a mob, he that was really seditious, rather
than he that was really loyal, and falsely accused
of sedition.

V. When Pilate urged the second time that Christ
should be released, they cried out, Crucify him, cru-
sify him, v. 20, 21. They not only will have him
die, but willy have him die so great a death; nothing
tless will serve but he must be crucified; Crucify
him, crucify him.

VI. When Pilate the third time reasoned with
them, to show them the unreasonable and injusti-
tice of it, they were the more peremptory and out-
rageous; (v. 22.) "Why? What evil hath he done?
Name his crime. I have found no cause of death,
and you cannot say what cause of death you have
found in him; and therefore if you will but speak
the word, I will chastise him, and let him go." But
popular fury, the more it is complimented, the more
furious it grows; they were impatient with loud voices,
with great noises or entreaties, not requesting, but
requiring that he might be crucified; as if they had
as much right, at the least, to demand the crucifying
of one that was innocent, as the release of one that
was guilty.

VII. Pilate's yielding, at length, to their impor-
tunity. The voice of the people and of the chief
priests prevailed and were too hard for Pilate, and
overruled him to go contrary to his convictions and
inclinations. He had not courage to go against so
strong a stream, but gave sentence that it should be
as they required, v. 24. Here is judgment turned
away backward, and justice standing afar off, for
fear of popular fury. Truth is fallen in the street,
and equity cannot enter, Isa. 59. 14. Judgment was
looked for, but behold, oppression; righteousness,
but behold, a cry, Isa. 5. 7. This is repeated, v. 25,
with the aggravating circumstance of the release of
Barabbas; He released unto them him that for sedi-
tion and murder was cast into prison, who hereby
would be hardened in his wickedness, and do the
more harm, but will he that he took him they had desired, being
altogether such a one as themselves, but he deliver-
ed Jesus to their will; and he could not deal more
barbarously with him than to deliver him to their
will, who hated him with a perfect hatred, and whose
tender mercies were cruelty.

26. And as they led him away, they laid
hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming
out of the country, and on him they laid
the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.
27. And there followed him a great com-
yany of people, and of women, which also
bewailed and lamented him. 28. But Je-
sus turning unto them, said, Daughters of
Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for
yourselves, and for your children. 29. For,
behold, the days are coming, in the which
they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and
the wombs that never bare, and the paps
which never gave suck. 30. Then shall
they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on
us; and to the hills, Cover us. 31. For if
they do these things in a green tree, what
shall be done in the dry?

We have here the blessed Jesus, the Lamb of
God, led as a lamb to the slaughter, to the sacrifice.
It is strange with what expedition they went through
his trial; how they could do so much work in so
little time, though they had so many great men to
deal with, attendance on whom is usually a work
of time. He was brought before the chief priests at
break of day, (ch. 22. 66.) after that to Pilate, then
to Herod, then to Pilate again; and there seems to
have been a long struggle between Pilate and the
people about him. He was scourged, and crowned
with thorns, and contumeliously used, and all this
was done in four or five hours' time, or six at most,
for he was crucified between nine of clock and twelve.
Christ's executors resolve to lose no time, for fear
lest his friends at the other end of the town should
get notice of what they were doing, and should rise
to rescue him. Never any one was so chased out of
the world as Christ was, but so he himself said, Let
a little while, and ye shall not see me; a very little
while indeed.

Now as they led him away to death we find,
I. That one was a bearer, that carried his cross,
Simon by name, a Cyrenian, who, probably, was
a friend of Christ, and was known to be so, and this
was done to put a reproach upon him; they laid
Christ's cross upon him, that he might bear it after
Jesus, (v. 26.) lest Jesus should faint under it and
die away, and so prevent the further instances of
malice they designed. It was a pity, but a cruel
fate, that gave him this case.

11. Many that were mourners, true mourners,
who followed him, bewailing and lamenting him.
These were not only his friends and well-wishers,
but the common people, that were not his enemies,
and were moved with compassion toward him, be-
cause they had heard the fame of him, and what
an excellent, useful Man he was, and had reason to
think he suffered unjustly; this drew a great crowd
after him, as is usual at executions, especially of
those that have been persons of distinction; A great
company of people followed him, especially of
women; (v. 27.) some led by pity, others by curiosity,
but they also (as well as those that were his particu-
lar friends and acquaintance) bewailed and lamented
him. Though there were many that reproached and
reviled him, yet there were some that valued him,
and pitied him, and were sorry for him, and were
partakers with him in his sufferings. The dying of
the Lord Jesus may perhaps move natural affections
in many that are strangers to devout affections,
many bewail Christ, that do not believe in him and
lament him, that do not love him above all.

Now here we are told what Christ said to these
mourners; though one would think he should be
wholly taken up with his own concerns, yet he had
heart and heart to take compassion of their tears.
Christ died lamented, and has a bottle for the tears
of those that lamented him. He turned to them,
though they were strangers to him, and bid them
not weep for him, but for themselves; he diverts
ther lamentation into another channel, v. 28.
1. He gives them a general direction concerning
their lamentations; Daughters of Jerusalem, weep;
they had wept for me when they saw me taken
weeping for him, but commended rather; these
hearts were hard indeed, that were not affected with
such sufferings of such a person; but they must not
weep only for him, (those were profiteless tears that
they shed for him,) but rather let them weep for
themselves and for their children, with an eye to
the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem,
which some of them might live to see; alas, in the
calamity of such at least their little children could,
for whom they ought to be solicitous. Note, When
with an eye of faith we behold Christ crucified, we
ought to weep, not for him, but for ourselves. We
must not be affected with the death of Christ as
with the death of a common person whose calamity
we pity, or of a common friend whom we are likely
to part with; the death of Christ was a thing pecu-
liar, it was his victory and triumph over his enemies,
it was our deliverance, and the purchase of eternal life for us. And therefore weep not for him, but let us weep for our own sins, and the sins of our children, that were the cause of his death; and weep for fear (such were the tears here prescribed) of the miseries we shall bring upon ourselves, if we slight his love, and reject his grace, as the Jewish nation did, which brought upon them the ruin here foretold. When our dear relations and friends die in Christ, we may rejoice with them, and grieve for them, but not put off the burden of the flesh, are made perfect in holiness, and are entered into perfect rest and joy, but for ourselves and our children, who are left behind in a world of sins, and sorrows, and snares.

2. He gives them a particular reason why they should weep for themselves and for their children; "For behold, sad times are coming upon your city, it will be destroyed, and evil will be Berkeley to these

common destruction." When Christ's own disciples sorrowed after a godly sort for his leaving them, he wiped away their tears with the promise that he would see them again, and they should rejoice, John 16. 22. But when these daughters of Jerusalem bewailed him only with a worldly sorrow, he turned their tears into another channel, and told them that they should have something given them to cry for. Let the tears be wiped away, and set not your heart on them; 4. 9. He had lately wept over Jerusalem himself, and now he bids them weep over it. Christ's tears should set us a weeping. Let the daughters of Zion, that own Christ for their King, rejoice in him, for he comes to save them; let but the daughters of Jerusalem, that only weep for him, but do not take him for their King, weep and tremble to think of his coming to judge them.

No description of Jerusalem is here foretold by two proverbial sayings that might then, fitly be used, which both bespeak it very terrible, that what people commonly dread they would then desire, to be written childless, and to be buried alive. (1.) They would wish to be written childless. Whereas commonly those that have no children, envy those that have, as Rachel envied Leah, then those that have children, will find them such a burden in extremity to escape, and such a grief when they see them either fasting for famine or falling by the sword, that they will envy those that have none, and say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, that have no children to be given up to the murderer, or to be snatched out of his hands. It would not only go ill with those who at that time were with child, or giving suck, as Christ had said, (Matt. 23. 19.) but it would be terrible to those who ever had had children, and suckled them, and had them now alive. See Hos. 9. 11—14. See the vanity of the creature and the uncertainty of its comforts, for such may be the changes of Providence concerning us, that those very things may become the greatest burdens, cares, and griefs to us, which we have delighted in as the greatest blessings. (2.) They would wish to be buried alive. "Our Synod shall come to the mountains, and fall upon us, and to the hills, Cover us." This also refers to a passage in the same prophecy with the former, Hos. 10. 8. They shall wish to be hid in the darkest caves, that they might be out of the noise of these calamities. They will be willing to be sheltered upon any terms, though with the hazard of being crushed to pieces. This would be the language, especially of the great and mighty by reason of their strength; 6. 16. They that would not flee to Christ for refuge, and put themselves under his protection, will in vain call to hills and mountains to shelter themselves from his wrath.

3. He shows how natural it was for them to infer that desolation from his sufferings; (v. 31.) If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Some think that this is borrowed from Ezek. 20. 47. The fire shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree. These words may be applied, (1.) More particularly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ here foretold, and which the Jews by putting him to death brought upon themselves; "If they (the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem) do these things upon the green tree, if they do thus abuse an innocent and excellent person for his good works, how may they expect God to deal with them for their so doing, who have made themselves a dry tree, a corrupt and wicked generation, and good for nothing! If this be their sin, what do you think will be their punishment?" Or take it thus; "If they (the Romans, their judges, and their soldiers) abuse me thus, who have given them no provocation, who am to them as a green tree, which you seem to be as much enraged at, what will they do by Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, who will be so very provoking to them, and make themselves as a dry tree, as fuel to the fire of their resentments? If God suffer those things to be done to me, what will he appoint to be done to those barren trees, of whom it hath been often said, that they should be hewn down and cast into the fire?" Matt. 3. 10—7. 19. (2.) They may be applied more generally to all the revelations of God's wrath against all mankind, and to such sufferings as these, because I am made a sacrifice for sin, what will he do with sinners themselves?" Christ was a green Tree, fruitful and flourishing; now if such things were done to him, we may from thence infer what should have been done to the whole race of mankind, if he had not interposed, and what shall be done to those that continue dry trees, notwithstanding all that is done to make them fruitful. If God did this to the Son of his love, when he found but sin imputed to him, what shall he do to the generation of his wrath, when he finds sin reigning in them? If the Father were pleased in doing these things to the green tree, why should he be loath to do it to the dry? Note, The consideration of the bitter sufferings of our Lord Jesus should engage us to stand in awe of the justice of God, and to tremble before him. The best saints, compared with Christ, are dry trees. If he suffer, why may not they expect to suffer? And what then shall the damnation of sinners be?

39. And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors; one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. 35. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar. 37. And saying, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. 38. And a superscription also was written over him, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39. And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40. But the
other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41. And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In these verses, we have,
1. Divers passages which we had before in Matthew and Mark, concerning Christ's sufferings. 1. That there were two others, malefactors, led with him to the place of execution; who, it is probable, had been for some time under death, and were not supposed to be executed at this day, which was, probably, the pretence for making such haste in the prosecution of Christ, that he and these two malefactors might be executed together, and one solemnity might serve.
2. That he was crucified at a place called Calvary, Latin, the Greek name for Golgotha—the place of a skull: an ignominious place, to add to the reproach of his sufferings, but that, for this, he was crucified. Both as it was upon his own dunghill. He was crucified: his hands and feet were nailed to the cross as it lay upon the ground; and then it was lifted up, and fastened into the earth, or some socket to receive it. This was a painful and shameful death above any other.
3. That he was crucified in the midst between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; thus that the great multitude of suckers, but such as were with him, the worst of them.
4. That the soldiers who were employed in the execution, seized his garments as their fee, and divided them among themselves by lot; They parted his raiment, and cast lots; it was worth so little, that, if it were divided, it would come to next to nothing, and therefore they cast lots for it.
5. That he was reviled and reproached, and treated with all the scorn and contempt imaginable, when he was lifted up upon the cross. It was strange that so much barbarity should be found in the human nature; The people stood beholding, not at all concerned, but rather pleasing themselves with the spectacle; and the rulers, whom from their office one would take to be men of sense and men of honour, they stood among the rabble, and derided him, to set those on that were about them to do so; and they said, He saved others, let him save himself.

Thus he was upbraided for the good works he had done, as if it were indeed for these that they crucified him. They triumph over him as if they had conquered him, whereas he was himself then more than a conqueror; they challenge him to save himself from the cross, when he was saving others by the cross: If he be the Christ, the chosen of God, let him save himself. They knew that the Christ is the child of God; designed by him, and dear to him. If he, as the Christ, would deliver our nation from the Romans, (and they could not form any other idea than that, of the Messiah,) let him deliver himself from the Romans that have him now in their hands. Thus the Jewish rulers jeered him as captivated by the Romans, instead of subduing them. The Roman soldiers jeered him as the King of the Jews. A not one receiveth for such a prince, and a prince good enough for such a people. They mocked him, (v. 36, 37.) they made sport with him, and made a jest of his sufferings; and when they were drinking sharp, sour wine themselves, such as was generally called “ted them, they triumphantly asked him if he would pledge them, or drink with them. And thou saidst, If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself. There was the same notion of a pretended Messiah, so the Romans under the notion of a pretended King.
6. That the superscription over his head, setting forth his crime, was, This is the King of the Jews, v. 38. He is put to death for pretending to be the King of the Jews; so they meant it; but God intended it to be a declaration of what he really was, not with standing his pretensions. He was the King of the Jews, the King of the church, and his cross is the way to his crown. This was written in these three languages, that it might be known and read of all men; but God designed it to signify that the gospel is preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and he read them in languages. The Gentile philosophy made the Greek tongue famous, the Roman laws and government made the Latin tongue so, and the Hebrew excelled them all for the sake of the Old Testament. In these three languages is Jesus Christ proclaimed King. Young scholars that are taking pains at school to make themselves masters of these three languages, see, at this, what advantage they may have, in that they may increase their acquaintance with Christ.

II. Here are two passages which we had not before, and they are very remarkable ones.
1. Christ's prayer for his enemies; (v. 34.) Father, forgive them. Seven remarkable words Christ spake after he was nailed to the cross, and before he died, and this is the first. One reason why he died the death of the cross, that he might have liberty to speak the last, and so might glorify his Father, and edify those about him. As soon as ever he was fastened to the cross, or while they were nailing him, he prayed this prayer: in which,
   (1.) The petition; Father, forgive them. One would think that he should have prayed, "Father, consume them; the Lord look upon it, and require it." The sin they were now guilty of, might justly, and with reason, have been upon their own heads, but they have been excepted by name out of the act of indemnity. No, these are particularly prayed for. Now he made intercession for transgressors, as was foretold, (Isa. 53. 12.) and it is to be added to his prayer, John 17. to complete the specimen he gave of his intercession within the vail; that for saints, this for sinners. Now the sayings of Christ upon the cross as well as his sufferings had a further reach in them they seemed to have. This was a mediatorial word, and explanatory of the intent and meaning of his death: "Father forgive them, not only these, but all that shall repent, and believe the gospel;" and he did not intend that these should be forgiven upon any other terms. "Father, that which I am now suffering and dying for, is in order to this, that poor sinners may be pardoned." Note, [1.] The great things which Christ did not refuse the treure for us, is, the forgiveness of sin. [2.] This is that which Christ intercedes for, all that repent and believe in the virtue of his satisfaction: his blood speaks this, Father, forgive them. [3.] The greatest sinners may, through Christ, upon their repentance, hope to find mercy. Father, forgive them; though they were his persecutors and murderers.
   (2.) The plea for them, that they do not; for they knew, they would not have crucified him, 1 Cor. 2. 8. There was a vall upon his glory and upon their understandings; and how could they see through two vails? They wished his blood on them and their children; but had they known what they did, they would have unwished it again
ST. LUKE, XXIII.

Note. [1.] The crucifiers of Christ know not what they do. They that speak ill of religion, speak ill of that which they know not, and it is because they will not know it. [2.] There is a kind of ignorance that does in part excuse sin; ignorance through want of the means of knowledge, or of a capacity to receive instruction, through the infidelities of education which have kept them in ignorance by their rulers, and had prejudices against him instilled into them, so that in what they did against Christ and his doctrine they thought they did God service, John 16. 2. Such are to be pitied and prayed for. This prayer of Christ was answered not long after, when many of those that had a hand in his death, were converted by Peter. This is written also for example to us. First, We must in prayer call God Father, and come to him with reverence and confidence, as children to a father. Secondly, The great thing we must beg of God, both for ourselves and others, is the forgiveness of sins. Thirdly, We must pray for our enemies, and those that hate and persecute us; must extend the same benedictions, and the same mercy, and as we must do to our own; (They know not what they do, peradventure it was an oversight,) and we must be earnest with God in prayer for the forgiveness of their sins, their sins against us. This is Christ's example to his own rule, (Matth. 5. 44.) Love your enemies; and it very much strengthens the rule, for if Christ loved and prayed for such enemies, what enemies shall we have, which we are not obliged to love and pray for?

2. The conversion of the thief upon the cross, which is an illustrious instance of Christ's triumphing over principalities and powers, then when he seemed to be triumphed over by them. Christ was crucified between two thieves, and in them were represented the different effects which the cross of Christ would have upon the children of men, to whom it would be brought near in the preaching of the gospel. They are all malefactors, all guilty before God. Now the cross of Christ is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. To them that perish it is foolishness, but to them that are saved it is the wisdom of God and the power of God.

(1.) Here was one of these malefactors, that was hardened to the last. Near to the cross of Christ, he railed on him, as others did; (v. 39.) he said, If thou be the Christ, as they say thou art, save thyself and us. Though he was now in pain and agony, and in the valley of the shadow of death, yet that did not humble his proud spirit, nor teach him to give good language, no, not to his fellow-sinner. Though thou pray a soul in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. No troubles will of themselves work a change in a wicked heart, but sometimes they irritate the corruption which, one would think, they should mortify. He challenges Christ to save both himself and them. Note, There are some that have the impudence to rail upon Christ, and yet the confidence to expect to be saved by him; nay, and to conclude that he will not save them, he is not to be looked upon as the Saviour.

(2.) Here was the other of them, that was softened at the last. It was said in Matthew and Mark, that, though the thieves, even they that were crucified with him, reviled him, which, some think, is by a figure put for one of them; but others think that they both reviled him at first, till the heart of one of them was wonderfully changed, and with it his language on a sudden. This malefactor, when just ready to fall into the hands of Satan, was snatched as a brand out of the burning, and made a monument of divine mercy and grace, and Satan was left to roar as a lion disappointed of his prey. This gives no encouragement to any to put off their repentance to their death-bed, or to hope that they then shall find mercy; for though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true. None can be sure that they shall have time to repent at death, but every man may be sure that he may repent before death. If this penitent thief had, whose case was altogether extraordinary. He never had any offer of Christ, nor day of grace, before now: he was designed to be made a singular instance of the power of Christ's grace, now at a time when he was crucified in weakness. Christ, having conquered Satan in the destruction of Judas, and the preservation of Peter, reaped another and other triumph of his victory over him in the conversion of this malefactor, or as a specimen of what he would do.

We shall see the case to be extraordinary, if we observe,

[1.] The extraordinary operations of God's grace upon him, which appeared in what he said. Here were so many evidences given in a short time of a change of heart, that may not be thought that more could not have been in so little a compass.

First, See what he said to the other malefactor, v. 40, 41. 1. He reproved him for railing on Christ, as destitute of the fear of God, and having no sense at all of religion; Dost thou not fear God? This implies that it was the fear of God which restrained him from following the multitude to do this evil. [2.] Fear God, and then thou shalt live forevermore. All that have their eyes opened, see this to be at the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. If thou hast any humanity in thee, thou wouldest not insult over one that is thy fellow-sinner; thou art in the same condition; thou art a dying man too, and therefore, whatever these wicked people do, it will become thee also to die. "He said not to him, Thou shalt live;" All that have their eyes opened, see this as the bottom of the wickedness of the wicked, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. If thou hast any humanity in thee, thou wouldest not insult over one that is thy fellow-sinner; thou art in the same condition; thou art a dying man too, and therefore, whatever these wicked people do, it will become thee also to die. He means, he realized that he deserved what was done to him; We indeed justly. It is probable that they both suffered for one and the same crime, and therefore he spake with the more assurance, we receive the due reward of our deeds. This magnifies divine grace, as acting in a distinguishing way. These two had been comrades in sin and suffering, and yet one is saved, and the other is not. This is a piece of mercy, and the case is introduced as a kind of encouragement to the others, and for them to make an end of their miseries. If the chief malefactor and thief was saved, why not the other? True penitents acknowledge the justice of God in all the punishments of their sin. God has done right, but we have done wickedly. 3. He believes Christ to have suffered wrongfully. Though he was condemned in two courts, and run upon as if he had been the worst of malefactors, yet this chief is convinced, by his conduct in his sufferings, that he has done nothing amiss. The chief priest would have him crucified between the malefactors, as one of them; but this thief has more sense than they, and owns his innocence, nothing absurd, or unbecoming his character. Whether he had before heard of Christ and of his wondrous works does not appear, but the Spirit of grace enlightened him with this knowledge, and enabled him to say, This man has done nothing amiss.

Secondly, See what he said to our Lord Jesus; (v. 42.) Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. This is the prayer of a dying sinner to a dying Saviour. It was the honour of Christ to be thus prayed to, though he was the cause of the death of that thief; it was the happiness of the thief thus to pray; perhaps he never prayed before, and yet now was heard, and saved at the last gasp. While there is life, there is hope; and while there is hope, there is room for prayer.
1. Observe his faith in this prayer. In his confession of sin, (ver. 4.) he discovered repentance towards God. In this petition he discovered faith towards man. In the Lord, and to have a kingdom, and that he was going to that kingdom; that he should have authority in that kingdom, and that those should be happy whom he favours; and to believe and confess all this was a great thing at this time of day. Christ was now in the depth of disgrace, deserted by his own disciples, reviled by his own nation, suffering as a thief, and what was not delivered by his Father. He made this profession before those prodigies happened which put honour upon his sufferings, and which started the centurion; yet verily we have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. He believed another life after this, and desired to be happy in that life, not as the other thief, to be saved from the cross, but to be well done for when the cross had done its worst.

2. Observe his humility in this prayer. All his request is, Lord, remember me. He does not pray, Lord, prefer me, (as they did, Matth. 20. 21.) though, having the honour so as none of the disciples had, to drink of Christ's cup, and to be baptized with his baptism, either on his right hand or on his left in his sufferings; when his own disciples had deserted him, he might have had some colour to claim a place on his right hand and on his left in his kingdom; acquaintance in sufferings hath sometimes gained such a point, Jer. 52. 31. 32. But he is far from the thought of it; all he begs is, Lord, remember me, referring himself to Christ in what way to remember him. It is a request like that of Joseph to the chief butler, Think on me, (Gen. 40. 14.) and it sped better; the chief butler forgot Joseph, but Christ remembered this thief.

3. There is an air of importunity and fervency in this prayer. He doth, as it were, breathe out his soul in it; "Lord, remember me, and I have enough; I desire no more; into thy hands I commit my case." Note, To be remembered by Christ, now that he is in his kingdom, is what we should earnestly desire and pray for, and it will be enough to secure our welfare, living and dying. Christ is in his kingdom, and will remember us, when we are in this our distress; "Lord, remember me, and intercede for me." He is there, ruling; "Lord, remember me, and rule in me by thy Spirit." He is there, preparing places for those, that are his; "Lord, remember me, and prepare a place for me; remember me at death, remember me in the resurrection." See Job 14. 15.

[2.] The extraordinary grants of Christ's favour to him: Jesus said unto him, in answer to his prayer, "Verily I say unto thee, I the Amen, the faithful Witness, I say Amen to this prayer, put my fiat to it: nay, thou shalt have more than thou didst ask, This day thou shalt be with me in paradise," v. 45. Observe, First, To whom this was spoken; to the penitent thief, to him, and not to his companion. Christ upon the cross is like Christ upon the throne; for now is the judgment of this world, and death to die with a curse, the other with a blessing. Though Christ was now himself in the greatest struggle and agony, yet he had a word of comfort to speak to a poor penitent that committed himself to him. Note, Even great sinners, if they be true penitents, shall, through Christ, obtain not only the pardon of their sins, but a place in the paradise of God, Heb. 9. 15. This magnifies the riches of free grace, that rebels and traitors shall not only be pardoned, but preferred, thus preferred.

Secondly, By whom this was spoken. This was another mediatorial work which Christ spake, bought upon a particular occasion, yet with a general intention to explain the true intent and meaning of his sufferings; as he did to purchase the forgiveness of sins for us, (ver. 34.) so also to purchase eternal life for us. By this word we are given to understand that Jesus Christ died to open the kingdom of heaven to all penitent, obedient believers.

1. Christ here lets us know that he was going to paradise himself; to hades—the invisible world; his human soul was removing to the place of separate souls; not to the place of the damned, but to paradise, the place of the blessed. By this he assures us that he is accepted, and the Father was well pleased in him, else he had not gone to paradise; that was the beginning of the joy set before him, which he comforted himself with the prospect of. He went by the cross to the crown, and we must not think of going any other way, or of being perfected but by sufferings.

2. He lets all penitent believers know that when they die they shall go to be with him there. He was now, as a Priest, purchasing this happiness for them, and is ready, as a King, to confer it upon them, when they are prepared and made ready for it. See here how the happiness of heaven is set forth to us. (1.) It is paradise, a garden of pleasure, the paradise of God, (Rev. 2. 7.) alluding to the garden of Eden, in which our first parents were placed when they were innocent. In the second Adam we are restored to all we lost in the first Adam, and more, to a heavenly paradise instead of an earthly one. (2.) It is being with Christ there. That is the happiness of heaven, to see Christ, and sit with him, and share in his glory, John 17. 24. (3.) It is immediate upon death; This day shalt thou be with me; to-night, before to-morrow. The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, immediately are in joy and felicity; the spirits of just men are immediately made perfect. Lazarus departs, and is immediately comforted; Paul departs, and is immediately with Christ, Phil. 1. 23.

44. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45. And the sun was darkened, and the vail of the temple was rent in the midst. 46. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. 47. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. 48. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. 49. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things. In these verses, we have three things.

1. Christ's dying magnified by the prodigies that attended it: only two are here mentioned, which we had an account of before.

1. The darkening of the sun at noon day. It was noon at that time, when the sun, according to the computation, twelve o'clock at noon; and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour: the sun was eclipsed, and the air exceedingly clouded at the same time; both which concurred to this thick darkness, which continued three hours, or three days, as that of Egypt did.

2. The rending of the veil of the temple. That
former prodigy was in the heavens, this in the temple; for both these are the houses of God, and could not but feel it when the Son of God was thus abused, and thus signify their resentment of it. By this rending of the veil was signified the taking away of the ceremonial law, which was a wall of partition between God and men, and between saints, and between Jews and Gentiles, and other divisions and discouragements in our approach to God, so that now we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

11. Christ's dying explained, (v. 46.) by the words with which he breathed out his soul. Jesus had cried with a loud voice, when he said, Why hast thou forsaken me? So we are told in Matthew and Mark, and, it should seem, it was with a loud voice that he said, This day is thrust upon me, and this day II shall be glorified in him, that the people might take notice of it; and this he said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

1. He bowed these words from his father David; (Ps. 31. 5.) not that he needed to have words put into his mouth, but he chose to make use of David's words, to show that it was the Spirit of Christ that testified in the Old-Testament prophets, and that he came to fulfill the scripture. Christ died with scripture in his mouth. Thus he directs us to make use of scripture-language in our addresses to God.

2. In this address to God, he calls him Father; when he complained of being forsaken, he cried, Eli, Eli, My God, my God; but to show that such a dreadful agony of his soul was now over, he here calls God Father. When he was giving up his life and soul for us, he did for us call God Father, that we through him might receive the adoption of sons.

3. Christ made use of these words in a sense peculiar to himself as Mediator. He was now to make his soul an offering for our sin, (Isa. 53. 10.) to give his life a ransom for many, (Matth. 20. 28.) by the eternal Spirit to offer himself, Heb. 9. 14. He was himself both the first and the last sacrifice; our souls were forfeited, and his must go to redeem the forfeitures. The price must be paid into the hands of God, the Father offended by sin; to him he had undertaken to make full satisfaction. Now by these words he offered up the Sacrifice, did, as it were, lay his hand upon the head of it, and surrender it; τιμησε ἐμεί, I deposit it, I pay it down into the hands. Father, accept of my life and soul instead of the lives and souls of the sinners I die for. (The animus offensionis—the good will of the Offerrer was requisite to the acceptance of the Offering. Now Christ here expresses his cheerful willingness to offer himself, as he had done when it was first proposed to him, (Heb. 10. 9, 10.) Lo, I come to do thy will, by the which will we are sanctified.

4. Christ hereby signifies his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection, by the re-union of his soul and body. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be received into paradise, and returned the third day. By this it appears that our Lord Jesus, as he had a true body, so he had a reasonable soul, which existed in a state of separation from the body, and thus he was made like unto his brethren; this soul he lodged in his Father's hand, committed it to his custody, resting in hope that it should not be left in hades, in its state of separation from the body, no, not so long as that the body might see corruption.

5. Christ hath hereby left us an example; hath fitted those words of David to the purpose of dying saints, and hath, as it were, sanctified them for their use. In death our great care should be about our souls, and we cannot more effectually provide for the same than we may now commit them to the hands of God as a Father, to be sanctified and governed by his Spirit and grace, and at death by committing them into his hands to be made perfect in holiness and happiness. We must show that we are freely willing to die, that we firmly believe another life after this, and are desirous of it, by saying, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.

11. Christ's dying improved by the impressions it made upon those that attended him.

1. The centurion that had command of the guard, and was the soldier that stood over against him, (Matth. 27. 54.) was a man without religious principles, and yet he glorified God. He never saw such amazing instances of divine power, and therefore took occasion from thence to adore God as the Almighty. And he bore a testimony to the patient Sufferer; "Certainly this was a righteous Man, and was unjustly put to death." God's manifest mercies to Christ were a clear evidence of his innocence. His testimony in Matthew and Mark goes further; Truly this was the Son of God. But in his case this amounts to the same; for if he was a righteous Man, he said very truly when he said that he was the Son of God; and therefore that testimony of his concerning himself must be admitted, for if it were false, he was not a righteous man.

2. The disinterested spectators could not but be concerned. This is taken notice of only here; (v. 48.) All the people that came together to that night, as is usual upon such occasions, beholding the things which were done, could not but go away very seriously for the time, whatever they were when they came home; they smote their breasts, and returned. (1.) They laid the thing very much to heart, v. 54. They were obliged upon their own principles to condemn him to death, and could not but think that some judgment of God would come upon their nation for it. Probably, those very people were of these that had cried, Crucify him, crucify him, and, when he was nailed to the cross, reviled and blasphemed him; but now they were so terrified with the darkness and earthquake, and the uncommon manner of his expiring, that they had not only their mouths stopped, but their consciences startled, and, in remorse for what they had done, as the publican, they smote upon their breasts, beat upon their own hearts, as those that had indignation at themselves. Some think that this was a happy step toward that good work which was afterward wrought upon them, when they were pricked to the heart, Acts 2. 57. (2.) You may see how the fear of the Lord, that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, smites at the heart. They smote their breasts, and returned. They see Christ's face in the glass of the ordinances and admire him; but they go away, and straightforward forget what manner of Man he is, and what reason they have to love him.

3. His own friends and followers were forced to keep their distance, and yet got as near as they could, and durst, to see what was done; (v. 48.) All his acquaintance that knew him, and were familiar with him, would not come to take them for certain prodigies of his resurrection. Now was Christ set for a Sign that should be spoken against, as Simeon foretold, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, ch. 2. 34, 35.
50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just; (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews; who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. 52. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. 53. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. 54. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. 55. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. 56. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

We have here an account of Christ's burial. For he must be brought not only to death, but to the dust of death, (Ps. 22. 15.) according to the sentence, (Gen. 3. 19.) To the dust thou shalt return. Observe,

Who buried him. His acquaintance stood afoot; they had neither money to bear the charge, nor courage to bear the aditus, of burying decently; but God raised up one that had both; a man named Joseph, v. 50. His character is, that he was a good man, and a just, a man of unsotted reputation for virtue and piety; not only just to all, but good to all that needed him; (and care to bury the dead, as becomes the hope of the resurrection of the dead, is one instance of goodness and benevolence;) he was a person of quality, a counsellor, a senator, a member of the sanhedrim, one of the elders of the Jewish church. Having said this of him, it was necessary to add, that though he was of that body of men who had put Christ to death, yet he had not consented to their counsel and deed; (v. 51.) though it was carried by the majority, yet he entered his protest against it, and followed not the multitude to do evil. Note, That evil counsel and deed shall not be reckoned our act, which we have not consented to. Nay, he not only disowned openly from those that were enemies to Christ, but he consented secretly with those that were his friends; He himself waited for the kingdom of God; he believed the Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected the accomplishment of them. This was the man that appears upon this occasion to have been a true respecter of the Lord Jesus. Note, There are many who are hearty in Christ's interests, who, though they do not make any show in their outward profession of it, yet will be more ready to do him a piece of real service, when there is occasion, than others who make a greater figure and noise.

What he did toward the burying of him. (1.) He went to Pilate, the judge that condemned him, and begged the body of the dead, for it was at his disposal; and though he might have reason sufficient to have carried off the body by violence, yet he would take the regular course, and do it peaceably. (2.) He took it down, it should seem, with his own hands, and wrapped it in linen. They tell us that it was the manner of the Jews, (and that the word here used signifies so much,) to roll the bodies of the dead as we do little children in their swaddling clothes; so that the piece of fine linen which he bought whole, he cut into many pieces for that purpose. It is said of Lazarus, He was bound hand and foot, John 11. 44. Grave clothes are to the same, as swaddling clothes, which they shall out-grow, and put off, when they come to the perfect man.

3. Where he was buried; in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, that the prison of the dead might be made strong at the church, when she was brought into darkness, had her way inclinded with hewn stone, Lam. 3. 2, 9. But it was a sepulchre in which never man before was laid, for he was buried on such an account as never any one before him was buried, only in order to his rising again the third day by his own power; and he was to triumph over the grave so as never any man did.

4. When he was buried; (v. 54.) on the day of the preparation, when the sabbath drew on. This is given as a reason why they made such haste with the funeral, because the sabbath drew on, which required their attendance to other work, preparing for the sabbath, and going forth to welcome it. Note, Weeping must not hinder seeing. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they must apply themselves to the sanctifying of the sabbath. And when the sabbath draws on, there must be preparation. Our worldly affairs must be so ordered, that they may not hinder us from our sabbath-work; and our holy affections must be so excited, that they may carry us on in it.

5. Who attended the funeral; (v. 55.) not any of the disciples, but only the women that came with him from Galilee, (v. 55.) who, as they stood by him when he died, so they stood by him when he rose, followed him; for they wept all in tears, no doubt, and beheld the sepulchre where it was, which was the way to it, and how his body was laid in it. They were led to this, not by their curiosity, but by their affection to the Lord Jesus, which was strong as death, cruel as the grave, and which many waters could not quench. Here was a silent funeral, and not a solemn one, and yet his rest was glorious.

6. What preparation was made for the embalming of his body after he was buried; (v. 56.) They returned, and prepared spices and ointments, which was more an evidence of their love than of their faith; for had they remembered and believed what he had so often told them, that he should rise again the third day, they would have spared their cost and pains herein, as knowing that in a short time there would be a great and honourable put from his body by the glory of his resurrection, than they could put upon it with their most precious ointments; but, busy as they were in this preparation, they rested on the sabbath-day, and did none of this service work thereon, not according to the custom of their nation, but according to the commandments of their God, which, though the day be altered, is still in full force; Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

CHAP. XXIV.

Our Lord Jesus went gloriously down to death, in spite of the machinations of his enemies, who thought his death ignominious; but he rose again more gloriously; of which we have an account in this chapter: and the proofs and evidences of Christ's resurrection are more fully related by this evangelist than they were by Matthew and Mark. Here is, I. Assurance given by two angels, to the women who visited the sepulchre, that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead, according to his own word, which the angels refer them to, v. 11. II. The tidings which Peter and John brought to the sepulchre, and his discovery there, v. 12. III. Christ's conference with the two disciples that were going to Emmaus, and his making of himself known to them, v. 13. To this he may be added his appearing to the eleven themselves, the same day at even, v. 36, 48. 4. The farewell he gave them, his ascension into heaven, and the joy and praise of his disciples whom he left behind, v. 49, 50.

1. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning;
they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. 2. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: 5. And, as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee. 7. Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

The manner of the re-uniting of Christ's soul and body in his resurrection, is a mystery, one of the secret things that belong not to us; but the infallible proofs of his resurrection, that he did indeed rise from the dead, and was thereby proved to be the Son of God, are things revealed, which belong to us and to our children; some of them we have here in these verses which relate the same story, for substance that we had in Matthew and Mark.

1. We have here the affection and respect which the good women that had followed Christ, showed to him, after he was dead and buried, v. 1. As soon as ever they could, after the sabbath was over, they came to the sepulchre, to embalm his body, not to take it out of the linen in which Joseph had wrapped it, but to anoint the head and face, and perhaps the wounded hands and feet, and to scatter sweet spices upon and about the body; as it is usual with us to strew flowers about the dead bodies and graves of our friends, only to show our good will toward the taking off the deformity of death, if we could, and to make them somewhat the less loathsome to those that are about them. The zeal of those good women for Christ did good face, and the spices which they had prepared the evening before the sabbath, at a great expense, they did not, upon the second thoughts, when they had slept upon it, dispose of otherwise, suggesting, To what purpose is this waste? But they brought them to the sepulchre on the morning after the sabbath, early, very early. It is a rule of charity, Every man, according as he had purposes in his heart, so let him give, 2 Cor. 9. 7. What is prepared for Christ, let it be used for him. Notice is taken of the names of these women, Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James; grave matronly women, r. should seem they were. Notice is also taken of certain others with them; (v. 1.) and again, v. 10. These that had not joined in preparing the spices, would yet go along with them to the sepulchre; as if the number of Christ's friends increased when he was dead, John 12. 24, 32. The daughters of Jerusalem, when they saw how inquisitive the spouse was, were desirous to seek him with her; (Cant. 6. 1.) so were these other women. The zeal of some provokes others.

II. The surprise they were in, when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave empty; (v. 2, 3.) they were much perplexed at that (v. 4.) which they had much reason to rejoice in, that the stone was rolled away from the sepulchre, (by which it appeared that there was a legal discharge, and leave to come out,) and that they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, by which it appeared that he had made use of his discharge, and was come out. Note. Good Christians often perplex themselves about that with which they should comfort and encourage themselves.

III. The plain account which they had of Christ's resurrection, from two angels that appeared to them in shining garments, not only white, but bright, and casting a lustre about them; they first saw one angel without the sepulchre, who presently went in, and sat with another angel in the sepulchre, one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain; so the evangelists may be reconciled.

The women, when they saw the angels, were afraid lest they had some ill news for them; but, instead of inquiring of them, they bowed down their faces to the earth, to look for their dear master in the grave. They would rather find him in his grave-clothes, than angels themselves in their shining garments. A dying Jesus has more beauty in the eyes of a believer than angels themselves. These women, like the spouse, when found by the watchmen, (and angels are called watchers,) enter not into any other conversation with them, than, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? Now here, 1. They.uphield the women with the absurdity of the search they were making; (v. 5.) Why seek ye the living among the dead? Witness is hereby given to Christ, that he is living, of him it is witnessed, that he liveth, (Heb. 7. 8.) and it is the same as if the evangelists had said, that there is a life in him, for he lives; because he lives we shall live also. But a reproof is given to those that look for him among the dead; among the dead heroes that the Gentiles worshipped, as if he were but like one of them, that look for him in an image, or a crucifix, the work of men's hands, or among unwritten traditions and the inventions of men. And indeed all they that expect happiness and satisfaction in the creature, or perfection in this imperfect state, may be said to seek the living among the dead.

2. They assure them that he is risen from the dead; (v. 6.) "He is not here, but is risen, is risen by his own power; he has quitted his grave, to return no more to it." These angels were competent witnesses, for they had been sent express from heaven with orders from his Father; and we are sure that their record is true; they first not tell a lie.

3. They refer them to his own words; Remember what he spoke to you, when he was yet in Galilee. If they had duly believed and observed the prediction of it, they would easily have believed the thing itself when it came to pass; and therefore, that the tiding might not be such a surprise to them as it seemed to be, he repeats to them what Christ had often said, in their hearing, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men; and though it was done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, yet they that did it, were
not the less sinful for doing it; he told them that he must be crucified, surely they could not forget that which they had with so much concern seen fulfilled; and would not that bring to their mind that which always followed, The third day he shall rise again? Or more, words from heaven bring not any new gospel, but put them in mind, as the angels of the churches do, of the sayings of Christ, and teach them how to improve and apply them.

IV. Their satisfaction in this account, v. 8. The women seemed to acquiesce; they remembered his words, when they were thus put in mind of them, and concluded from thence, that if he were risen, it was now the proper season to take them. But now they were ashamed of the preparations they had made to embalm him on the third day, who had often said that he would on the third day rise again. Note, A reasonable remembrance of the words of Christ will help us to a right understanding of his providence.

V. The report they brought of this to the apostles, they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest of Christ's disciples, v. 9. It does not appear that they were together in a body, they were scattered every one to his own, perhaps scarcely two or three of them together in the same lodgings, but one went to some of them, and another to others of them, so that in a little time, that morning, they got them all in notice of it. But we are told (v. 11.) how the report was received; Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. They thought it was only the fancy of the women, and imputed it to the power of imagination; for they also had forgotten Christ's words, and wanted to be put in mind of them, not only what he had said to them in Galilee some time ago, but what he had said very lately in the night wherein he was betrayed. Again a little while, and ye shall see me, I will see you again. One would be amazed at the stupidity of these disciples, who had themselves so often professed that they believed Christ to be the Son of God and the true Messiah, had been so often told that he must die, and rise again, and then enter into his glory, had seen him more than once raise the dead, that they should be so backward to believe him raising him from the dead. It would have been the less strange in them, (when hereafter this complaint would justly be taken up by them,) to remember that there was a time when it might justly have been taken up against them, Who hath believed our report?

VI. The inquiry which Peter made hereupon, v. 12. It was Mary Magdalene that brought the report to him, as appears, John 20. 1, 2. where this story of his running to the sepulchre, is more particularly related. 1. Peter hastened to the sepulchre, upon the report; perhaps ashamed of himself, to think that Mary Magdalene should have been there before him; and yet, perhaps, he had not been so ready to go thither now, if the woman had not told him, among other things, that the watch was fled. Many that are swift-footed enough when there is no danger, are but cow-herds when there is. Peter now ran to the sepulchre, who but the other day ran from his Master. 2. He looked into the sepulchre, and took notice how orderly the linen clothes in which Christ was wrapped, were taken off, and folded up, and laid by themselves, but the body gone. He was very particular in making his observations, as if he would rather credit his own eyes, than the testimony of the angels. He went away, as he thought, not much the wiser, wonderling in himself at that which was come to pass. Had he remembered the words of Christ, even this was enough to satisfy him that he was risen from the dead; but, having forgotten them, he is only amazéd with the thing, and knows not what to make of it. There is many a thing puzzling and perplexing to us, which would be both plain and probable, if we did but rightly understand the words of Christ, and had them ready to us.

13. And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about thirty-two furlongs. 14. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15. And it came to pass, that while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18. And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19. And he said unto them, what things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. 21. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. 22. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: 23. And when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said; but him they saw not. 25. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

26. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27. And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28. And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 29. But they constrained him saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. 30. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31. And their eyes were opened,
We may observe it for our encouragement to keep up Christian conference and utilizing discourse among the disciples, where both two together are well employed in work of that kind, Christ will come to them, and make a third. When they that fear the Lord, speak one to another, the Lord heartens and hearts, and is with them of a truth; so that two thus twisted in faith and love become a threefold cord, not easily broken, Eccl. 4. 12. They in their communings and reasonings together were searching for Christ, and comparing with what they had heard concerning him, that they may come to more knowledge of him: and now Christ comes to them. Note, They who seek Christ shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. When the spouse inquired of the watchmen concerning her Beloved, it was but a little that she passed from them, but she returned that night. But though they had Christ with them, they were not at first aware of it; (v. 16.) Their eyes were held that they should not know him: it should seem, there were both an alteration of the object, (for it is said in Mark, that now he appeared in another form,) and a restraint upon the organ; for here it is said, that their eyes were held by a divine power; as in Song 5. 3. This was a metaphor, they were taken aback; the air was so disposed, that they could not discern who it was. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him; Christ so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him and he with them; and that it might appear that his word, and the influence of it, did not depend upon his bodily presence, which the disciples had too much detracted upon, and must be weaned from; but he could teach them, and warm their hearts, by others, who should have his spiritual presence with them, and should have his grace going along with them unseen.

III. The conference that was between Christ and them, when he knew them, and they knew not him. Now Christ and his disciples, as is usual when friends meet incognito, or in disguise, are here cross-questioning. 1. Christ's first question to them is concerning their present sadness, which plainly appeared in their countenances; (v. 17.) What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? It is a very kind and friendly inquiry. Observe, 1. (They were sad;) it appeared to a stranger that they were so. [1.] They had lost their dear Master, and were, in their own apprehensions, quite disappointed in their expectations from him. They had given up the cause and knew not what course to take to retrieve it. Note, Christ's disciples have reason to be sad when he withdraws from them; to fast when the Bridegroom is taken from them. [2.] Though he was risen from the dead, yet they did not know him, and so they were still in sorrow. Note, Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful even then when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith they cannot take the comfort that is offered to them. [3.] Being sad, they had communications one with another concerning Christ. Note, First, It becomes Christians to talk of Christ. After their hearts had been broken by him, and so they lost him, they had the more reason to talk of him, and to speak of what he had done and suffered for us, as they should be, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak, not only of God and his providence, but of Christ and his grace and love. Secondly, Good company and good converse are an excellent antidote against prevailing melancholy. When Christ's disciples were sad they did not each one get by himself, but considered as he sent them out, two and two, for two are better than one, especially in times of sorrow. Giving vent
to the grief, may perhaps give ease to the grieved; and by talking it over we may talk ourselves, or our friends may talk us, into a better frame. Jointmourners should be mutual comforters; comforts sometimes come best from such.

(2.) Christ came up to them, and inquired into the matter of their talk, and the cause of their grief; What manner of communications are these? Though Christ was now entered into his state of glory, yet he was tender of his disciploes, and concerned for their comfort. He speaks as one troubled to see their melancholy; Wherefore look you so sad to day? Gen. 40. 7. Note, Our Lord Jesus takes notice of the sorrow and sadness of his disciples, and is afflicted in their afflictions. Christ has hereby taught us, [1.] To be conversable. Christ here fell into discourse with two grave, serious persons, though it were to a Stranger, and one that knew not him, and they readily embraced him. It does not become Christians to be morose and shy, but to take pleasure in good society. [2.] We are hereby taught to be compassionate. When we see our friends in sorrow and sadness, we should, like Christ here, take cognizance of their grief, and give them the best counsel and comfort we can; Weep with them that weep.

(3.) He, who was full of compassion, to have a civil answer. He does not rudely ask him, "As for what we are talking of, what is that to you?" and bid him go about his business. Note, We ought to be civil to those who are civil to us, and to conduct ourselves obligingly to all, both in word and deed. It was a dangerous time now with Christ's disciples; yet he was not jealous of this Stranger, that he had any design upon them, to inform against them, or bring them into trouble. Charity is not forward to think evil, no not of strangers.

(2.) He is full of Christ himself, and of his death and sufferings, and wonders that every body else is not so too; "What! art thou such a stranger in Jerusalem, as not to know what has been done to our Master there?" Note, Those are strangers indeed in Jerusalem, that know not of the death and sufferings of Christ. What are they daughters of Jerusalem, and yet so little acquainted with Christ, as to ask, What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?

(3.) He is very willing to inform this stranger concerning Christ, and to draw on further discourse with him on this subject. He would not have any one that had the face of a man, to be ignorant of Christ. Note, Those who have themselves the knowledge of Christ crucified, should do what they can to spread that knowledge, and lead others into an acquaintance with him. And it is observable, These disciples that were so forward to instruct the Stranger, were instructed by him; for to him they had been used as a man, so he gave.

(4.) It appears, by what Cleopas says, that the death of Christ made a great noise in Jerusalem, so that it could not be imagined that any man should be such a stranger in the city, as not to know of it; it was all the talk of the town, and discoursed of in all companies. Thus the matter of fact came to be universally known, which, after the pouring out of the Spirit, was to be explained.

(1.) Those who are asked concerning their knowledge; (v. 19.) He said unto them, What things? thus making himself yet more a Stranger. Observe,

(1.) Jesus Christ made light of his own sufferings, in comparison with the joy set before him, which was the recompense of it. Now that he was entering upon his glory, see with what unconcernedness he looks back upon his sufferings; What things? He had reason to know what things; for to him they were bitter things, and heavy things, and yet he asks, What things? The sorrow was forgotten, for joy that the Man-Child of our salvation was born. He took pleasure in infinities for our sakes, to teach us to do so for his sake.

(2.) Those whom Christ will teach, he will first make sure that they know what he is going to tell them what things they know, and then he will tell them what was the meaning of these things, and lead them into the mystery of them.

4. They, hereupon, give him a particular account concerning Christ, and the present posture of his affairs. Observe the story they tell, v. 19, &c.

(1.) Here is a summary of Christ's life and character. The things they are full of, are concerning Jesus of Nazareth, and are so much to the purpose, that their principal discourse, when they met with him, was concerning this. He was a Prophet, a Teacher come from God. He preached a true and excellent doctrine, which had manifestly its rise from heaven, and its tendency toward heaven; he confirmed it, by many glorious miracles, miracles of mercy, so that he was mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; that is, he was both a great Favourite of Heaven and a great favourite of mankind; he was fitting to be and appeared to be greatly beloved of God, and much the darling of his people. He had great acceptance with God, and a great reputation in the country. Many are great before all the people, and are exalted by them, who are not so before God, as the Scribes and Pharisees; but Christ was mighty both in his doctrine and in his doings, before God and all the people. Those were strangers in Jerusalem, that did not know this.

(2.) Here is a modest narrative of his sufferings and death, v. 20. Though he was so dear both to God and man, yet the chief priests and our rulers, in contempt of both, delivered him to the Roman power, to be condemned to death, and they have crucified him. It is strange that they did not aggravate the matter more, and lay more hand upon those that had been guilty of crucifying Christ; but perhaps because they spake to one that was a Stranger, they thought it prudence to avoid all reflections upon the chief priests and their rulers, how just soever.

(3.) Here is an intimacy of their disappointment in him, as the reason of their sadness; We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel, v. 21. We are of those who not only looked upon him to be a Prophet, like Moses, but, like him, a Redeemer too; he was depended upon, and great things expected of him; by them they looked for redemption, and in it for the consolation of Israel. Now, if hope deferred makes the heart sick, hope disappointed, especially such a hope, kills the heart. But see how they made that the ground of their despair, which, if they had understood it aright, was the surest ground of their hope—and that was the dying of the Lord Jesus; We trusted (say they) that he had been the one, and yet he is not. And is it not he that doth redeem Israel? Nay, is he not by his death paying the price of their redemption? Was it not necessary, in order to his saving Israel from their sins, that he should suffer? So that now that most difficult part of his undertaking was got over, they had more reason than ever to trust this is he that shall deliver Israel; yet now those are ready to give up the cause.

(4.) Here is a precedent of their present arrangement, with reference to his resurrection. [1.] "This is the third day since he was crucified and died, and that was the day, when it was expected, if ever, that he should rise again, and arise in glory and outward pomp, and show himself as publicly in honour as he had been shown three days before in disgrace; but we see no sign of it; nothing appears as
we expected, to the conviction and confession of his prosecutors, and the consolation of his disciples, but all is silent." [2] They own that there was a report among them, that he was risen, but they seem to speak of it very slightly, and as what they gave no credit at all to; (v. 22, 23.) "Certain women also of our company made us astonished, (and that was all,) and, after they were come out of the sepulchre, found the body gone, and they said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive; but we are ready to think it was only their fancy, and no real thing, for angels would have been sent to the apostles, not to the women, and women are easily imposed upon." [3] They acknowledge that some of the apostles had made a visit to the sepulchre; (v. 14.) but (says he) his body was gone, not, and therefore we have reason to fear that he is not risen, for if he were, surely he would have showed himself to them; so that upon the whole matter, we have no great reason to think that he is risen, and therefore have no expectations from him now; our hopes were all nailed to his cross, and buried in his grave.

I. Of Jesus, though not known by face to them, makes himself known to them by his word. [1] He reproves them for their incogitancy, and the weakness of their faith in the scriptures of the Old Testament; (v. 25.) O fools, and slow of heart to believe. When Christ forbade us to say to our brother, Thou fool, it was intended to restrain us from giving unreasonable reproaches, not from giving just reproaches. Christ called them fools, not as it were the wrong end to which we are often led by our notions of human infamy, and as we use it as a term of reproach; but as it signifies weak men. He might call them fools, for he knows our foolishness, the foolishness that is bound in our hearts. They are fools, that act against their own interest; so they did, who would not admit the evidence given them that their Master was risen, but put away the comfort of it. That which is condemned in them as their foolishness, is, First, Their slowness to believe. Believers are branded as fools by atheists and infidels and free-thinkers, and their most holy faith censured as a fond credulity; but Christ tells us that these are fools, who are slow of heart to believe, and are kept from it by prejudices never impartially examined. Secondly, Their slowness to believe the writings of the prophets. He does not so much blame them for their slowness to believe the testimony of Believers and of the angels, but for that which was the cause thereof—their slowness to believe the prophets; for if they had given the prophets of the Old Testament their due weight and consideration, they would have been as sure of Christ's rising from the dead that morning, (being the third day after his death,) as they were of the rising of the sun; for the series and succession of events as settled by prophecy, are no less certain and invariable than the sepulchre, by Pro¬
vidence; were we but more conversant with the scripture, and the divine counsels as far as they are made known in the scripture, we should not subject to such perplexities as we often entangle ourselves in.

[2] He shows them that the sufferings of Christ, which were such a stumbling-block to them, and made them so unapt to believe the scriptures, were the appointed way to his glory, and he could not go to it any other way; (v. 26.) "Ought not the Christ (the Messiah) to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? Was it not decreed, and was that decreed declared, that the promised Messiah must first suffer, and then reign, that he must go by his cross to his crown?" Had they never read the prophecy of Isaiah, and the prophet of Da¬

niel, where the prophets speak so very plainly of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow? 1 Pet. 11. The cross of Christ was that they could not reconcile themselves to; now here he shows them two things, which take off the offence of the cross; First, That the Messiah ought to suffer these things; and therefore his sufferings were not only no objection against his being the Messiah, but really a proof of it, as the afflictions of the saints are an evidence of their sonship; and they were not the signs of avarice, but of a spirit of the highest generosity. Secondly, That, when he had suffered these things, he should enter into his glory; which he did at his resurrection, that glory being a foreknowledge; (v. 27.) But now was the glory; because he was duly entitled to it; and it was the glory he had before the world was; he ought to enter into it, for in that, as well as in his sufferings, the scripture must be fulfilled. He ought to suffer first, and then to enter into his glory; and thus the refraction of the cross is for ever rolled away; and we are directed to expect the crown of thorns, and the glory of its removal, in every place. Secondly, The things concerning Christ need to be expounded. The eunuch, though a scholar, would not pretend to understand them, except some man should guide him; (Acts 8. 31.) for they were delivered darkly, according to that dispensation: but now that the veil is taken away, the New Testament expounds the Old. Thirdly, Jesus Christ is himself the best Expounder of scripture, particularly the scriptures concerning himself; and even after his resurrection, it was in this way that he led people into the knowledge of the mystery concerning himself; not by advancing new notions independent upon the scripture, but by showing how the scripture was fulfilled, and turning them over to the study of them. Even the Apocalypse speaks of his coming, turning in their expectations of scriptures, and has continually an eye to them. If men believe not Moses and the prophets, they are incurable. Fourthly, In studying the scriptures, it is good to be methodical, and to take them in order; for the Old Testament light shone gradually to the perfect day, and it is good to observe how at sundry times, and in divers manners, (subsequent predictions involving and giving light to the preceding ones,) God spake to the fathers concerning his Son, by whom he has now spoken to us. Some begin their Bible at the wrong end, who study
the Revelation first; Christ has here taught us to begin at Moses. Thus far the conference between them.

IV. Here is the discovery which Christ at length made of himself to them. One would have given a deal for a copy of the sermon Christ preached to them by the way, of that exposition of the Bible which he gave them; but it is not thought fit that we should have it, we have the substance of it in other scriptures; the disciples are so charmed with it, that they think they are come too soon to their journey's end; but so it is; They drew nigh to the village whither they went; (v. 28.) where, it should seem, they determined to take up for that night. And there they parted from him.

1. They counted his stay with them; He made as though he would have gone further; he did not say that he would, but he seemed to them to be going further, and did not readily turn in to their friend's house, which it would not be decent for a stranger to do unless he was invited; he would have gone further, if they had not counted his stay; so that here was nothing like dissimulation in the case. If a strong wind were to carry away the verses of the Bible, as they think only that week, can be sure to find; and if he seem to draw off from us, it is but to draw out our importance; as here, they constrained him; both of them laid hold on him, with a kind and friendly violence, saying, Abide with us. Note, Those that would have Christ dwell with them, must invite him, and be importunate with him; though he is busy and preoccupied with others, yet if they press him, if it be only that week, he may, or that day, or that hour, or that hour and a half, or that moment, it will be so; he will not thrust himself rudely upon your house or company; but if you make it appear that you are freely desirous of him for your Guest or Companion, he knows not but he may accept your invitation; and this was all that Christ did, when he made as though he would have gone further. 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none but he, no word but his, could make our hearts burn within us as they did; it must be he that has the key of the heart, it could be no other." See here, (1.) What preaching is likely to do good—such as Christ's was; plain teaching, and which is familiar and level to our capacity—he talked with us by the way; and scriptural preaching—he opened the scripture to us, as he was seen doing himself. Ministers should show people their religion in their Bibles, and that they preach no other doctrine to them than what is there; they must show that they make that the fountain of their knowledge, and the foundation of their faith. Note, The expounding of those scriptures which speak of Christ, has a direct tendency to warm the hearts of his disciples and to comfort them. (2.) What hearing is likely to do good—that which makes the heart burn; when we are much affected with the things of God, especially with the love of Christ in dying for us, and have our hearts thereby drawn out in love to him, and drawn up in holy desires and devotions, then our hearts burn within us; when our hearts are raised and elevated, and are as the sapphire which is set upward toward God, and when they are kindled and carried out with a holy zeal and indignation against sin, both in others and in ourselves, and we are in some measure refined and purified from it by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then we may say, "Through grace our hearts are thus inflamed." 36. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39. Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. 40. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them. 44. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. 45. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. 46. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it befell Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48. And ye are witnesses of these things. 49. And, behold, I send before you him who shall be called the comforter, whom the Lord sent from heaven; he shall tell you whatsoever I have commanded you. So they, when they had heard this saying, prepared to depart; but observe, Peter does not here proclaim
night by the eleven; which we have an account of in these verses, as also John 20. 19. Observe,

I. The great surprise which his appearing gave them. He came in among them very seasonably, as they were comparing notes concerning the proofs of his resurrection; As they thus spake, and were ready perhaps to put it to the question, whether the proofs produced amounted to evidence of their Master's resurrection or no, and how they should proceed; Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and put it out of question. Note, Those who make the best use they can of their evidences for their comfort, may expect further assurances, and that the Spirit of Christ will witness with their spirits, (as Christ here witnessed with the disciples, and it is a most comfortable assurance, that the events which come home to concern our spiritual state, are of his own dispensation, not only to his disciples, but to all the children of God, and risen with Christ. Observe,

1. The comfort Christ spake to them; Peace be unto you. This intimates in general that it was a visit which Christ now made them, a visit of love and friendship, Though they had very unkindly deserted him in his sufferings, yet he takes the first opportunity of seeing them together; for he deals now as with children. They did not credit those who had seen him; therefore beareth he himself, that they might not continue in their disconsolate incredibility. He had promised that after his resurrection he would see them in Galleh; but so desirous was he to see them, and satisfy them that he anticipated the appointment, and sees them at Jerusalem. Note, Christ is often better than his word, but never worse. Now his first word to them was, Peace be unto you. What a happy day is this, when comfort is proffered, when dissolution of consolation. This was a common form of salutation among the Jews, and Christ would thus express his usual familiarity with them, though he was now entered into his state of exaltation. Many, when they are advanced, forget their old friends, and take state upon them; but we see Christ as free with them as ever. Thus Christ would at the first word intimate to them, that he did not come to quarrel with Peter for denying him, and the rest estranged from him; no, he came peaceably, to signify to them that he had forgiven them, and was reconciled to them. 2. The fright which they put themselves into; (v. 37.) They were terrified, supposing that they had seen a spirit, because he came in among them without any noise, and was in the midst of them ere they were aware. The word used denotes a terrible fright, as it is supposed, (a spirit, a spectre,) but the word here used is περίπτωμα, the word that properly signifies a spirit; they supposed it to be a spirit not clothed with a real body. Though we have an alliance and correspondence with the world of spirits, and are hastening to it; yet, while we are here in this world of sense and matter, it is a terror to us to have a spirit so far change its own nature as to become visible to us, and conversable with us, for it is something, and bodies something; very extraordinary. Observe here,

II. The great satisfaction which his discourse gave them; wherein we have,

1. The reproofs he gave them for their causeless fears; (v. 38.) Why are ye troubled, and why do fruitful thoughts arise in your hearts? Observe here,

(1.) That when at any time we are troubled, thoughts are apt to rise in our hearts, that do us hurt. Sometimes the trouble is the effect of the thoughts that arise in our hearts, our griefs and fears take rise from those things that are the creatures of our own fancy; sometimes the thoughts arising in the heart are the effect of the trouble, without any fightings, and then within are fears. These that are melancholy and troubled in mind, have thoughts arising in their hearts, which reflect dishonour upon God, and create disquiet to themselves. I am cut off from thy sight. The Lord has forsaken and forgotten me.

(2.) That many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are diseased, arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They were here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright. We forget that Christ is our elder Brother, and look upon him to be at as great a distance from us as the world of spirits is from this world, and therewith terrify ourselves. When Christ is by his Spirit convincing and humbling us, when he is by his providence trying and converting us, we mistake him, as if he designed our hurt, and that troubles us.

3. The proof he gave them of his resurrection, both for the silencing of their fears, by convincing them that he was not a spirit, and for the strengthening of their faith in that doctrine which they were to preach to the world, by giving them full satisfaction concerning his resurrection, which if not true, their faith and preaching were all vain. Two proofs he gives them.

(1.) He shows them his body, particularly his hands and his feet. They saw that he had the shape, and features, and exact resemblance of their Master; but is it not his ghost? No, saith Christ, behold my hands and my feet; you see I have hands and feet, and therefore have a true body; you may move these hands and feet, and therefore have a living body, and you see the marks of the nails in my hands and feet, and therefore it is my own body, the same that you saw crucified, and not a borrowed one. He lays down this principle—that a spirit has not flesh and bones, it is not compounded of gross matter, shaped into various members, and consisting of divers heterogeneous parts, as our bodies are. He does not tell us what a spirit is, and leaves us to consider what it is; but he shows us what it is not, (as the world of spirits,) but what it is not; It has no flesh and bones. Now hence he infers, It is I myself; whom you have been so intimately acquainted with, and have had such familiar conversation with; it is I myself, whom you have reason to rejoice in, and not to be afraid of. Those who know Christ aright, and know him as theirs, will have no reason to be terrified at his appearances, at his approaches. He appeals to their sight, shows them his hands and his feet, which were pierced with the nails. Christ retained the marks of them in his glorified body, that they might be proofs that it was he himself; and he was willing that they should be seen, he afterward showed them to Thomas, for he is not ashamed of his sufferings for us; little reason then need we to have doubt of the reality of ours for ourselves. As he showed his wounds here to his disciples, for the enforcing of his instructions to them, so he showed them to his Father, for the enforcing of his intercessions with him. He appears in heaven as a Lamb that had been slain; (Rev. 5. 6.) his blood speaks, Heb. 12. 24. He makes intercession in the virtue of his satisfaction; he says to the Father, as here to the disciples, Hold my hands and my feet, Zech. 13. 6, 7.

He appeals to their touch! Handle me, and see.
He would not let Mary Magdalene touch him at that time, John 20. 17. But the disciples here are entrusted to do it, that they who were to preach his resurrection, and to suffer for doing so, might be themselves abundantly satisfied concerning it. He bids them understand, that they might be convinced that he was not a spirit. If there were really no spirits, nor apparitions of spirits, (as by this and other instances it is plain that the disciples did believe there were,) this had been a proper time for Christ to have unawaded them, by telling them that there were no such things; but he seems to take it for granted that there have been, and may be, apparitions of spirits; else what need was there that he should make such much pains to prove that he was not one? There were many heretics in the primitive times, atheists I rather think they were, who said that Christ had never any substantial body, but that it was a mere phantasm, which was neither really born, nor truly suffered; such wild notions as these, we are told, the Valentinians and Manichaei had, and the followers of Simon Magus; they were called Demiurges and Pantheists. Blessed be God, these heresies are long since buried; and we know and are sure that Jesus Christ was no spirit or apparition, but had a true and real body, even after his resurrection. 

(2.) He eats with them, to show that he had a real and true body, and that he was willing to converse freely and familiarly with his disciples, as one friend with another. St. Paul speaks of a great stress upon this, (Acts 10. 41.) We did eat and drink with him, after he rose from the dead.

[1.] When they saw his hands and his feet, yet they knew not what to say, They believed not for joy, and wondered, v. 41. It was their infirmity, that they believed not, that yet they believed not, in the sight of his hands and his feet, as yet being unbelievers. This very much corroborates the belief of the resurrection, that the disciples were so slow to believe it. Instead of stealing away his body, and saying, He is risen, when he is not, as the chief priests suggested they would do, they are ready to say again and again, He is not risen, when he is. Their being incredulous of it at first, and insisting upon the utmost proofs of it, shows that when afterward they did believe it, and venture all upon it, it was not but upon the fullest demonstration of the thing that could be.

But though it was their infirmity, yet it was an excusable one; for it was not from any contempt of the evidence offered them, that they believed not: but, First, They believed not for joy, as Jacob, when he was told that Joseph was alive; they thought it too good news to be true. When the faith and hope are therefore weak, because the love and desires are strong, that weak faith shall be helped, and not rejected. Secondly, They wondered! they thought it not only too good, but too great, to be true, forgetting both the scriptures and the power of God.

[2.] For their further conviction and encouragement, he called for some meat. He sat down to meat with them, and therein he instance himself to their beholding, as he had said that he did eat with them; now lest that should be made an objection, he here did actually eat with them and the rest, to show how his body was really and truly returned to life; though he did not eat and drink, and converse constantly with them, as he had done, (and as Lazarus did after his resurrection, who not only returned to life, but to his former state of life;) that he might be more conprehensible to the economy of the state he was risen to.

They gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honey-corn, v. 42. The honey-corn, perhaps, was used as sauce to the broiled fish, for Canaan was a land flowing with honey. This was mean fare; yet, if it be the fare of the disciples, their Master will fare as they do, because in the kingdom of our Father they shall fare as he does, shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom.

3. The insight he gave them into the word of God, which they had heard and read, by which faith in the resurrection of Christ is wrought in them, and all the mysteries are opened.

(1.) He refers them to the word which they had heard from him, when he was with them, and puts them in mind of that as the angel had done; (v. 44.) There are the words which I said unto you in private, many a time, while I was yet with you. We should better understand what Christ doth, if we did but: better remember what he hath said, and had but the art of comprehending them together. (2.) He refers them to the word they had read in the Old Testament, which the word they had heard from him directed them to; All things must be fulfilled which were written. Christ had given them this general hint for the regulating of their expectations—that, whatever they found written concerning the Messiah, in the Old Testament, must be fulfilled in him; what was written concerning his sufferings, as well as what was written concerning his kingdom; those God had joined together in the prediction, and it could not be thought that they should be put asunder in the event. All things must be fulfilled, even the hardest, even the heaviest, even the vinegar, he could not die till he had that, because he could not till then say, It is finished. The same sense of their Old Testament prophecies is meant, as containing all of them things concerning Christ: The law of Moses, that is, the Pentateuch, or the five books written by Moses; the prophets, containing not only the books that are purely prophetical, but those historical books that were written by prophetical men; the Psalms containing the other writings, which they called the Hagiographa. And in the introduction of these two orders of books, the Scriptures are thus opened his will; but all proceeded from one and the same Spirit, who by them gave notice of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah; for to him bare all the prophets witness. (3.) By an immediate present work upon their minds, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, he gave them to apprehend the true intent and meaning of the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, and to see them all fulfilled in him; (v. 45.) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. In his discourse with the two disciples he took the veil from off the text, by opening the scriptures; here he took the veil from off the hearts, by opening the mind. Observe here, [1.] That Jesus Christ by his Spirit operates on the minds of men, on the minds of all that have access to our spirits, and can immediately influence them. It is observable, how he did now after his resurrection give a specimen of those two great operations of his Spirit upon the spirits of men; his enlightening of the intellectual faculties with a divine light, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, and his invigoration of the active powers of their minds, as a dew upon the grass, and not a thing which can be conceived by the reasons within them. [2.] Even good men need to have their understandings opened; for though they are not darkness, as they were by nature, yet in many things they are in the dark. David prayeth, Open mine eyes. Give me understanding. And St. Paul, who knows so much of Christ, sees his need to learn more. [3.] Christ's way of working faith in the hearts of his people is, by opening the understanding, to discern the evidence of those things that are to be believed. Thus he comes into the soul by the door, while Satan, as a thief and a robber clumbs up some other way. [4.] The design of opening the understanding is, that we may understand the scriptures; not that we may be wise above what is written, but that we may be wiser in what we
written, and may be made wise to salvation by it. The Spirit in the word, and the Spirit in the heart, is Christ's doxology, and it is Christ's command they must study, above their Bibles in this world; but they need to be learning still more and more out of their Bibles, and to grow more ready and mighty in the scriptures. That we may have right thoughts of Christ, and our mistakes concerning him rectified, there needs no more than to be made to understand the scriptures.

4. The instructions he gave them as apostles, who were to be employed in setting up his kingdom in the world. They expected, while their Master was with them, that they should be preferred to posts of honour, which they thought themselves quite disappointed of when he was dead. "No," saith he, "you are now to enter upon them; ye are to be witnesses of these things, (v. 48.) to carry the notice of them to all the world; must to report them as matter of news, but to assert them as true; and upon the trial of the great cause that has been so long depending between God and Satan, the issue of which must be, the casting down, and casting out, of the prince of this world. You are fully assured of these things yourselves, you are eye and ear witnesses of them; go and assure the world of them; and the same Spirit that has enlightened you, shall go along with you in the enlightening of others. Now here they are told,

(1.) What they must preach; they must preach the gospel, must preach the New Testament as the full accomplishment of the Old, as the continuation and conclusion of divine revelation. They must take their Bibles along with them, (especially when they preached to the Jews;) and Peter, in his first sermon to the Gentiles, directed them to consult the prophets, Acts 10. 43.) and must, in their sermons to the world, point out that it was written of old concerning the Messiah, how the glories and graces of his kingdom, and then must tell them how, upon their certain knowledge, all this was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus.

[1.] The great gospel-truth concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, must be published to the children of men; (v. 46.) Thus it was written in the sacred book of the divine counsels from eternity, the volume of that book of the covenant of redemption; and thus it was written in the open book of the Old Testament, among the things revealed; and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer, for the divine counsels must be performed, and care taken that no word of God fall to the ground. "Go, and tell the world," First, That Christ suffered, as it was written of him. Go, preach Christ crucified, be not ashamed of his cross, which was a sufferer ing Jesus. Tell them what he suffered, and why he suffered, and how all the scriptures of the Old Testament were fulfilled in his sufferings. Tell them that it behoved him to suffer, that it was necessary to the taking away of the sin of the world, and the deliverance of mankind from death and ruin; nay, it became him to be perfected through suffering. Secondly, That he rose from the dead on the third day, by which not only all the offence of the cross was rolled away, but he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and in this also the scriptures were fulfilled; (see 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4.) go, tell the world how often you saw him after he rose from the dead, and how intimately you conversed with him. Your eyes see" (as Joseph said to his brethren, when his discovering of himself to them was declared,) "that it is he, even he that spake thunto you, Gen. 45. 12. Go, and tell them, that he that was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of death and the grave." [2.] The great gospel-duty of repentance must be pressed upon the children of men. Repentance for sin must be preached in Christ's name, and by his authority, v. 47. All men everywhere must be called and commanded to repent, Acts 17. 30. And tell people that the God that made them, and the Lord that bought them, expects and requires that, immediately upon this notice given, they turn from the worship of the gods that they have made, to the worship of the God that made them; and not only so, but from serving the interests of the world and the flesh; they must turn to the service of God in spirit, until they have become sick of all sinful practices. Their hearts and lives must be changed, and they must be universally renewed and reformed."

[3.] The great gospel-privilege of the remission of sins must be proposed to all, and assured to all that repent, and believe the gospel. "Go, tell a guilty world, that stands convicted and condemned at God's bar, that an act of indemnity has passed the royal assent, which all that repent and believe will have the benefit of, and not only be pardoned, but preferred by. Tell them that there is hope concerning them."

[2.] To whom they must preach. Whither must they carry these proposals, and how far doth their commission extend? They are here told,

[1.] That they must preach this among all nations. Then the apostles, the sons of Noah after the flood, some one way and some another, and carry this light along with them wherever they go. The prophets had preached repentance and remission to the Jews, but the apostles must preach them to all the world. None are excepted from the obligations the gospel lays upon men to repent, nor are any excluded from those inestimable benefits which are included in the remission of sins, but all, that repent and believe, and of relief and impendence put a bar in their own door.

[2.] That they must begin at Jerusalem; there they must preach their first gospel sermon; there the gospel-church must be first formed; there the gospel-day must dawn, and thence that light shall go forth, which must take hold on the ends of the earth. And why must they begin there? First, Because this it was written, and therefore it behoved them to take this method. The word of the Lord must go forth from Jerusalem, Isa. 2. 3. And see Joel 2. 32.—3. 16. Obad. 21. Zech. 14. 8. Secondly, Because there the matters of fact, on which the gospel was founded, were transacted; and therefore there they were first attested, where if there had been any just cause for it, they might be best contested and disproved. So strong, so bright, is the first shining forth of the glory of the risen Redeemer, that it dares face those daring enemies of his, that had put him to an ignominious death, and sets them at defiance. "Begin at Jerusalem, that the chief priests may try their strength to crush the gospel, and may rage to see themselves disappointed."

Thirdly, Because he would give us a further example of forgiving enemies. Jerusalem had put the greatest affronts imaginable upon him, (both the rulers and the multitude,) that he might have been expected by name out of the act of indemnity; but no, so far from that, the first offer of gospel-grace is made to Jerusalem, and thousands there are in a little time brought to partake of that grace.

(3.) What assistance they should have in preaching. It is a vast undertaking that they are here called to, a very large and difficult province, especially considering the opposition this service would meet with, and the sufferings it would be attended with; if therefore they ask, Who is sufficient for these things? here is an answer ready, (v. 49.) Forth, I send the promise of my Father upon you, and we shall be endued with power from on high. He here assures them that in a little time the Spirit
should be poured out upon them in greater measure than ever, and they should thereby be furnished with all those gifts and graces which were necessary to their discharge of this great trust: and therefore they must tarried in Jerusalem, and not enter upon it till this be done. Note, [1.] Those who receive the Holy Ghost, are thereby endued with a power from on high, a supernatural power; a power above all of their own: it is from on high, and therefore draws the soul upward, and makes it to aim high. [2.] Christ's apostles could never have planted his gospel, and set up his kingdom in the world, as they did, if they had not been endued with such a power; and their admirable achievements prove that there was an excellency of power going along with them.

[5.] This power from on high was the promise of the Father, the great promise of the New Testament, as the promise of the coming of Christ was of the Old Testament. And if it be the promise of the Father, we may be sure that the promise is inviolable, and the thing promised inviolable. [4.] Christ would not leave his disciples till the time was just at hand for the performing of this promise. It was but ten days after the ascension of Christ that there came the descent of the Spirit. [5.] Christ's ambassadors must stay till they have their powers, and not venture upon their embassy till they have received full instructions and credentials; though, one would think, it was such a time now, for the preaching of the gospel, yet the preachers must tarry till they be endued with power from on high, and tarry at Jerusalem, though a place of danger, because this promise of the Father was to find them, Joel 2. 28.

50. And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. 51. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. 52. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53. And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

This evangelist omits the solemn meeting between Christ and his disciples in Galilee; but what he said to them there, and at other interviews, he subjoins to what he said to them at the first visit he made them on the evening of the day he rose; and has now 'nothing more to account for' but his ascension into heaven, which we have a very brief narrative of in our verses; in which we are told,

I. How solemnly Christ took leave of his disciples. Christ's design being to reconcile heaven and earth, and continue a Daysman between them, it was necessary that he should lay his hands on them both, and, in order thereunto, that he should pass and return. He had business to do in both worlds, and accordingly came from heaven to earth in his incarnation, to make the ground to his ascension; and being finished which, he returned to heaven, to reside there, and negotiate our affairs with the Father. Observe,

1. From whence he ascended; from Bethany, near Jerusalem, adjoining to the mount of Olives. There he had done eminent services for his Father's glory, and there he entered upon his glory. There was the garden, in which his sufferings began, there he was transfigured, and both his power and the house of sorrow. Those that would go to heaven, must ascend thither from the house of sufferings and sorrow, must go by agonies to their joys. The mount of Olives was pitched upon long since to be the place of Christ's ascension; (Zech. 14. 4.) 'His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. And here it was that a while ago he began his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, ch. 19. 29.

2. Who were the witnesses of his ascension? He led out his disciples to see him: probably, it was very strange and amazing that he ascended, before people were stirring, for he never showed himself openly to all the people after his resurrection, but only to chosen witnesses. The disciples did not see him rise out of the grave, because his resurrection was capable of being proved by their seeing him alive afterward: but they saw him ascend into heaven, because they could not otherwise have an ocular demonstration of his ascension. They were led out on purpose to see him ascend; had their eyes upon him when he ascended, and were not looking another way.

3. What was the farewell he gave them? He lifted up his hands, and blessed them. He did not go away in displeasure, but in love, he left a blessing behind him; he lifted up his hands, as the High-Priest did when he blessed the people; see Lev. 9. 22. He blessed as one having authority, commanded by the blessings which he had purchased; _he blessed them_ as Jacob blessed his sons. The apostles were now as the representatives of the twelve tribes, so that in blessing them he blessed all his spiritual Israel, and put his Father's name upon them. He blessed them as Jacob blessed his sons, and Moses the tribes, at parting, to show that, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 4. How he left them; While he was blessing them, he was parted from them; not as if he were taken away before he had said all he had to say, but to intimate that his being parted from them did not put an end to his blessing of them, for the intercession which he went to heaven to make for all his, is a continuation of that blessing. He began to bless them on earth, but he went to heaven to go on with it. Christ was now sending his apostles to preach his gospel to the world, and he gives them his blessing, not for themselves only, but to be conferred in his name upon all that should believe on him through their word, for in him all the families of the earth were to be blessed.

5. How his ascension is described. (1.) He was parted from them, was taken from their head, as Elijah from Elisha's. Note, The dearest friends must part. Those that love us, and pray for us, and instruct us, must be parted from us. The bodily presence of Christ himself was not to be expected always in this world; those that knew him after the flesh, must now henceforth know him so no more.

(2.) He was carried up into heaven; not by force, but by his own act and deed. As he arose, so he ascended, by his own power, yet attended by angels. There needed no chariot of fire, or horses of fire, he knew the way, and, being the _Lord from heaven_, could go back himself. He ascended in a cloud, as the angel in the smoke of Manoah's sacrifice, Judg. 13. 20.

II. How cheerfully his disciples continued their attendance on him, and on God through him, even now that he was parted from them.

1. They paid their homage to him at his going away, to signify that though he was going into a far country, yet they would continue his loyal subjects that were willing to have him reign over them; _They worshiped him_, v. 52. Note, Christ expects adoration from those that receive blessings from him. He was himself the object of veneration; in token of that, so long as they worshipped him. This fresh display of Christ's glory drew from them fresh acknowledgments and adorations of it. They knew that though he was parted from them, yet he could, and did, take no notice of their adorations of him; the cloud that received him out of their sight, did not put them or their services out of his sight.
2. They returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There they were ordered to continue till the Spirit should be poured out upon them, and thither they went accordingly, though it was into the mouth of danger. Thither they went, and there they stood with great joy. This was a wonderful change, and an effect of the opening of their understandings. When Christ told them that he must leave them, sorrow filled their hearts; yet now that they see him go, they are filled with joy, being convinced at length that it was expedient for them and for the church that he should go away, to send the Comforter. Note, The glory of Christ is the joy, the exceeding joy, of all true believers, even while they are here in this world; much more will it be so when they go to the new Jerusalem, and find him there in his glory.

3. They abounded in acts of devotion while they were in expectation of the promise of the Father, v. 53. (1.) They attended the temple-service at the hours of prayer; God had not as yet quite forsaken it, and therefore they did not. They were continually in the temple, as their Master was when he was at Jerusalem. The Lord loves the gates of Zion, and so should we. Some think that they had their place of meeting, as disciples, in some of the chambers of the temple which belonged to some Levite that was well affected to them; but others think that it is not likely that either could be concealed from, or would be connived at by, the chief priests and rulers of the temple. (2.) Temple-sacrifices, they knew, were superseded by Christ's sacrifice, but the temple-songs they joined in. Note, While we are waiting for God's promises, we must go forth to meet them with our praises. Praising and blessing God is work that is never out of season; and nothing better prepares the mind for the receiving of the Holy Ghost than holy joy and praise. Fears are silenced, sorrows sweetened and allayed, and hopes kept up.

The amen that concludes, seems to be added by the church and every believer to the reading of the gospel; signifying an assent to the truths of the gospel, and a hearty concurrence with all the disciples of Christ in praising and blessing God. Amen. Let him be continually praised and blessed.

AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

ST. JOHN.

It is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of that disciple whom Jesus loved; one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and agony. The ancients tell us, that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say that he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the heresy of Cerinthus and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a mere Man. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his Apocalypse, the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those latter fathers, who say that he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was a hundred saith another of them. However, it is clear that he wrote last of the four evangelists, and, comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe, 1. That he relates what they had omitted; he brings up the rear, and his gospel is as the reaper that follows the harvester, and gleans up what they had passed by. Thus there is some collection of Solomon's wise sayings, (Prov. 25. 1.) and yet far short of what he delivered, 1 Kings 4. 32. 2. That he gives us more of the mystery of that which the other evangelists give us only the history of. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach, Luke 1. 1. Acts 1. 1. But that being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, John goes on to perfection, (Heb. 6. 1.) not laying again the foundation, but building upon it; leading us more within the vail. Some of the ancients observe that the other evangelists wrote more of the σαρκικά—the bodily things of Christ; but John writes of the θεώσεως—the spiritual things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the key of the evangelists. Here it is that a door is opened in heaven, and the first voice we hear, is, Come up hither; come up higher. Some of the ancients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the four evangelists, make John himself to be the flying-eagle, so high doth he soar, and so clearly doth he see into divine and heavenly things.
in the soul? Surely then the generations and births of the eternal mind may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth.

There is the word. For in the word is speech, the chief and most natural indication of the mind. And thus Christ is the Word, for by him God has in these last days spoken to us. (Heb. 1. 2.) and has directed us to hear him, Mat. 17. 5. He has made known God's mind to us, as a man's word or speech makes known his thoughts, as far as he pleases, and no farther. Christ is called that wonderful speaker, (Dan. 8. 13.) the Speaker of things hidden and things to come. He is the Word speaking from God to us, and to God for us. John Baptist was the voice; but Christ the Word; being the Word, he is the Truth, the Amen, the faithful Witness of the mind of God.

II. What he said of him, enough, beyond any contradiction that he is God. He asserts,

1. His existence in the beginning; in the beginning was the Word. This speaks his existence, not only before his incarnation, but before all time. The beginning of Time, in which all creatures were produced and brought into being, found this eternal Word in being. The world was from the beginning, but the Word was in the beginning. Eternity is usually expressed by being before the foundation of the world. (Ps. 89. 10.) Before the foundation of the world, says our Lord, and by the Son, who is to be the first-born of all creation. So Prov. 8. 23. The Word had a being before the world had a beginning. He that was in the beginning never began, and therefore was ever

1. I. Whom he speaks of.—the Word—i. 

2. His co-existence with the Father; The Word was with God, and the Word was God. Let none say that when we invite them to Christ, we would draw them from God. For Christ is with God, and is God; it is repeated again, (v. 2.) the same, the very same that we believe in and preach, was in the beginning with God, that is, he was so from eternity.

In the beginning, the world was from God, as it was created by him; but the Word was with God, as ever with him. The Word was with God, (1.) In respect of essence and substance: for the Word was God, a distinct Person from God, as God; and was God, yet the same in substance, for he was in God, Heb. 1. 3. (2.) In respect of compleacence and felicity. There was a glory and happiness which Christ had with God before the world was: (ch. 17. 5.) the Son infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his Father's bosom, and no less the Father's Delight, the Son of his love, Prov. 8. 30. (3.) In respect of counsel and design. The mystery of man's redemption by this Word incarnate, was his in God, before all worlds, Eph. 3. 9. He that undertook to bring us to God, (1 Pet. 3. 18.) was himself from eternity with God; so that this grand affair of man's reconciliation to God was concerted between the Father and Son from Eternity, and they understand one another perfectly well in it, Zech. 8. 13. Matth. 11. 27. He was by him as one brought forth of the womb. Then for this sentence, Prov. 8. 30. He was with God, and therefore is said to come forth from the Father.

3. His agency in making the world, v. 3. This is here, (1.) Expressly asserted; All things were made by him. He was with God, not only so as to be acquainted with the divine counsels from eternity, but to be active in the divine operations in the beginning of the world, (2.) For he is the first-born of the Father; that eternal, essential Wisdom which the Lord possessed, as the soul doth its thought, in the beginning of his way, Prov. 8. 22. There is nothing we are more sure of than that we think; yet nothing we are more in the dark about than how we think; who can declare the generation of thought
made, that was made, from the highest angel to the nearest worm. God the Father did nothing without him in that work. Now, [1.] This proves that he is God; for he that built all things is God; Heb. 3. 4. The God of Israel often proved himself to be God, with this, that he made all things; (Isa. 40. 28, 29.) and see Jer. 10. 11, 12. [2.] This proves the excellency of the christian religion; the Author and Founder of it is the same that was the Author and Founder of the world. How excellent new creation is, which draws institution from him who is the Fountain of all excellency! When we worship Christ, we worship him to whom the patriarchs gave honour as the Creator of the world, and on whom all creatures depend. [3.] This shows how well qualified he was for the work of our redemption and salvation; help was laid upon one that was mighty indeed, for it was readily upon him that made all things; and he is appointed the Author of our bliss, who was the Author of our being.

4. The original of life and light that is in him; (v. 4.) In him was life. This further proves that he is God, and every way qualified for his undertaking; for, (1.) He has life in himself; not only the true God, but the living God. God is Life, he speaks by himself, when he saith, As I live. (2.) Also the light of life; for from him is the light of life, and all the matter of the creation was made by him, but all the life too that is in the creation, is derived from him, and supported by him. It was the word of God that produced the moving creatures that had life, Gen. 1. 20. Acts. 17. 25. He is that Word by which man lives, more than by bread, Mat. 4. 4. (3.) Reasonable creatures have their light from him, that life which is the light of men, comes from him. Life in a man is the same thing great and greater than it is in other creatures, it is rational, and not merely animal; when man became a living soul, his life was light, his capacities such as distinguished him from, and dignified him above, the beasts that perish. The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, and it was the eternal Word that lighted this candle. The light of reason, as well as the life of sense, is derived from him, and depends upon him. This proves him to be the great creator of life and light, spiritual and eternal life and light, are the two great things that fallen man, who lies so much under the power of death and darkness, has need of. From whom may we better expect the light of divine revelation than from him who gave us the light of human reason? And if when God gave us natural life, that life was in his Son, how inexactly should we receive the gospel-record, that he hath given us eternal life, and that life too is in his Son?

5. The manifestation of him to the children of men. It might be objected, If this eternal Word was all in all thus in the creation of the world, whence is it that he has been so little taken notice of and regarded? To this he answers. (v. 5.) The light shines, but the darkness comprehendeth it not. Observe, (1.) The discovery of the eternal Word to the lapsed world; even before he was manifested in the flesh; the light shineth in darkness. Light is self-evidencing, and will make itself known; this Light, from whence the light of men comes, hath shined, and doth shine. [1.] The eternal Word, as God, shines in the darkness of natural conscience. Though men by the fall are become darkness, yet that which was manifest of God, is manifest in them; see Rom. 1. 19, 20. The light of nature is this light shining in darkness. Something of the power of the divine word, both as creating and commanding, all mankind have an innate sense of; were it not for that, this earth would be a hell, a place of utter darkness; blessed be God, it is not so yet. [2.] The eternal Word, as Mediator, shone in the darkness of the Old-Testament types and figures, and the prophecies and promises which were of the Messiah from the beginning. He that had commanded the light of this world to shine out of darkness, was himself long a Light shining in darkness; there was a vail upon this light, 2 Cor. 3. 13.

6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13. Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

The evangelist design to bring in John Baptist bearing an honourable testimony to Jesus Christ. Now in these verses, before he does that,

I. He gives us some account of the witness he is about to produce. His name is John, which signifies gracious; his conversation was austere, but he was not less gracious. Observe,

1. We are told concerning him, in general, that he was a man sent of God. The evangelist had said concerning Jesus Christ, that he was with God, and that he was God; but here concerning John, that he was a man, a mere man; God is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves. John was a great man, but he was a man, a son of man, he was sent from God, yet was God's messenger, so he is called, Mal. 3. 1. God gave him both his mission and his message, both his credentials and his instructions. John wrought no miracle, nor do we find that he had visions and revelations; but the strictness and purity of his life and doctrine, and the direct tendency of both to reform the world, and to revive the interests
of God's kingdom among men, were plain indications that he was sent of God.

2. We are here told what his office and business were (v. 7.) To come again as a witness, an eye-witness of his everlasting-witness. He came not to send light, but was; [augs] for a witness. The legal institutions had been long a testimony for God in the Jewish church, by them revealed religion was kept up; hence we read of the tabernacle of the testimony, the ark of the testimony, the law and the testimony; but now divine revelation is to be turned into another channel; now the testimony of Christ is the testimony of the Highest, of the Lord (Cor. 1. 6.—2. 1.) Among the Gentiles, God indeed had not left himself without witness, (Acts 14. 17.) but the Redeemer had no testimonies borne him among them. There was a profound silence concerning him, till John Baptist came for a witness to him. Now observe,

(1.) The matter of his testimony; he came to bear witness of the light. Light is a thing which witnesses for itself, and carries its own evidence along with it; but to those who shut their eyes against the light, it is necessary there should be those that bear witness to it. Christ's light needs not man's testimony, but the world's darkness does. John was like the night watchman that goes round the town, proclaiming the approach of the morning light to those that have closed their eyes, and are not willing themselves to observe it; or like that watchman that was set to tell those who asked what of the night, that the morning comes, and if ye will inquire, inquire ye, Isa. 21. 11, 12. He was sent of God to tell the world that the longlooked for Messiah was now come, who should be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel; and that dispensation at hand, which would bring life and immortality to light.

(2.) The design of his testimony; that all men through him might believe; not in him, but in Christ, whose way he was sent to prepare. He taught men to look through him, and pass through him, to Christ; through the doctrine of repentance for sin, to that of faith in Christ. He prepared men for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel, by awakening them to a sight and sense of sin; and that, their eyes being thereby opened, they might be ready to admit those beams of divine light, which, in the person and doctrine of the Messiah, were now ready to shine in their faces. If they would but receive this witness of man, they would soon find that the witness of God was greater, 1 John 5. 37—43. Observe, that all men through him might believe, excluding none from the kind and beneficial influences of his ministry, that did not exclude themselves, as multitudes did, who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and so received the grace of God in vain.

3. We are here cautioned not to mistake him for the Light, who only came to bear witness to it; (v. 8.) He was sent not that Light that was expected and promised, but only was sent to bear witness of that great and ruling Light. He was a star, like that which guided the wise men to Christ, a morning-star; but he was not the Sun; not the Bridegroom, but a friend of the Bridegroom; not the Prince, but his harbinger. There were those who rested in this light, and looked on further, as the Ephesians, Acts 19. 3. To rectify this mistake, the evangelist here, when he speaks very honourably of him, yet shows that he must veil to Christ. He was great as the prophet of the Highest, but not the Highest himself. Note, We must take heed of overvaluing ministers, as well as of under-valuing them; they are not our lords, nor have they dominion over our faith; but ministers by whom we believe, stewards of our Lord's house. We must not give up ourselves by an implicit faith to their conduct, for they are not that light; but we must attend to, and receive, their testimony; for they are sent to bear witness of that Light; so then let us esteem of the things which are sent from God, as if he were to be that Light, he had not been so much as a faithful witness of that Light. Those who usurp the honour of Christ, forfeit the honour of being the servants of Christ; yet John was very serviceable as a witness to the Light, though he was not that Light. Those may be of great use to us, who yet shine with a borrowed light.

II. Before he goes on with John's testimony, he returns to give us a further account of this Jesus to whom John bore record. Having showed, in the beginning of the chapter, the glories of his God head, he here comes to show the graces of his incarnation, and his favours to man as Mediator.

1. Christ was the true Light; (v. 9.) not as if John Baptist were a false light, but, in comparison with Christ, he was a very small light. Christ is that great Light that deserves to be called so. Other lights are but figuratively and equivocally called so: Christ is the true Light. The Fountain of all knowledge and of all comfort must needs be the true Light. He is the true Light; for proof of it he does not refer us to the emanations of his glory in the world, but to the faith which he enlightens that, but to those rays of light which are darted downwards, and with which this dark world of ours is enlightened. But how does Christ lighten every man that comes into the world?

(1.) By his creating power he lightens every man with the light of reason; that life which is the light of men, is from him; all the discoveries and directions of reason, all the knowledge which he gives us, and all the beauty it puts upon us, are from Christ.

(2.) By the publication of his gospel to all nations he does in effect lighten every man. John Baptist was a light, but he enlightened only Jerusalem and Judea, and the region round about Jordan, like a candle that enlightens one room; but Christ is the true Light, for he is a Light to lighten the Gentiles. His everlasting gospel is to be preached to every nation and language, Rev. 14. 6. Like the sun which lightens every man that will open his eyes, and receive its light, (Ps. 19. 6.) to which the preaching of the gospel is compared, Rom. 10. 18. Divine revelation is not now to be confined, as it had been, to one people, but to be diffused to all people, Matth. 5. 15. (2.) By the operation of his Spirit and grace he lightens all those that are enlightened to salvation; and those that are not enlightened by him, perish in darkness. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is said to be in the face of Jesus Christ, and is compared with that light which was at the beginning commended to shine out of darkness, and which lightens every man that comes into the world. That there is no man that is indebted to Christ for it, whether it be natural or supernatural.

2. Christ was in the world; (v. 10.) He was in the world, as the essential Word, before his incarnation, upholding all things; but this speaks of his being in the world when he took our nature upon him, and dwelt among us; see ch. 16. 28. I am come into the world. The Son of the Highest was here in this world, and is hereafter to be seen by men, as a holy Thing in this sinful, polluted world. He left a world of bliss and glory, and was here in this melancholy, miserable world. He undertook to reconcile the world to God, and therefore was in the world, to treat about it, and settle that affair; to satisfy God's justice for the world, and discover God's favour to the world. He was in the world, but not of it, and speaks with an air of triumph, when he can say, Now I am no more in it, ch. 11. 11. The
greatest honour that ever was put upon this world, which is so mean and inconsiderable a part of the universe, was, that the Son of God was once in the world; and as it should engage our affections to think that it was the Messiah, and that should reconcile us to our present abode in this world, that once Christ was here. He was in the world for a while, but it is spoken of as a thing past; and so it will be said of us shortly. We were in the world. O that when we are here no more, we may be where Christ is! Now observe here,

(1.) What reason Christ had to expect the most admirable or complete settlement of the world, and the whole inhabitants of the world, as made possible in this world; for the world was made by him. Therefore he came to save a lost world, because it was a world of his own making. Why should not he concern himself to revive the light that was of his own kindling, to restore a life of his own infusing, and to renew the image that was originally of his own impressing? The world was made by him, and therefore he set to do his own Trouble.

(2.) What kind entertainment he met with, notwithstanding; The world knew him not. The great Maker, Ruler, and Redeemer of the world was in it, and few or none of the inhabitants of the world were aware of it. The as knows his owner, but the more brutish world did not; they did not own him, did not bid him welcome, because they did not know him; and they did not know him, because he did not appear in the way he was expected. In external glory and majesty. His kingdom came not with observation, because it was to be a kingdom of trial and probation. When he shall come as a Judge, the world shall know him. 3. He came to his own, (v. 11.) not only to the world, which was his own, but to the people of Israel, that were peculiarly his own above all people; of them he came, among them he lived, and in them he was esteemed to be the Son of God. To such a mean, desppicable people, the crown was fallen from their head; yet, in remembrance of the ancient covenant, bad as they were, and poor as they were, Christ was not ashamed to look upon them as his own. This is his own things; not these his own persons, as true believers are called ch. 13. 1. The Jews were his, as a man's house and lands and goods, and privileges and characters; but believers are his, as a man's wife and children are his own, which he loves and enjoys. He came to his own, to seek and save them, because they were his own. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, for it was he whose own the sheep were. Now observe,

(1.) That the generality rejected him; His own received him not. He had reason to expect that those who were his own, should have hidden him welcome, considering how great the obligations were, which they lay under to him, and how fair the opportunities were, which they had of coming to the knowledge of him. They had the oracles of God, which told them beforehand when and where to expect him, and of what tribe and family he should arise. He came among them himself, introduced with signs and wonders, and himself the greatest; and therefore it is not said of them, as it was of the world, (v. 10.) that they knew him not; but his own, though they could not but know him, yet they received him not; did not receive his doctrine, did not welcome him as the Messiah, but forsook themselves against him. The chief priests, that were in a particular manner his own, (for the Levites were God's tribe,) were ringleaders in this contempt put upon him. Now this was very unjust, because himself knew his own, and therefore he might command their respects; and it was very unknown and ungrateful, because he came to them, to seek and save them, and so to court their respect. Note, Many who in profession are Christ's own, yet do not receive him, because they will not part with their sins, nor have him to reign over them.

(2.) That yet there was a more remnant who owned him, and were true children to him. Though his own received him not, yet there were those that received him; (v. 12.) But as many as received him. Though Israel were not gathered, yet Christ was glorious. Though the body of that nation persisted and persisted in unbelief, yet there were many of them that were wrought upon to submit to Christ, and many more that were not of that fold. Observe here,

[3.] The best of them are not all of the same mind. How the image of God, and property; and that is, that he receives Christ, and believes on his name; the latter explains the former. Note, First, To be a christian indeed, is to believe on Christ's name; it is to assent to the gospel-discovery, and consent to the gospel-proposal, concerning him. His name is the Word of God; the King of kings; the Lord our Righteousness; Jesus a Saviour. Now to believe on his name, is to acknowledge that he is what these great names bespeak him to be, and to acquiesce in it, that he be so to us. Secondly, Believing in Christ's name is receiving him as a Gift from God. We must receive his doctrine as true and good; receive his law as just and holy; receive his offers as kind and advantageous; and we must receive the image of his grace, and impressions of his love, as the governing principle of our affections and actions.

[2.] The true christian's dignity and privilege are two-fold. First, The privilege of adoption, which takes them into the number of God's children; To them gave he power to become the sons of God. Hitherto, the adoption pertained only to the Jews only; (Israel is my son, my first born;) but now, by faith in Christ, Gentiles are the children of God. Theirs is a gift of adoption, by grace, not of nature, nor from the works of nature, nor from the works of law, nor from the works of righteousness which are in the law, but theirs is the adoption of God, Gentiles are not born children, but made such. Tertull. Behold what manner of love is this, 1 John 3. 1. God calls them his children, they call him Father, and are entitled to all the privileges of children; those of their way, and those of their home. 2. The privilege of adoption is entirely owing to Jesus Christ; he gave this power to them that believe on his name. God is his Father, and so are ours; and it is by virtue of our espousals to him, and union with him, that we stand related to God as a Father. It was in Christ that we were predestinated to the adoption; from him we receive both the character and the Spirit of adoption, and he is the First-born among many brethren. The Son of God became a Son of man, that the sons and daughters of men might become the sons and daughters of God Almighty.

Secondly, The privilege of regeneration; (v. 13.) which were born. Note, All the children of God are born again; all that are adopted, are regenerated. This real change evermore attends that relative one. Wherever God confers the dignity of children, he creates the nature and disposition of children. Men cannot do so, when they adopt. Now here we have an account of the original of this new birth. 1. Negatively. (1.) It is not from nature. By nature, they were children by nature. They were born of nature, not of grace. They sinned not, by nature, because they are children of nature. From nature they were not born. (2.) From corruption. It is not of corruption, but of corruption. Corruption was in the flesh, they were corrupted of nature. They were born of a corrupt nature, but not of corruption itself. They were born of nature, not of corruption.

1. Man is called flesh and blood, because thence he has his original; but we do not become the chil-
dren of God as we become the children of our natural parents. Note, Grace does not run in the blood, as corruption does. Man polluted begat a son in his own likeness; (Gen. 5. 3.) but God, through a new and holy instrument, begat a son in that likeness. The Jews gloried much in their parentage, and the noble blood that ran in their veins; We are Abraham’s seed, and therefore to them pertained the adoption, because they were born of that blood; but this New Testament adoption is not founded in any such natural relation. (2.) It is not produced by the natural birth, but by the will of God, by the will of the flesh, so neither is it of the will of man; that labours under a moral impotency of determining itself to that which is good; so that the principles of the divine life are not of our own planting, it is the grace of God that makes us willing to be his. Nor can human laws or writings prevail to sanctify and regenerate a soul; if they could, the new birth would be by the will of man. But, 2. Positively; it is of God. This new birth is owing to the word of God as the means, (1 Pet. 1. 23.) and to the Spirit of God as the great and sole Author. True believers are born of God, 1 John 3. 9. and 5. 1. And this is necessary to their adoption; for we cannot expect the love of God, if we have not something of his likeness, nor claim the privileges of adoption, if we be not under the power of regeneration.

4. The word was made Flesh, v. 14. This expresses Christ’s incarnation more clearly than what went before. By his divine presence he always was in the world, and by his prophets he came to his own. But now that the fulness of time was come, he was sent forth after another manner, made of a woman, (Gal. 4. 4.) God manifested in the flesh, according to the faith and hope of holy Job, (Job 19. 26.) Yet shall I see God in my flesh. Observe here,

(1.) The human nature of Christ with which he was vailed; and that expressed two ways.

[1.] The Word was made Flesh. Forasmuch as the children who were to become the sons of God, were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, Heb. 2. 14. The Seccinians agree that Christ is both God and man, but they say that he was Man, and was made God, as Moses, (Exod. 7. 1.) directly contrary to John here, who saith, Gw in—He was God, but say7 Fj-s—He was made Flesh. Compare v. 1. with this. This speaks not only that he was a truly and really man, but that he subjected himself to the miseries and calamities of the human nature. He was made Flesh, the meanest part of man. Flesh speaks man weak, and he was crucified through weakness, 2 Cor. 13. 4. Flesh speaks man mortal and dying, (Ps. 78. 39.) and Christ was put to death in the flesh, 1 Pet. 3. 18. Nay, flesh speaks man tainted with sin, (Gen. 6. 3.) and Christ, though he was perfectly holy and harmless, yet appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, (Rom. 8. 3.) and was made to bear our infirmities, (Isa. 53. 4.) and was given up to sin, (Rom. 5. 8.) as one accursed, (Deut. 21. 23.) the sword of death, (Ps. 88. 1.) and the accursed, (Ps. 69. 21.) and weaned from all comfort, and verily, (Rom. 8. 28.) and was made to be sin for us, (2 Cor. 5. 21.) and bore our sin, (Isa. 53. 6.) and was condemned to death, and condemned sin in the flesh, Rom. 8. 3. Wonder at this, that the eternal Word should be made Flesh, when flesh was contemptible, and an ill name; that he who made all things, should himself be made Flesh, one of the meanest things, and submit to that from which he was at the greatest distance. The voice that ushers in the gospel, cried, All flesh is grass; (Isa. 40. 6.) to make the Redeemer’s love the more wonderful, who, to redeem and save us, was made Flesh, and withered as grass; but the Word of the Lord, who was made Flesh, endures for ever; when made Flesh, he ceased not to be the Word of God.

[2.] He dwelt among us, as his own lower world. Having taken upon him the nature of man, he put himself into the place and condition of other men. The Word might have been made Flesh, and dwelt among the angels; but, having taken a body of the same mould with us, in it he came, and resided in the same world with us. He dwelt among us, us worms of the earth, us that had no need of us, us that had no use for us, us that were in want, us that were depraved, and revolted from God. The Lord came, and dwelt even among the rebellious, Ps. 68. 18. He that had dwelt among angels, those noble and excellent beings, came, and dwelt among us that are a generation of vipers, us sinners, which was worse to him than David’s dwelling in Mesec and Kedar, or Ezeckiel’s dwelling among scorpions, or the church of Pergamos dwelling where Satan’s seat is. When we look upon the upper world, the world of spirits, how mean and contemptible does this flesh, this body, appear, which we carry about with us, and this world in which our lot is cast; and how hard it is to a contemplative mind, to be reconciled to them! But that the eternal Word was made Flesh, was clothed with a body as we are, and dwelt in this world, was the thing he did; and dwelt among us both, and should make us willing to abide in the flesh while God has any work for us to do, for Christ dwelt in this lower world, bad as it is, till he had finished what he had to do there, ch. 17. 4. He dwelt among the Jews, that the scripture might he fulfilled, He shall dwell in the tents of Shem, Gen. 9. 27. And see Zech. 2. 10. Though the Jews were unkind to him, yet he continued to dwell among them; though (as some of the ancient writers tell us) he was invited to better treatment by Abgarus king of Edessa, yet he removed not to any other nation.

He dwelt among us. He was in the world, not as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night, but he dwelt among us, made a long residence; the original word is observable, εικονιζομαι—he dwelt among us, he dwelt as a tabernacle, which indicates, First, That he dwelt here in very mean circumstances, as shepherds that dwell in tents. He did not dwell among us as in a palace, but as in a tent; for he had not where to lay his head, and was always upon the remove. Secondly, That his state here was a military state; soldiers dwell in tents, he had long since proclaimed war with the seed of the serpent, and now he marks the field in person; sets up his standard, and pitches his tent, to prosecute this war. Thirdly, That his stay among us was not to be perpetual. He dwelt here as in a tent, not as at home. The patriarchs, by dwelling in tabernacles, confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth, and sought the better country, and so did Christ, leaving us an example, Heb. 13. 14. edly. That hedwelt in the midst of Manna, the Shechinhah between cherubims, so now he dwells in the human nature of Christ; that is now the true Shechinhah, the symbol of God’s peculiar presence. And we are to make all our addresses to God through Christ, and from him to receive divine oracles.

(2.) The beams of his divine glory, that darted through this vail of flesh; We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, which was manifested by him, and gave us grace and truth. The sun is still the fountain of light, though eclipsed or clouded; so Christ was still the Brightness of his Father’s glory, even then when he dwelt among us in this lower world. And how slightly soever the Jews thought of him, there were those that saw through the vail. Observe, (1.) Who were the witnesses of this glory we,
his disciples and followers, that conversed most freely and familiarly with him; we among whom he dwelt. Other men discover their weaknesses to those that are most familiar with them, but it was not so with Christ; those that were most intimate with him, saw most of his glory. As it was with his doctrine, the disciples knew the most of his glory, while others had it merely through the veil of parables; so it was with his person, they saw the glory of his divinity, while others saw only the veil of his human nature. He manifested himself to them, and not unto the world. These witnesses were a competent number, twelve of them, a whole jury of witnesses; men of plainness and integrity, and far from any thing of design or intrigue.

[2.] What every one of them had of it; We saw it; This had not their evidence by report, at second hand, but were themselves eye-witnesses of those proofs on which they built their testimony that he was the Son of the living God; We saw it. The word signifies a fixed, abiding sight, such as gave them an opportunity of making their observations. This apostle himself explains this, What we declare unto you of the word of life, is what we have seen with our eyes, and what we have looked upon, 1 John 1:1.

[3.] What the glory was; the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. The glory of the Word made Flesh, was such a glory as became the only begotten Son of God, and could not be the glory of any other. Note, First, Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father. Believers are the children of God by the special favour of adoption, and the special grace of regeneration; they are in a sense, Temporal—of a like nature, (2 Pet. 1. 4.) and have the image of his perfections; but Christ is immaterial—of the same nature, and is the express Image of his person, and the Son of God by an eternal generation. Angels are sons of God, but he never said to any of them, This day have I begotten thee, Heb. 1. 5. Secondly, He was evidently declared to be the Only Begotten of the Father, by that which he wrought, the fulness of his goodness in his glory, and he went about doing good: he spake and acted in every thing as an incarnate Deity. Perhaps the evangelist had a particular regard to the glory of his transfiguration, which he was an eye-witness of; see 2 Pet. 1. 16–18. God's calling him his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased, intimated that he was the Only Begotten of the Father; but the glory of this was at his resurrection.

[4.] What advantage the church had from this. He dwelt among them, full of grace and truth. In the old tabernacle wherein God dwelt, was the law, in this was grace; in that were types, in this was truth. The incarnate Word was every way qualified for his undertaking as Mediator, for he was full of grace and truth, the two great things that fallen man stands in need of; and this proved lively in all the persons of God, as much as the divine power and majesty that shine upon him. He has a fulness of grace and truth for himself; he had the Spirit without measure. He was full of grace, fully acceptable to his Father, and therefore qualified to intercede for us; and full of truth, fully apprized of the things he was to reveal, and therefore fit to instruct us. He had a fulness of knowledge and a fulness of compassion. Secondly, He has a fulness of grace and truth for us. He received, that he might give, and God was well pleased in him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and this was the truth of the legal types.

15. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I speak. He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for he was before me. 16. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. 17. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. 18. No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

In these verses,
1. The evangelist begins again to give us John Baptist's testimony concerning Christ, v. 15. He had said, v. 8. that he came for a witness, now he tells us that he did accordingly, according to that prediction, and proves what he had said, v. 11. Secondly, Here, 1. Observe how he expressed his testimony; he cried, according to the prediction, that he should be the voice of one crying. The Old-Testament prophets cried aloud, to show people their sins; this New-Testament prophet cried aloud, to show people their Saviour. This intimates, (1.) That it was an open public testimony, proclaimed, that all manner of persons might take notice of it. The Old Testament prophets' entire secrecy, but his published his dictates in the chief places of concourse. (2.) That he was free and hearty in bearing this testimony. He cried as one that was both well assured of, and well affected to, the truth he witnessed of. He that had leaped in his mother's womb, for joy of Christ's approach when newly conceived, does now with a like exultation of spirit come his public appearance.

2. What his testimony was. He appeals to what he had said at the beginning of his ministry, when he had directed them to expect one that should come after him, whose forerunner he was, and never intended any other than to lead them to him, and to prepare his way. This he had given them notice of from the first. Note, It is very comfortable to a minister, to have the testimony of his conscience for him, that he sets out in his ministry, with the most holy principles and truths; he has a double interest, with a single eye to the glory and honour of Christ. Now what he had then said, he applies to this Jesus whom he had lately baptized, and who was so remarkably owned from heaven; This was he of whom I speak. John did not tell them that there would shortly appear such a one among them, and then leave them to find him out; but in this he went beyond all the Old-Testament prophets, that rare and holy specification of that person; This was he, the very man I told you of, and to him all I said is to be accommodated. Now what was it he said? (1.) He had given the preference to this Jesus; He that comes after me, in the time of his birth and public appearance, is preferred before me; he that succeeds me in preaching and making disciples, is a more excellent Person, upon all accounts; as the prince or peer that comes after a king, when he sits on the throne before the prince or peer that succeeds him, makes way to that person. Note, Jesus Christ, who was to be called the Son of the Highest, (Luke 1. 32.) was preferred before John Baptist, who was to be called only the prophet of the Highest, Luke 1. 76. John was a minister of the New Testament, but Christ was the Mediator of the New Testament. And observe, though John was a great man, and had a great name and interest, yet he was forward to give the prefer
enue to him to whom it belonged. Note, All the ministers of Christ must prefer him and his interest before themselves and their own interests: they will make an ill account, that seek their own things, not the things of Christ, Phil. 2: 21. He comes after me, and I am preferred before him. Note, God distributes his gifts according to his good pleasure, and many times crosses hands, as Jacob did, preferring the younger before the elder. Paul farther outstripped those that were in Christ before him.

2. He here gives a good reason for it; for he was before me, πριν ἦν ἐμί—He was my first, or first to me; he was my first Cause, my Original. The first principle of Christ's being God, is, he was before me, my first. [1.] In respect of seniority he was before me, for he was before Abraham, ch. 8. 58. Nay, he was before all things, Col. 1. 17. I am but of yesterday, he from eternity. It was but in those days that John Baptist came, (Matth. 3. 1.) but the going forth of our Lord Jesus were of old, from everlasting, Mic. 5. 2. This proves two natures in Christ; Christ, as Man, came after John as to his public appearance, Christ, as God, was before him; and how could he otherwise be before him but by an eternal existence? [2.] In respect of supremacy, for he was my Prince; so some princes are called the first; πρώτος. "It is he for whose sake and service I am sent: he is my Master, I am his minister and messenger."

11. He presently returns again to speak of Jesus Christ, his name, his name and his grace. Grace is that which has him. The Baptist's testimony still to v. 19. The 16th verse has a manifest connexion with v. 14. where the incarnate Word was said to be full of grace and truth. Now here he makes this the matter, not only of our adoration, but of our thankfulness, because from that fullness of grace we have all received. He received gifts for men, (Ps. 68. 18.) that he might give gifts to men, Eph. 4. 8. He was filled, that he might fill all in all, (Eph. 1. 23.) might fill our treasures, Prov. 8. 21. He has a fountain of fulness overflowing; We have all received. All we apostles; so some. We have received the favour of this apostleship, that is grace; and a fitness for it, that is truth; or rather, All we believers; as many as received him, (v. 16.) received from him. Note, All true believers receive from Christ's fulness; the best and greatest souls, the greatest grace, the greatest strength of grace, the weakest may live by him. This excludes proud boasting, that we have nothing but we have received it; and silences perplexing fears, that we want nothing but we may receive it.

Let us see what it is that we have received.

1. We have received grace for grace. Our receivings by Christ are all summed up in this one word, grace; we have received, μετά γὰρ—ever grace, so great a gift, so rich, so invaluable; we have received no less than grace; that is a gift to be spoken of with an emphasis. It is repeated, grace for grace; for to every stone in this building, as well as to the top-stone, we must cry, Grace, grace, observe. [1.] The blessing received; it is grace; the good will of God towards us, and the good work of God in us. God's good will works the good work, and then the good work qualifies us for further tokens of his good will. As the cistern receives water from the fulness of the fountain, the branches sap from the fulness of the root, and the air light from the fulness of the sun, so we receive grace from the fulness of Christ.

2. The manner of its reception; grace for grace—γὰρ γὰρ γὰρ. The phrase is singular, and interpreters put different senses upon it, each of which will be of use to illustrate the unsearchable riches of the grace of Christ. Grace for grace speaks.

[1.] The freeness of this grace. It is grace for grace-sake; so Grothus. We receive grace, not for our sakes, (be it known to us,) but even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy sight. It is a gift according to grace, Rom. 12. 6. It is grace to us for the sake of grace to Jesus Christ. God was well pleased in him, and is therefore well pleased with us in him, Eph. 1. 6.

[2.] The fulness of this grace. Grace for grace is abundance of grace, grace upon grace, (so Cameron,) one grace heaped upon another; as skin for skin is skin after skin, even all that a man has, Job 2. 4. It is a blessing poured out, that there shall not be room to receive it, plenteous redemption: one grace is a pledge of another grace. Joseph—He will add. It is such a fulness as is called the fulness of God, which we are filled with. We are not straitened in the grace of Christ, if we be not straitened in our own bosoms.

[3.] The serviceableness of this grace. Grace for grace is grace for the promoting and advancing of grace. Grace to be exercised by ourselves, gracious habits for gracious acts; grace to be ministered to others, gracious vouchsafements for gracious performances, grace is a talent to be traded with. The apostles received grace, (Rom. 1. 5. Eph. 3. 8.) that they might communicate it, 1 Pet. 4. 10.

[4.] The substitution of New-Testament grace in the room and stead of Old-Testament grace; so Beza. And this sense is confirmed by what follows; (v. 17.) for the Old-Testament had grace in type, the New Testament hath grace in substance. Grace for grace is a grace under the Old Testament, the gospel was preached then; (Gal. 3. 8.) but that grace is superseded, and we have gospel-grace instead of it, a glory which excelleth, 2 Cor. 3. 10. Discoveries of grace are now more clear, distributions of grace far more plentiful; this is grace instead of grace.

[5.] It speaks the augmentation and continuance of grace. Grace for grace is grace one grace, to improve, confirm, and perfect, another grace. We are changed into the divine image, from glory to glory, from one degree of glorious grace to another, 2 Cor. 3. 18. Those that have true grace, have that for more grace, Jam. 4. 6. When God gives grace, he saith, Take this in part; for he who hath promised, will perform.

[6.] Grace speaks the agreeableness and conformity of grace in the saints to the grace that is in Jesus Christ; so Mr. Clark. Grace for grace is grace in us answering to grace in him, as the impression upon the wax answers the seal, line for line. The grace we receive from Christ, changes us into the same image, (2 Cor. 3. 18.) the image of the Son, (Rom. 8. 29.) the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. 15. 49.

2. We have received grace and truth, v. 17. He had said, (v. 14.) that Christ was full of grace and truth; now here he saith, that by him grace and truth came to us. From Christ we receive grace; this is a string he delights to harp upon, he cannot go off from it. Two things he further observes in this verse, concerning this grace.

[1.] Its preference above the law of Moses; The law was given by Moses, and it was a glorious discovery, both of God's will concerning man, and his good will to man; but the gospel of Christ is a much clearer discovery both of duty and happiness. That which was given by Moses, was purely terrifying and threatening, and bound with penalties, a law which could not give life, which was given with abundance of terror; (Heb. 12. 18.) but that which is given in Christ, is a gospel, in which all the beneficial uses of the law, but not the terror, for it is grace; grace teaching, (Tit. 2. 11.) grace reigning, (Rom. 5. 21.) It is a law, but a remedial law. The emendations of law are the corruptions of the gospel, not the affrightments of law and the curse.
(2.) Its connexion with truth; grace and truth. In the gospel we have the discovery of the greatest truths, to be embraced by the understanding, as well as of the richest grace, to be embraced by the will and affections. It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation; it is grace and truth. The offers of grace are sincere, and what we may venture our souls upon, that we may be saved. Grace and truth. It is grace and truth, with reference to the law that was given by Moses. For it is, [1.] The performance of all the Old Testament promises. In the Old Testament we often find mercy and truth put together, that is, mercy according to promise; so here, grace and truth denote grace according to promise. See Luke 1. 72. 1 Kings 8. 56. 2 Chron. 7. 14. 15. Here grace and truth are joined together.

Grace and truth came, &c.—was made; the same word that was used v. 3, concerning Christ's making all things. The law was only made known by Moses, but the being of this grace and truth, as well as the discovery of it, is owing to Jesus Christ; this was made by him, as the world at first was; and by him this grace and truth do consist.

The discovery of grace and truth received from Christ is a clear revelation of God to us; (v. 18.) He hath declared God to us, whom no man hath seen at any time. This was the grace and truth which came by Christ, the knowledge of God and an acquaintance with him, observe. (1.) The insufficiency of all other discoveries; No man hath seen God at any time. This intimates, [1.] That the nature of God being spiritual, he is invisible to bodily eyes, he is a Being whom no man hath seen, or can see. We have therefore need to live by faith, by which we see him that is invisible, Heb. 11. 27. [2.] That the revelation which God made of himself in the Old Testament was very short and imperfect, in comparison with that which he has made by Christ; No man hath seen God at any time; that is, what was seen and known by the children of God, and Gentiles of Christ, was nothing to that which is now seen and known. Grace and immortality are now brought to a much clearer light than they were then. [3.] That none of the Old-Testament prophets were so well qualified to make known the mind and will of God to the children of men as our Lord Jesus was, for none of them had seen God at any time. Moses beheld the similitude of the Lord, (Num. 12. 8.) but it was told that he could not see his face, Exod. 33. 20. But this recommends Christ's holy religion to us, that it was founded by one that had seen God, and knew more of his mind than any one else ever did, for he had seen him, which they never did.

(2.) The all-sufficiency of the gospel-discovery, proved from its Author; The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him to us. [1.] How fit he was to make this discovery, and every way qualified for it. He, and he alone, was worthy to take the book, and open the seals, Rev. 5. 9. For, First, He is the only begotten Son; and who so likely to know the Father as the Son; or, in whom is the Father better known than in the Son? Matt. 11. 27. He is of the same nature with the Father, so that he who hath seen him, hath seen the Father, ch. 14. 9. The servant is not supposed to know so well what his Lord does, as the Son, ch. 15. Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ as a Son. Secondly, He is in the bosom of the Father. He had lain in his bosom from eternity; when he was here upon earth, yet still, as God, he was in the bosom of the Father, and thither he returned when he ascended. In the bosom of the Father, 1. In the bosom of his spiritual love, dear to him, in whom he was well pleased, always his delight. All God's saints are in his hand, but his Son was in his bosom, one in nature and essence, and therefore in the highest degree one in love. 2. In the bosom of his secret counsels. As there was a mutual complicity so there was a mutual consciousness, between the Father and Son; (Matt. 11. 27.) none so fit as he to make known God, for none knew his mind so as did he. Our moment secret counsels, are hid in his bosom, (in secret.) Christ was privy to the bosom-counsels of the Father. The prophets sat down at his feet as scholars, Christ lay in his bosom as a Friend. See Eph. 3. 11.

[2.] How free he was in making this discovery; He hath declared; him is not in the original. He has declared that of God, which no man had at any time seen or known; not only that which was hid of God, but that which was hid in God; (Eph. 3. 9.) He hath declared it, &c. it signifies a plain, clear, and full discovery, not by general and doubtful hints, but by particular explications. He that runs, may now read the will of God and the way of salvation. This is the grace, this the truth, that came by Jesus Christ.

19. And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? 20. And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. 21. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. 22. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us: what sayest thou of thyself? 23. He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. 24. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. 25. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? 26. John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; 27. He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose. 28. These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.
understood the times so well as to know that the Messiah was at hand, and therefore should presently have known him that was his forerunner, and readily embraced him; but, instead of that, they sent messengers to cross question with him. Secular learning, honour, and power, seldom dispose men's minds to the reception of divine light.

2. They that were sent, were, (1.) Priests and Levites. And therefore they were men of learning, gravity, and authority. John Baptist was himself a priest of the seed of Aaron, and therefore it was not fit he should be examined by any but priests. It was prophesied concerning John's ministry, that it should purify the sons of Levi, (Mal. 3. 1.) and therefore they were jealous of him and his reformation. (2.) They were of the Pharisees, proud, silly, and therefore they would not be refuted, not reproved, and therefore could not bear one that made it his business to preach repentance.

II. On what errand they went; it was to enquire concerning John and his baptism. They did not send for John up to them, probably because they feared the people, lest the people where John was, should be provoked to rise, or lest the people where they were, should be brought acquainted with him; they thought it was good keeping him at a distance.

They enquire concerning him, 1. To satisfy their curiosity; as the Athenians inquired concerning Paul's doctrine, for the novelty of it, Acts 17. 19, 20. Such a proud conceit they had of themselves, that the doctrine of repentance was to them strange doctrine. 2. It was to show their authority. They thought that they had a right to it when they called him to account, whom all men counted as a prophet, and arraigned him at their bar. 3. It was with a design to suppress him and silence him if they could find any colour for it, for they were jealous of his growing interest; and his ministry agreed neither with the Mosaic dispensation, which they had been long under, nor with the notions they had formed of the Messiah's kingdom.

III. What was the answer he gave them, and his answer, both concerning himself and concerning his baptism, in both which he witnessed to Christ.

1. Concerning himself, and what he professed himself to be. They asked him, αὐτῷ ἡμῖν ὥσπερ ἐστι; Thou, who art thou? John's appearance in the world was surprising; he was in the wilderness till the day of his showing unto Israel his spirit, his converse, his doctrine, his favours, were something new, and everything in him which commanded and gained respect; but he did not, as seducers do, give himself out to be some great one. He was more industrious to do good than to appear great; and therefore waved saying any thing of himself till he was legally interrogated. Those speak best for Christ, that say least of themselves, whose own work praises them, not their own lips. He answers as an interrogatory.

(1.) Negatively. He was not that great one whom some took him to be. God's faithful witnesses stand more upon their guard against undue respect than against unjust contempt. Paul writes as warmly against those that overvalued him, and said, I am of Paul, as against those that undervalued him, and said that his bodily presence was weak; and he rent his reproaches, and was called a tissue.

[1.] John disowns himself to be the Christ; (v. 20.) He said, I am not the Christ, who was now expected and waited for. Note, The ministers of Christ must remember that they are not Christ, and therefore must not usurp his powers and prerogatives, nor assume the praises due to him only. They are not Christ, and therefore must not lord it over God's heritage, nor pretend to a dominion over the faith of christians. They cannot create grace and peace, they cannot enlighten, convert, quicken, commit the power, for they are not Christ. Observe how emphatically this is here expressed concerning John: He confessed, and denied not, but confessed; it denotes his vehemence and constancy in making this protestation.

Note, Temptations to pride, and assuming that honour to ourselves which doth not belong to us, ought to be resisted with a great deal of vigour and earnestness. When John was taken to be the Messiah, he did not abuse his great power with it. It was his lot to be a servant to others, and not to be exalted above them, and to be called a prophet. (2.) Affirmatively. The committee that was sent to examine him, pressed for a positive answer, (v. 22.) urging the authority of them that sent them, which they expected he should pay a deference to; Tell us what art thou? Not that we may believe thee, and be baptized by thee, but that we may give an answer to them that sent us, and it may not be said that we were on a fool's errand. John was asked upon as a man of sincerity, and therefore they believed he would not give an evasive, ambiguous answer, but would be fair and above-board, and give
a plain answer to a plain question; What saighest thou of this place? And he said so, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Observe,

[1.] He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by a divine authority. What the scripture saith of the office of the ministry should be often thought of by those of that high calling, who must look upon themselves as that, and that only, which the word of God makes them.

[2.] He gives in his answer, in very humble, modest, self-denying expressions; he chooses to apply that scripture to himself, which spake, not his dignity, but his duty and dependance, which speaks him little; I am the voice, as if he were vox, et freta sacra, as if he were God's mouthpiece.

[3.] He gives such an account of himself as might be profitable to them, and might excite and awaken them to hearken to him; for he was the voice, (see Isa. 40. 3.) a voice to alarm, an articulate voice to instruct. Ministers are but the voice, the vehicle, by which God is pleased to communicate his mind. What are Paul and Apollos but messengers? Observe,

First, He was a human voice. The people were prepared to receive the law by the voice of thunder, and a trumpet exceeding loud, such as made them tremble; but they were prepared for the gospel by the voice of a man like ourselves, a still small voice, such as that in which God came to Elijah, 1 Kings 19. 20.

Secondly, He was the voice of one crying; which denotes, 1. His earnestness and importunity in calling people to repentance; he cried aloud, and did not spare. Ministers must preach as those that are in earnest, and are themselves affected with those things which they desire to affect others with. Those words are not likely to thaw the hearers' heart, that freeze between the speaker's lips. 2. His open publication of the doctrine he preached; he was the voice of one crying, that all manner of persons might hear and take notice. Doth not Wadman cry? Prov. 8. 1.

Thirdly, It was in the wilderness that this voice was crying; in a place of silence and solitude, out of the noise of the world, and the hurry of its business; the more retired we are from the tumult of secular affairs, the better prepared we are to hear from God.

Fourthly, That which he cried was, Make straight the way of the Lord; that is, 1. He came to rectify the mistakes of people concerning the ways of God; it is certain that they are right ways; but the Scribes and Pharisees, with their corrupt glosses upon the law, had made them crooked. Now John Baptist calls people to return to the original rule. He came to prepare and dispose people for the reception and entertainment of Christ and his gospel. It is an allusion to the harbingers of a prince or great man, that cry, Make room. Note, When God is coming towards us, we must prepare to meet him, and let the word of the Lord have free course. See Ps. 24. 7.

2. Here is his testimony concerning his baptism. (1.) The inquiry which the committee made about it; (v. 25.) Whence camest thou, if thou be not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet? [1.] They readily, and apprehended baptism to be a thing never used as a sacred rite or ceremony, for the Jewish church had used it with circumcision in the admission of proselytes, to signify the cleansing of them from the pollutions of their former state. That sign was made use of in the christian church, that it might be the more passable. Christ did not affect novelty, nor should his ministers. [2.] They expected it would be used in the days of the Messiah, because it was promised then; there should be a fountain opened, (Zech. 13. 1.) and clean water sprinkled, Ezek. 36. 25. It is taken for granted, that Christ and Elias, and that prophet, would baptize, for they came to purify a polluted world. Divine justice cleansed the old world in its flux, but divine grace has provided for the cleansing of this new world from its filth. [3.] They would therefore know by what authority John baptized. His denying of himself to be Elias, or that prophet subjected him to this further question, Why baptizest thou? Note, It is no new thing for a man's modesty to be turned against him, and improved to his prejudice; but it is better that men should take advantage of our weak thoughts of ourselves, to transpire upon us, than that the devil should take advantage of our high thoughts of ourselves, to tempt us to pride, and to draw us into his condemnation.

(2.) The account he gave of it, v. 26, 27. [1.] He owned himself to be only the minister of the outward sign; I baptize with water, and that is all; I am no more, and do no more, than what you see; I have no other title than John the Baptist; I cannot confer the spiritual grace signified by it. Paul was in care that none should think him above what the world would call him to (Gal. 2. 12.) so was John Baptist. Ministers must not set up for masters.

[2.] He directed them to one that was greater than himself, and would do that for them, if they pleased, which he could not do; I baptize with water, and that is the utmost of my commission; I have nothing to do but this to lead you to one that comes after me, and consign you to him. Note, Now great business of Christ's ministers is to direct all people to him; we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord. John gave the same account to this committee that he had given to the people, (v. 15.) This is he of whom I speak. John was constant and uniform in his testimony, not as a reed shaken with the wind. The sinnerdrem were jealous of his interest in the people, but he is not afraid to tell them that there is one at the door, that will go beyond him.

First, He tells them of Christ's presence among them now at this time; There stands one among you, at this time, whom you know not. Christ stood among the common people, and was as one of them. Note. 1. Much true worth lies hid in this world; obscurity is often the lot of real excellency. Saints are God's hidden ones, therefore the world knows them not. 2. God's hidden ones are the awfully awful; The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.

They were gazing in expectation of the Messiah; Lo he is here, or he is there, when the kingdom of God was abroad and already among them, Luke 17. 21.

Secondly, He tells them of his preference above himself; he comes after me, and yet is preferred before me. This he had said before; he adds here, Whose shoe-latchet am I not worthy to unloose? I am not fit to be named the same day with him; it is an honour too great for me to pretend to be in the meanest office about him, 1 Sam. 25. 41. Those to whom Christ is precious, reckon his service, even the most despised instances of it, an honour to them. See Ps. 84. 10. If so great a man as John accounted himself unworthy of the honour of being near Christ, how unworthy then should we account ourselves, to be the ministers of priests and Pharisees, upon this intimation given concerning the approach of the Messiah, should presently have asked, who, and where, this excellent Person was; and who more likely to tell them than he who had given them this general notice; No, they did not think that was any part of their business or concern; they came to molest John, not to receive any instructions from him; so that their ignorance was selfish; they might have known Christ, and would not.
Lastly. Notice is taken of the place where all this was done, (v. 28.) In Bethabara beyond Jordan. Bethabara signifies the house of passage; some think it was the very place where Israel passed over Jordan into the land of promise under the conduct of Joshua; there was opened the way into the gospel-state by Jesus Christ. It was at a great distance from Nazareth, from where he had taught; because what he did there, would be least offensive to the government. Amos must go prophesy in the country, not near the court; but it was said that Jerusalem should put so far from her the things that belonged to her peace. He made this confession in the same place where he was baptized; that all those who attended his baptism, might be witnesses of it, and none might say that they knew not what to make of him.

29. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. 30. This is he of whom I said After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. 31. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. 32. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. 33. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. 34. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. 35. Again, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; 36. And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

We have in these verses an account of John's testimony concerning Jesus Christ, which he witnessed to his own disciples that followed him. As soon as ever Christ was baptized, he was immediately hurried into the wilderness, to be tempted; there he was forty days; during his absence, John had continued to bear testimony to him, and to tell the people of him; but now at last, he sees Jesus coming to him, returning from the wilderness of temptation. As soon as that conflict was over, Christ presently returned to John, who was preaching and baptizing. Now Christ was tempted for example and encouragement to us; and this teaches us, 1. That the hardships of a tempted state should engage us to keep close to ordinances; to go into the sanctuary of God, Ps. 73. 17. Our combats with Satan should oblige us to keep close to the communion of saints; two are better than one. 2. That the honours of a victorious state must not allure us off from the duties of a tempted one. Christ was tempted over Satan, and been attended by angels, and yet, after all, he returns to the place where John was preaching and baptizing. As long as we are on this side heaven, whatever extraordinary visits of divine grace we may have here at any time, we must still keep close to the ordinary means of grace and comfort, and walk with God in them.

Here are four things are witnessed by him concerning Christ, when he had him before his eyes. 1. That he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, v. 29. Let us learn here, (1.) That Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God, which speaks him the great Sacrifice, by whom atonement is made for sin, and man reconciled to God. Of all the sacrifices of the law that were offered, not only because a lamb is an emblem of meekness, and Christ must be led as a lamb to the slaughter, (Isa. 53. 7.) but with a special reference, [1.] To the daily sacrifice, which was offered every morning and evening continually, and that was always a lamb, (Exod. 29. 38.) which was a type of Christ, as the everlasting investigation, whose blood continues to make atonement. He made the blood of, which, being sprinkled upon the doorposts, secured the Israelites from the stroke of the destroying angel. Christ is our Passover, 1 Cor. 5. 7. He is the Lamb of God; he is appointed by him, (Rom. 3. 25.) he was devoted to him, (ch. 17. 19.) and he was accepted with him; in him he was well pleased. The 1st lamb which he on the goat that was offered for a sin-offering, is called the Lord's lot; (Lev. 16. 8, 9.) so Christ, who was to make atonement for sin, is called the Lamb of God.

(2.) That Jesus Christ, as the Lamb of God, takes away the sin of the world. This was his undertaking; he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. 9. 26. John Baptist had called people to repentance; and men, taking away that which is offensive to the holiness of God, and destructive to the happiness of man. He came, First, To take away the guilt of sin by the merit of his death, to vacate the judgment, and reverse the attainer, which mankind lay under, by an act of indemnity, which all penitent, obedient believers may claim the benefit of. Secondly, To take away the power of sin by the Spirit of his grace, so that it shall not avail to cast him down, as it did to Christ; and Thirdly, as the Lamb of God, washes us from our sins in his own blood; that is, he both justifies and sanctifies us: he takes away sin. He is a sinner—he is taking away the sin of the world, which speaks it not a single but a continued act; it is his constant work and office to take away sin, which is such a work of time, that it will never be completed till time shall be no more. He is always taking away sin, by the continual intercession of his blood in heaven, and the continual influence of his grace on earth.

[2.] He takes away the sin of the world; purchases pardon for all those that repent, and believe the gospel, of what country, nation, or language, soever they be. The legal sacrifices had reference only to the sins of Israel, to make atonement for them; but this was the Lamb of God, offered for the Propitiation for the sin of the whole world; see 1 John 2. 12. This is encouraging to our faith; if Christ takes away the sin of the world, then why not my sin? Christ levelled his force at the main-body of sin's army, struck at the root, and aimed at the overthrow, of that wickedness which the whole world lay in. God was in him reconciling the world to himself.

[3.] He does this, by taking it upon himself. He is the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world; so the margin reads it. He bore sin for us, and so bears it from us; he bore the sin of many, as the
scape-goat, he sins of Israel put upon his head.

Lev. 16. 21. God could have taken away the sin, by taking away the sinner, as he took away the sin of the old world; but he has found out a way of abolishing the sin, and yet sparing the sinner, by making his Son Sin for us.

(2.) It is our duty, with an eye of faith, to believe the Lamb of God thus taking away the sin of the world. See him taking away sin, and let that increase our hatred of sin, and resolutions against it. Let us not hold that fast, which the Lamb of God came to take away: for Christ will either take our sins away, or take us away. Let it increase our love to Christ, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, Rev. 1. 5. Whatever God is pleased to do for us, if withal he take away our sins, we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain.

2. That this was he of whom he had spoken before; (v. 30, 31.) This is he, this Person whom I now point at, you see where he stands, this is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man. Observe,

(1.) This honour John had above all the prophets, that he was a witness of his birth, from an eye of faith as well as of reason, and said, that when he saw him, he saw him already come. This is he. He sees him now, he sees him nigh, Numb. 24. 17. Such a difference there is between present faith and future vision. Now we love one whom we have not seen, then we shall see him whom our souls love; shall see him, and say, This is he of whom I said, my Christ, and my All; my Beloved, and my Friend.

(2.) John calls Christ a Man; after me comes a Man—see, a strong man; like the Man, the Branch, or the Man of God's right hand.

(3.) He refers himself to what he had said of him before; This is he of whom I said. Note, Those who have said the most honourable things of Christ, will never see cause to unsay them; but, the more they know him, they more they are confirmed in their esteem of him. John still thinks as meanly of himself, and as highly of Christ, as ever. Though Christ appeared not in any external pomp or grandeur, yet John is not ashamed to own, This is he I meant, that is preferred before me. And it was necessary that John should thus shew them the Person, otherwise they could not have believed that one who made so mean a figure, should be he of whom John had spoken, so greatly above all others.

(4.) He protests against any confederacy or combination with this Jesus; And I knew him not. Though there was some relation between them, (Elisabeth was cousin to the Virgin Mary,) yet there was no acquaintance at all between them; John had no personal knowledge of Jesus till he saw him come to his baptism. Their manner of life had been different: John had spent his time in the wilderness, in solitude; Jesus at Nazareth, in conversation. There was no correspondence, there were no interviews between them, that the matter might appear to be wholly carried on by the direction and disposal of Heaven, and not by any design or concit of the persons themselves. And as he hereby disowns all collusion, so also all partiality and sinister regard, in it; he could not be supposed to favour him as a Friend; Jesus at Nazareth, he had no familiarity between them. Nay, as he could not be biased to speak honourably of him, because he was a stranger to him, so, really being such a stranger to him, he was not able to say anything of him but what he received from above, to which he appeals, ch. 3. 27. Note, They who are taught, believe and confess one whom they have not seen, and blessed are they, who know him who is believed.

(5.) The great intention of John's ministry and baptism was, to introduce Jesus Christ. That he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. Observe, [1.] Though John did not know Jesus by face, yet he knew that he should be made manifest. Note We may know the certainty of that which yet we do not fully know the nature and intention of. We know that the happiness of heaven shall be made manifest to Israel, but cannot describe it. Therefore, if John had, that Christ should be made manifest, served to carry him with diligence and resolution through his work, though he was kept in the dark concerning particulars; Therefore and I came. Our assurance of the reality of things, though they are unseen, is enough to quicken us to our duty. [3.] God reveals himself to his people by degrees. At first, John knew nothing concerning Christ but that he should come. Then as to this, when he came, he saw him, and now he is favoured with a sight of him. They who, upon God's word, believe what they do not see, shall shortly see what they now believe. [4.] The ministry of the word and sacraments is designed for no other end than to lead people to Christ, and to make him more and more manifest. [5.] Baptism with water made for our remission of sins, supposes our corruption and fineness, and signified our cleansing by him who is the Fountain of righteousness.

3. That this was he upon whom the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove. For the confirming of his testimony concerning Christ, he here vouches the extraordinary appearance of his baptism, in which God himself bore witness to him. This was a considerable proof of Christ's mission. Now, to assure us of the truth of it, we are here told, (v. 32, 33.)

(1.) That John Baptist saw it; he bare record; did not relate it as a story, but solemnly attested it, with all the seriousness and solemnity of witness-bearing. He made affidavit of it; I saw the Spirit descending from heaven. John could not see the Spirit, but he saw the dove, which was a sign and representation of the Spirit. The Spirit came now upon Christ, both to make him fit for his work, and to make him known to the world. Christ was notified, not by the descent of a crown upon him, or by a transfiguration, but by the descent of the Spirit as a dove upon him, to qualify him for his undertaking. Thus the first testimony given to the apostles was by the descent of the Spirit upon them. God's children are by a visible signification of their mission, in their offices and services are reserved for their future state. Observe,

[1.] The Spirit descended from heaven, for every good and perfect gift is from above. [2.] He descended like a dove—an emblem of meekness, and mildness, and gentleness, which makes him fit to teach. The dove brought the olive-branch of peace, Gen. 8. 11. [3.] The Spirit that descended upon Christ, abode upon him, was for told, Isa. 11. 2. The Spirit did not move him at times, as Sennacherib (Judg. 13. 25.) but at all times. The Spirit was given to him without measure; it was his prerogative to have the Spirit always upon him, so that he could at no time be found either unqualified for his work himself, or unfurnished for the supply of those that see to him for his grace.

2. That he was hidden to report it, which very much concerns the gospel. It was not John's bare conjecture, that surely he on whom he saw the Spirit descending, was the Son of God; but it was an instituted sign given him before, by which he might know it for certain; (v. 33.) I knew him not. This he insists much upon, that he knew no more of him than other people did, otherwise than by revelation. But he that sent me to baptize, gave me this sign, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, the same is he.

[1.] See here what sure grounds John went upon, in his ministry and baptism, that he might proceed
with all imaginable satisfaction. First, He did not run without sending; God sent him to baptize. He had a warrant from heaven for what he did. When a minister's call is clear, his comfort is sure, though his success is not always so. Secondly, He did not run without speaking; for when he was sent to baptize with water, he was directed that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost; under that notion John Baptist was taught to expect Christ, as one who would give that repentance and faith which he called people to, and would carry on and complete that blessed structure which he was now laying the foundation of. Note, It is a great comfort to Christ's ministers, in their administration of the outward signs, that he whose ministers they are, can confound the world, and prepare them for life and soul and power into their ministrations; can speak to the heart what they speak to the ear, and breathe upon the dry bones on which they prophesy.

[2.] See what sure grounds he went upon, in his designation of the person of the Messiah. God had before given him a sign, as he did to Samuel concerning Saul; "On whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, that shall be he." This not only prevented any mistakes, but gave him boldness in his testimony. When he had such assurance as this given him, he could speak with assurance. When John was told this before, his expectations could not but be very much raised; and when the event exactly answered the prediction, his faith could not but be much confirmed: and these things are written that we may observe them.

4. That he is the Son of God. This is the conclusion of John's testimony, that in which all the particulars centre, as the quae erat demonstrandum—the fact to be demonstrated; (v. 34.) I saw, and bare record, that this is the Son of God.

(1.) The truth asserted is, That this is the Son of God. The voice from heaven proclaimed, and John subscribed to it, not only that he should baptize with the Holy Ghost by a divine authority, but that he has a divine nature. This was the peculiar Christian creed, that Jesus is the Son of God, (Matt. 16. 16.) and here is the first framing of it.

(2.) John's testimony to it; "I saw, and bare record. Not only I now bear record of it, but I did so as soon as I had seen it." Observe, [1.] When he saw, he was forward to bear record of it, as they, Acts 4. 20. We cannot but speak the things which we have seen. [2.] What he bare record of was what he saw. Christ's witnesses were eye-witnesses, and therefore the more to be credited: they did not speak by hearsay and report, 2 Pet. 1. 16.

11. Here is John's testimony to Christ, the next day after, v. 35, 36. Where observe,

1. He took every opportunity that offered itself, to lead people to Christ; John stood looking upon Jesus as he walked. It should seem, John was now retired from the multitude, and was in close conversation with two of his disciples. Note, Ministers should not only in their private preaching, but in their private converse, witness to Christ, and serve his interests. He saw Jesus walking at some distance, yet did not go to him himself, because he would shun every thing that might give the least colour to suspect a combination. He was looking upon Jesus—σάλκ. Σου; he looked steadfastly, and fixed his eyes upon him. Those that would lead others to Christ, must be different and frequent in the contemplation of him themselves. John had seen Christ before, but now looked upon him, 1 John 1. 1.

2. He repeats the same testimony which he had given to Christ the day before, though he could have delivered some other great truth concerning him; but thus he would show that he was uniform and constant in his testimony, and consistent with himself. His doctrine was the same in private that it was in public, as Paul's was, Acts 20, 20, 21. It is good to have that repeated, which we have heard, Phil. 3. 1. The doctrine of Christ's sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world, ought especially to be insisted upon by all good ministers; Christ, the Lamb of God, Christ and him crucified.

3. He intended this especially for his two disciples that stood with him; he was willing to turn them over to Christ, for to this end he bore witness to Christ in their hearing, that they might leave all to follow him, even that they might leave him. He did not reckon that he lost these disciples who went over from him to Christ, any more than the schoolmaster reckons that scholar lost whom he sends to the university. John gathered disciples not for himself, but for Christ, to prepare them for the Lord, Luke 1. 17. So far was he from being jealous of Christ's growing interest, that there was nothing he was more desirous of. Humble, generous souls will give others their due praise without fear of diminishing themselves by it. What we have of reputation, as well as of other things, will not be the less for our giving every body their own.

37. And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? 39. He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. 40. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, The Christ. 42. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt he called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, A stone.

We have here the turning over of two disciples from John to Jesus, and one of them fetching in a third, and these are the first fruits of Christ's disciples; see how small the church was in its beginnings, and what the dawning of the day of its great things was.

1. Andrew and another with him were the two that John Baptist had directed to Christ, v. 37. Who the other was, we are not told; some think that it was Thomas, comparing ch. 21. 2. others, that it was John himself, the penman of this gospel, whose manner it is industriously to conceal his name, ch. 13. 23. and 20. 3.

2. Here is their readiness to go over to Christ; they heard John speak of Christ as the Lamb of God, and they followed Jesus. Probably they had heard John say the same thing the day before, and then it had not the effect upon them which now it had; see the benefit of repetition, and of private personal converse. They heard him speak of Christ as the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world, and they believed them, and followed him. Note, The strongest and most prevailing argument with a sensible awakened soul to follow Christ, is, that it is he, and he only, that takes away sin. 2. The kind notice Christ took of them, v. 55. They came behind him; but, though he had his
back toward them, he was soon aware of them, and turned, and saw them following. Note, Christ takes early cognizance of the first motions of a soul toward him, and the first step taken in the way to heaven; see Isa. 64. 5. Luke 15. 20. He did not stay till they besought leave to speak with him, but spake first. What communion there is between a soul and Christ, it is he that begins the discourse. He saith unto them, Where see ye? This was not a reprimand for their boldness in intruding into his company; he that came to see us, never checked any for seeking him; but, on the contrary, it is a kind invitation of them into his acquaintance, whom he saw bashful and modest; 'Come, what have you to say to me? We seek you to talk upon our case,' &c. Note, They whose business it is to instruct people in the affairs of their souls, should be humble, and mild, and easy of access, and should encourage those that apply to them. The question Christ put to them is, what we should all put to ourselves when we begin to follow Christ, and take upon us the profession of his holy religion; 'What see ye? What do we design and desire?' Those that follow Christ, and lay sown communion with him, cannot but desire, 'What seek we in seeking Christ, do we seek a Teacher, Ruler, and Reconciler? In following Christ, do we seek the favour of God and eternal life?' If our eye be single in this, we are full of light.

3. Their modest inquiry concerning the place of his abode; 'Rabbi, where dwell thou?' (1.) In calling him Rabbi, they intimate that their design in coming to him was, to be taught by him, 'Rabbi signifies master, a teaching master; the Jews called their doctors, or learned men, rabbies.' The word comes from rab, multus, or magnus, a rabbi, a great man, and one that, as we say, hath much in him. Never was there such a rabbi as our Lord Jesus; such a great one, in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. These came to Christ, to be taught by him 'Where doth thy abode?' that it might be to them open, and see themselves. John had told them that he was the Lamb of God; now this Lamb is worthy to take the book, and open the seals as a rabbi, Rev. 5. 9. And unless we give up ourselves to be ruled and taught by him, he will not take away our sins. (2.) In asking where he dwelt, they intimate a desire to be better acquainted with him. Christ was a Stranger in this country, so that they mean, where was his inn where he lodged, for there they would attend him at some seasonable time when he should appoint, to receive instruction from him; they would not press rudely upon him, when it was not proper. Civility and good manners well become those who follow Christ. And besides, they hoped to have more from him than they could have in a short conference now by the way. They resolved to make a business, not by a business, of conversing with Christ. Those that have known him as a Stranger, desire to know him better, [1.] A further communion with him; they follow on to know more of him. [2.] A fixed communion with him; where they might sit down at his feet, and abide by his instructions. It is not enough to take a turn with Christ now and then, but we must lodge with him.

4. The courteous invitation Christ gave them to his lodgings; He saith unto them, Come, and see. They were not invited, nor did they intim- mation with him be contemnanced. (1.) He invites them to come to his lodgings: the nearer we approach to Christ, the more we see of his beauty and excellency. Deceivers maintain their interest in their followers by keeping them at a distance, but that which Christ desired to recommend him to the esteem and affections of his followers, was, that they would come, and see; 'Come, and see what a mean lodging I have, what poor accommodations I take up with, that you may not expect any worldly advantage by following me, as they did who made the court to the scribes and Pharisees, and called them Rabbi. Come, and see what you must com- mune, and make the most of it, and do not come with pretexts, and without delay. They asked him where he lodged, that they might wait upon him at a more convenient season; but Christ invites them immediately to come, and see; never in better time than now. Hence learn, (1.) As to others, that it is best taking people when they are in a good mind; strike while the iron is hot. (2.) As to ourselves, that it is wisdom to embrace the present opportunities; New is the accepted time, 2 Cor. 5. 6. is it.

5. Their cheerful and (no doubt) thankful acceptance of his invitation; They came, and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day. It had been more modesty and manners than had done them good if they had refused this offer. (1.) They rea- dily went along with him; They came, and saw where he dwelt. Gracious souls cheerfully accept Christ's gracious invitations; as David, Ps. 27. 8. It is, in a manner, not to be anticipated, or at all acquainted with, but would put that to the venture, and make the best of what they found. It is good where Christ is, wherever it be. (2.) They were so well pleased with what they found, that they abode with him that day; ('Master, it is good to be here,') and he bid them welcome. It was about the tenth hour. Some think that John reck- sons according to the Roman computation, and that it was almost four o'clock in the afternoon, and they staid with him till night; others think that John reckons the as the other evangelists did, according to the Jewish computation, and that it was four o'clock in the afternoon, and they abide with him that night and the next day. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that this next day that they spent with Christ, was a sabbath-day, and, it being late, they could not get home before the sabbath ended; it is a convenient time to persevere, to contrive to spend the sabbath as much as may be to our spiritual benefit and advantage; so they were blessed, who, by the lively exercises of faith, love, and devotion, spend their sabbaths in communion with Christ. These are Lord's days indeed, days of the Son of man.

II. Andrew brought his brother Peter to Christ. If Peter had been the first-born of Christ's disciples, he would have made a noise with it; he indeed afterward came to be more eminent in gifts, but Andrew had the honour first to be acquainted with Christ, and to be the instrument of bringing Peter to him. Observe, 1. The information which Andrew gave to Peter, with an invitation to come to Christ. (1.) He found him; He first finds his own broth- er Simon; his finding implies his seeking of him. He has gone along with Andrew, to attend his ministry and baptism, and Andrew knew where to look for him. Perhaps the other disciple that was with him, went out to seek some friend of his at the same time, but Andrew sped first; He first findeth Simon, who came only to attend on John, but has his expectations out-done, he meets with Jesus. (2.) He told him whom they had found; We have found the Messias; Observe, (1.) He has found the Messias; 'We have found the discovery to himself, but, 'We have,' rejoicing that he had shared with others in it. (2.) He speaks cxultingly, and with triumph; We have found that pearl of great price, that true treasure; and, having found it, he proclaims it as those lepers, 2 Kings 7. 9, for he knows that he shall have never the less in Christ for others' sharing. (3.) He speaks intelli- gently; We have found the Messias, which was more than had yet been said. John had said, He b
the Lamb of God, and the Son of God, which Andrew compares with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and comparing them together, concludes that he is the Messiah promised to the fathers for it is now that the fulness of time is come. Thus, by making God's testimonies his meditation, he speaks more clearly concerning Christ than ever his teacher had done, Ps. 119. 99.

[2.] He brought to Jesus; would not undertake to instruct him himself, but brought him to the Fountain-head, persuaded him to come to Christ, and introduced him. Now this was, [1.] An instance of true love to his brother, his own brother, so he is called here, because he was very dear to him. Note, We ought with a particular concern and application, to endeavour the spiritual welfare of our friends, as it is here attempted to be done. [2.] It adds both to the obligation and to the opportunity of doing good to their souls. [2.] It was an effect of his day's conversation with Christ. Note, The best evidence of our profiting by the means of grace, is, the piety and usefulness of our conversation afterward. Hereby it appeared that Andrew had been with Jesus, that he was so full of him, that he had become a large fountain for his face. He knew there was enough in Christ for all; and, having tasted that he is gracious, could not rest till those he loved had tasted it too. Note, True grace hates monopolies, and loves not to eat its morsels alone.

2. The entertainment which Jesus Christ gave to Peter, who was never the less welcome for his being influenced by his brother to come, v. 42. Observe, [1.] Christ called him by his name; When Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona. It should seem that Peter was utterly a stranger to Christ, and if so, [1.] It was a proof of Christ's omniscience, that, upon the first sight, without any inquiry, he could tell the name both of him and of his father. The Lord knows them that are his, and their whole case. However, [2.] It was an instance of his condescending grace and favour, that he did thus freely and affably call him by his name, though he was of mean extraction, and vir nnullius nominis—an obscure man. It was an instance of God's favour to Moses, that he knew him by name, Exod. 33. 17. Some observe the signification of these names, Simon—obedient, Jona—a dove. An obedient, dove-like spirit qualifies us to be the disciples of Christ.

[2.] He gave him a new name; Cephas.

[1.] His giving of him a name, speaks Christ's favour to him. A new name speaks some great dignity, Rev. 2. 17. Isa. 62. 2. By this Christ not only wiped off the reproach of his mean and obscure parentage, but adopted him into his family as one of his own.

[2.] The name which he gave him, speaks his fidelity to Christ. Thou shalt be called Cephas; that is Hebrew for a stone; which is by interpretation Peter; so it should be rendered, as Acts 9. 40. Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; the former Hebrew, the latter Greek, for a young ree. Peter's natural temper was stiff, and hardy, and resolute, which I take to be the principal reason why Christ called him Cephas—a stone. When Christ afterward prayed for him, that his faith might not fail, he added to the name he had called him by himself, and at the same time bid him strengthen his brethren, and lay out himself for the support of others, then he made him what he here called him, Cephas—a stone. Those that come to Christ, must come with a fixed resolution to be firm and constant to him, like a stone, solid and steadfast; and it is by his grace that they are so. His saying, Be thou steady, makes them so. Now this does no more prove that Peter was the singular or only rock upon which this church is built, than the calling of James and John, Boanerges, proves them the only sons of thunder; or the calling of Joses, Barnabas, proves him the only son of consolation.

43. The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. 49. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 50. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

We have here the call of Philip and Nathanael. 1. Philip was called immediately to Christ himself not as Andrew, who was directed to Christ by John, or Peter, who was invited by his brother. God has various methods of bringing his chosen ones home to himself. But, whatever means he uses, he is not tied to any. 1. Philip was called in a preventing way; Jesus findeth Philip. Christ sought us, and found us, before we made any inquiries after him. The name Philip is of a Greek original, and much used among the Gentiles, which some make an instance of the degeneracy of the Jewish church at this time, and their conformity to the nations; yet Christ changed not his name. 2. He was called the day following. See how closely Christ applied himself to his business. When work is to be done for God, we must not lose a day. Yet observe, Christ now called one or two a day; but, after the Spirit was poured out, there were thousands a day effectually called, in which was fulfilled ch. 14. 12.

3. Jesus would go forth into Galilee, to call him. Christ will find out all those that are given to him, wherever they are, and none of them shall be lost. 4. We are told, that Philip was of Bethsaida, and Andrew and Peter were so too, v. 44. These eminent disciples received not their honour from, but
reflected honour upon the place of their nativity. Bethsaida signifies the house of nets, because inhabited mostly by fishermen; thence Christ chose disciples, who were to be furnished with extraordinary gifts, and therefore needed not the ordinary advantages of learning. 

II. Nathanael was invited to Christ by Philip, and much is said concerning him. In which we may observe,
1. What passed between Philip and Nathanael, in which appears an observable mixture of pious zeal with weakness, such as is usually found in beginners, that are yet but asking the way to Zion. Here is, (1.) The joyful news that Philip brought to Nathanael, v. 45. As Andrew before, so Philip here, having got some knowledge of Christ himself, rests not till he has made manifest the favour of that knowledge. Philip, though newly come to an acquaintance with Christ himself, yet steps aside to seek Nathanael. Note, When we have found the greatest opportuni- ties of getting good to our own souls, yet even then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others; remembering the words of Christ, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts 20. 35. 

2. What a transport of joy Philip was in, upon this new acquaintance with Christ; "We have found him; we have often talked of, so long wished and waited for; at last, he is come, he is come, and we have found him!" [2.] What an advantage it was to him, that he was so well acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which prepared his mind for the reception of evangelical light, and made the entrance of it the more easy; him of whom Moses and the prophets did write. W宣 was written entirely and from eternity in the book of God, and he knew it as a part, at some times and in divers manners, copied out into the book of the divine revelations. Glorious things were written there concerning the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, Shiloh, the Prophet like Moses, the Son of David, Emmanuel, the Man, the Branch, Messiah, the Prince. Philip had studied these things, and was full of them, which made him ready, as well as he had the natural piety and weaknesses he laboured under; he called Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, whereas he was of Bethlehem; and the Son of Joseph, whereas he was but his supposed Son. Young beginners in religion are subject to mistakes, which time and the grace of God will rectify. It was his weakness to say, We have found him, for Christ found them before they found Christ. He did not yet apprehend, as Paul did, how he had found. Note, When we have the fullest opportunities of getting good to our own souls, yet even then we must seek opportunities of doing good to the souls of others; remembering the words of Christ, It is more blessed to give than to receive, Acts 20. 35. [2.] The objection which Nathanael made against this; (v. 46.) Can there any good come out of Nazareth? Here, [1.] His caution was commendable, that he did not lightly assent to everything that was said, but took it into examination; our rule is, Prove all things. But, [2.] His objection arose from ignorance. If he meant that no good thing could come out of Nazareth, it was owing to his ignorance of the divine grace, as if that were less affected to one place than another, or tied itself to men's foolish and ill-natured observations. If he meant that the Messiah, that great good Thing, could not come out of Nazareth, so far he was right; (Moses, in the law, said that he should come out of Judah, and the prophets had assigned Bethlehem for the place of his nativity;) but then he was ignorant of the matter of fact, that this Jesus was born at Bethlehem; so that the blunder Philip made, in calling him Jesus of Nazareth, occasioned this objection. Note, The mistakes of preachers often give rise to the prejudice of hearers. [3.] The short reply which Philip gave to this objection; Come and see. [1.] It was his weakness, that he could not give a satisfactory answer to it; yet it is the go and come of young beginners in religion. We may know enough to satisfy ourselves, and yet not be able to say enough to silence the cavils of a subtle adversary. [2.] It was his wisdom and zeal, that, when he could not answer the objection himself, he would have him go to one that could; Come, and see. Let not us stand arguing here, and raising difficulties to ourselves, which we cannot get out of; let us let the question with Christ himself, and these difficulties will all vanish presently. (ch. 2.) It is folly to spend that time in doubtful disputation, which might be better spent, and to much better purpose, in the exercises of piety and devotion. Come, and see; not, Go, and see, but, "Come, and I will go along with thee;" as Isa. 2. 3. Jer. 50. 5. From this parley between Philip and Nathanael, we may observe, First, That many people are kept out of the ways of religion by the unreasonable prejudices they have conceived against religion, and the account of some foreign circumstances which do not at all touch the merits of the case. Secondly, The best way to remove the prejudices they have entertained against religion, is, to prove themselves, and make trial of it. Let us not answer this matter before we hear it.

2. What passed between Nathanael and our Lord Jesus. He came, and saw not in vain, (1.) Our Lord Jesus bore a very honourable testimony to Nathanael's integrity; Jesus saw him coming, and met him with favourable encouragement; he said of him to those about him, Nathanael himself being within hearing, Behold an Israelite indeed. Observe, [1.] That he commended him; not to flatter him, or puff him up with a good conceit of himself, but perhaps because he knew him to be the proper heir of an extraordinary and not a melancholy man, one that had hard and mean thoughts of himself, was ready to doubt his own sincerity; and Christ by his testimony put the matter out of doubt. Nathanael had, more than any of the candidates, objected against Christ; but Christ hereby showed that he excused it, and was not extreme to mark what he said amiss, because he knew his heart was upright. He did not rebuke upon him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? and as for Prince, 2. an obscure town in Galilee? But kindly gives him this character, to encourage us to hope for acceptance with Christ, notwithstanding our weakness, and to teach us to speak honourably of those who without cause have spoken slightly of us, and to give them their due praise. [2.] That he commended him for his integrity, First, Behold an Israelite indeed. It is Christ's prerogative to know what men are in their heart; we can but hope the best. The whole nation were Israelites in name, but all are not Israel that are of Israel; (Rom. 9. 6.) here, however, was an Israelite indeed. 1. A sincere follower of the good example of Israel, whose character it was, that he was a plain man, in opposition to Esau's character of a cunning man. He was a genuine son of honest Jacob, not only of blood, but of heart. 2. A sincere professor of the faith of Israel; he was the true son of that race, and lived up to it; he was really as good as he seemed, and his practice of a piece with his profession. He is the Jew, that is one inwardly; (Rom. 2. 29.) so is he the Christian. Secondly, He is one in whom is no guile—that is the character of an Israelite indeed, a Christian indeed; no guile toward men; a man without trick or design; a man that one may trust; no guile toward God, that is, sincere in his repentance for sin, sin
...in his covenanting with God, in whose spirit is no guile, Ps. 32. 2. He does not say, without guilt, but, without guile. Though in many things he is foolish and forgetful, yet in nothing false, nor wickedly departing from God: there is no allowed, approved guilt in him; not painted, though he have his spots; — Behold this Israelite indeed. 1. Take note here of the manner, way, and style, like him. 2. "Admire him; behold and wonder." The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees had so lawneamed the Jewish church and nation, and their religion so degenerated into formality or state-policy, that an Israelite indeed was a man wondered at; a miracle of divine grace, like Job, ch. 1. 8.

Nathanael is much surprized at this spoken word, which gives him a further proof of his omniscience, and a kind memorial of his former devotion.

[1.] Here is Nathanael's modesty, in that he was soon put out of countenance at the kind notice Christ was pleased to take of him; — Whence knowest thou me, me that am unworthy of thy cognizance; who am I, O Lord God? 2 Sam. 7. 18. This was an evidence of his sincerity, that he did not catch at the conversation of the King. He knew Christ knew us better than we know ourselves; we know not what is in a man's heart by looking in his face, but all things are naked and open before Christ, Heb. 4. 12, 13. Dost Christ know us? Let us covet to know him.

[2.] Here is Christ's further manifestation of himself to him; — Before Philip called thee, I saw thee. First, He gives him under God, to understand that he knew him, and so manifests his divinity. It is God's prerogative infallibly to know all persons and all things; by this Christ proved himself to be God upon many occasions. It was prophesied concerning the Messiah that he should be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, that is, in judging the sincerity and degree of the fear of God in others, and that he should not judge after the sight of his eyes. Isa. 11. 2, 3. Here he answers that prediction. See 2 Tim. 2. 19.

Secondly, That before Philip called him, he saw him under the fig-tree; this manifests a particular kindness for him. 1. His eye was toward him before Philip called him, which was the first time that ever Nathanael was acquainted with Christ. Christ has knowledge of us before we have any knowledge of him. Isa. 44. 5. Gal. 4. 9. 2. His eye was upon him when he was under the fig-tree; this was a private token which nobody understood but Nathanael; — When thou wast retired under the fig-tree in thy garden, and thoughtest that no eye saw thee, I had then mine eye upon thee, and saw that which was very acceptable. It is most probable that Nathanael under the fig-tree was employed, as Israel in the field, in meditation, and prayer; and communion with God. Perhaps then and there it was that he solemnly joined himself to the Lord in an inviolable covenant. Christ saw in secret, and by this public notice of it did in part reward him openly. Sitting under the fig-tree notes quietness and composedness of spirit, which much befriended communion with God. See Mic. 4. 4. Zech. 3. 10. Nathanael in the field, in meditation, and prayer, like Israel, he wrestled with God alone, (Gen. 32. 24.) prayed, not like the hypocrites, in the corners of the streets, but under the fig-tree.

Nathanael hereby obtained a full assurance of faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in that noble acknowledgment, (v. 49.) Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel: that is, in short, thou art the Messiah. He confesses Christ's prophetic office, in calling him Rabbi, a title which the Jews commonly gave to their teachers. Christ is the great Rabbi, at whose feet we must all be brought up. Secondly, He confesses his divine nature and mission, in calling him the Son of God; (that Son of God spoken of Ps. 2. 7.) though he had but a human form and aspect, yet having a divine knowledge, the knowledge of the heart, and of things distant and secret, from thence he concludes him to be the Son of God. Thirdly, He confesses, — Thou art the King of Israel; that King of Israel whom we have been long waiting for. If he be the Son of God, he is King of the Israel of God. Nathanael hereby proves himself an Israelite indeed, that he so readily owns and adheres to the King of Israel.

(4.) Christ hereupon raises the hopes and expectations of Nathanael to something further and greater than all this, v. 50, 51. Christ is very tender of young converts, and will encourage good beginnings, though weak, Math. 12. 20.

[1.] He here signifies his acceptance, and (it should seem) his admiration, of the ready faith of Nathanael. He promises him, if he believes and submit to that he has been pleased to show him, a power to work miracles. 

First, In general, — Thou shalt see greater things than these, stronger proofs of my being the Messiah, the miracles of Christ, and his resurrection. Note, 1. To him that hath, and maketh good use of what he hath, more shall be given. 2. Those who truly believe the gospel, will find its evidences grow clearer and stronger to them, and will see more and more cause to believe it. 3. Whatever discoveries Christ is pleased to make of himself to his people while they are here in this world, he hath still greater things than these to make known to them; a glory yet further to be revealed.

Secondly, In particular; — Not thou only, but ye, all ye my disciples, whose faith this is intended for the confirmation of, ye shall see heaven opened that is more than telling Nathanael of his being under the fig-tree. This is introduced with a solemn preface, Verily, verily I say unto you. This command both a fixed attention to what is said as very weighty, and a full assent to it, as undoubtedly true; — I say it, whose word you may rely upon, amen, amen.

Note, 1. The power of heaven and earth, was given to Christ. He concedes all power to him, and, though the Jews often used it at the close of a prayer, and sometimes doubled it: It is a solemn asseveration. Christ is called the Amen, (Rev. 3. 14.) and so some take it here, I the Amen, the Amen, say unto you. I the faithful Witness. Note, The assurances we have of the glory to be revealed, are built upon the word of Christ.

We believe that Christ will do all that is in his power to work miracles; Hereafter, or within a while, or ere long, or from henceforth, ye shall see heaven opened.

1. It is a mean title that Christ here takes to himself; the Son of man; a title frequently applied to him in the gospel, but always by himself. Na-
thanachel had called him the Son of God, and King of
Israel: he calls himself Son of man, (1.) To express his
humility in the midst of the honours done him. (2.) To teach his humanity, which is to be believed as well as his divinity. (3.) To intimate his present state of humiliation, that Nathanael might not expect this King of Israel to appear in external pomp.

2. Jesus said, (John, v. 2.) He that believeth on me, as he ancient Scriptures which were written (Ps. cxix. 57); Ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. 1. Some understand it literally, as pointing at some particular event. Either, (1.) There was some vision of Christ’s glory, in which this was exactly fulfilled, which Nathanael was an eye witness of, as Peter and James and John were of his transfiguration. There were many things which Christ did, and those in the presence of his disciples, which were not written; (ch. 20. 30.) and why not that? Or, (2.) It was fulfilled in the many ministrations of the angels to our Lord Jesus, especially that at his ascension, when heaven was opened to receive him, and the angels ascended and descended, to attend him, and to do him honour, and this in the sight of the disciples. Christ’s ascension was the great proof of his mission, and confirmed the faith of his disciples, ch. 6. 6, 7. Or, (3.) It may refer to Christ’s second coming, to judge the world, when the heavens shall be open, and every eye shall see him, and the angels of God shall ascend and descend about him as attendants on him, every one employed; and a busy day it will be. See 2 Thess. 1. 10.

2. Others take it figuratively, as speaking of a state or series of things to commence from henceforth; and so we may understand it. (1.) Of Christ’s miracles. Nathanael believed, because Christ, as the prophets of old, could tell him things secret; but what is this? Christ is now beginning a dispensation of miracles, much more great and strange than this, as if heaven were opened; and such a power shall be exerted by the Son of man, as if the angels, which excel in strength, were continually attending his orders. Immediately after this, Christ began to work miracles, ch. 2. 11. Or, (2.) Of his mediation, and that blessed intercourse which he hath settled between heaven and earth, which his disciples should by degrees be let into the mystery of. [1.] By Christ, as Mediator, they shall see heaven opened, that we may enter into the holiest by his blood; (Heb. 10. 19, 20.) heaven opened, that by faith we may look in, and at length may go in; may now behold the glory of our Lord, and may enter into joy of our Lord. And, (2.) They shall see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Through Christ we have communion with, and benefit by, the holy angels, and things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled and gathered together. Christ is to us as Jacob’s ladder, (Gen. 28. 12.) by whom angels continually ascend and descend for the good of the saints.

CHAP. II.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had an account of the first disciples whom Jesus called, Andrew and Peter, Philip and Nathanael. These were the first fruits to God and to the Lamb, Rev. 14. 14. Now in this chapter, we have, 1. The account of the first miracle which Jesus wrought—turning water into wine, at Cana of Galilee, (v. 1.) and his appearing at Capernaum, v. 12. 11. The account of the first passover he kept at Jerusalem after he began his public ministry; his driving of the buyers and sellers out of the temple; (v. 13.; 17.) and the sign he gave to those who did believe on him for the works that he did. 22. with an account of some almost believers, that followed him, thereupon, for some time, (v. 23. 25.) but he knew them too well to put any confidence in them.

1. AND the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: 2. And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. 3. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. 4. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. 5. His mother saith unto the servants, Whosoever he saith unto you, do it. 6. And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water-pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. 8. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. 9. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was, (but the servants which drew the water knew,) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom. 10. And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. 11. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

We have here the story of Christ’s miraculous converting of water into wine, at a marriage in Cana of Galilee. There were some few so well disposed as to believe in Christ, and to follow him, when he did no miracle; yet it was not likely that many should be wrought upon till he had something wherewith to answer these that asked, What sign showest thou? He could have wrought miracles before, could have made them the common actions of his life, and the common entertainments of his friends; but miracles being designed for the sacred and solemn seals of his doctrine, he began not to work any till he began to preach his doctrine. Now observe,

1. The occasions of this miracle. Maimonides observes it to be to the honour of Moses, that all the signs he did in the wilderness, he did upon necessity; we needed food, he brought us manna, and so did Christ. Observe, 1. The time; the third day after he came into Galilee. The evangelist keeps a journal of occurrences, for no day passed without something extraordinary and notable. Our Master filled up his time better than his servants do, and never lay down at night complaining, as the Roman emperor did, that he had lost a day.

2. The place; it was at Cana in Galilee, in the tribe of Asher, (Josh. 19. 28.) of which, before, it was said that he shall yield royal dainties, Gen. 49. 20. Christ began to work miracles in an obscure corner of the country, remote from Jerusalem, which was the public scene of action, to show that he sought not honour from men, (ch. 5. 41.) but would put honour upon the lowly. His doctrine and miracles would not be so much opposed by the plain honest Galileans as they would be by the proud and prejudiced rabbins, politicians, and grudgees, at Jerusalem.

3. The occasion itself was a marriage; probably, one or both of the parties were a-kin to our Lord.
Jesus. The mother of Jesus is said to be there, and not to be called, as Jesus and his disciples were, which intimates that she was there as one at home. Observe the honour which Christ hereby put upon the ordinance of marriage, that he graced the solemnity of it, not only with his presence, but with his first miracle; because it was instituted and blessed in innocency, because by it he would still seek a godly seed, because it resembles the mystical union between him and his church, and because he foresaw that in the papal kingdom, while the marriage-ceremony would be unduly dignified, and advanced into a sacrament, the married state would be unduly vilified, as inconsistent with any sacred function. There was a marriage—ςαμας, a marriage-feast, to grace the solemnity. Marriages were usually celebrated with feasts. (Gen. 29. 22. Judg. 14. 10.) in token of joy and friendly respect, and for the confirming of love.

4. Christ and his mother and disciples were principal guests at this entertainment; The mother of Jesus (that was her most honourable title) was there; no mention being made of Joseph, we conclude he was dead before this. Jesus was called, and he came, accepted the invitation, and feasted with them, thus presenting to us the truth that love us to be reconciled to our relations, and sociable with them, though they be mean. Christ was to come in a way different from that of John Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking, Matth. 11. 18, 19. It is the wisdom of the prudent to study how to improve conversation rather than how to decline it.

There was a marriage, and Jesus was called. Note, (1.) It is very desirable, when there is a marriage, to have Jesus Christ present at it; to have his spiritual, gracious presence, to have the marriage owned and blessed by him, the marriage is then honourable indeed; and they that marry in the Lord, (1 Cor. 7. 39.) do not marry without him. (2.) They that would have Christ with them at their marriage, must invite him by prayer; that is the messenger that must be sent to heaven for him; and he will come; Thou shalt call, and I will answer. And he will turn the water into wine.

The disciples also were invited, those five whom he had called, ch. 1. for as yet he had no more; they were his family, and were invited with him. They had thrown themselves upon his care, and they soon find, though he had no wealth, he had good friends. Note, [1.] Those that follow Christ, shall feast with him, they shall fare as he fared, so had Joseph the husband of Mary, ch. 11. 12, 13. Ch. 11. 21. there shall my servant be. [2.] Love to Christ is testified by a love to those that are his, for his sake; our goodness extendeth not to him, but to the saints. Calvin observes how generous the maker of the feast was, though he seems to be but of small substance, to invite four or five strangers more than he thought of, because they were followers of Christ, who having nothing but the word, were able to perform duties of charity and liberality, and true friendship, in the conversation of some meaner persons than among many of higher rank.

II. The miracle itself. In which observe, 1. They wanted wine, v. 3. (1.) There was want at a feast; though much was provided, yet all was spent. While we are in this world we sometimes find ourselves in straits, even then when we think ourselves in plenty; it is perhaps always spending, perhaps all is spent ere we are aware. (2.) There was want at a marriage-feast. Note, They who, being married, are come to care for the things of the world, must expect trouble in the flesh, and count upon disappointment. (3.) It should seem, the occasion of this want, was, Christ and his disciples, because there was more company than they expected when the provision was made; but they who straiten themselves for Christ, shall not lose by him.

2. The mother of Jesus solicited him to assist her friends in this strait. We are told (v. 3—5.) what passed between Christ and his mother upon this occasion. (1.) She acquaints him with the plunge they were at (v. 3.) She saith unto him, They have no wine. Some think that she did not expect him to appear with miraculous supply, (he having as yet wrought no miracle,) but that she would have him make some decent excuse to the company, and make the best of it to save the bridgroom's reputation, and keep him in countenance; or (as Calvin suggests) would have him make up the want of wine with some holy, profitable discourse. But, most probably, she looked for a miracle; for she knew he was appearing as the great Prophet, like unto Moses, who so often seasonably supplied the wants of Israel; and though this was his first public miracle, perhaps he had sometimes relieved her and her husband in their low estate. The bridgroom might have sent out for more wine, but she was for going to the Fountain-head. Note, [1.] We ought to be concerned for the wants and straits of our friends, and would seek our own things, but only their own, and our friends' straits is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to Christ by prayer. [3.] In our addresses to Christ, we must not prescribe to him, but humbly spread our case before him, and then refer ourselves to him to do as he pleases. (2.) He gave her a reprimand for it, for he saw more amiss in it than we do, else he had not treated it so. Here is, [1.] The rebuke itself; Woman, what have I to do with thee? As many as Christ loves, he rebukes and chastens. He calls her Woman, not Mother. When we begin to be assuming, we should be minded what we are, men and women, frail, foolish, and corrupt. The question, τι με σημαντήσης; might be read, What is that to me and thee? What is it to us, if they do want? But it is always used as we render it, What have I to do with thee? as Judges 11. 12. 2 Sam. 16. 10. Ezra. 4. 3. Matth. 8. 29. It therefore bespeaks a resentment, yet not at all inconsistent with the reverence and subjection which he paid to his mother, according to the fifth commandment; (Luke 2. 48.) for there was a time when it was Levi's praise, that he said to his father, I have not known him, Deut. 33. 2. Now this was the devil's work, to separate them in discourse, by interposing in a matter which was the act of his Godhead, which had no dependence on her, and which she was not the mother of. Though, as Man, he was David's Son, and hers; yet, as God, he was David's Lord, and hers, and he would have her know it. The greatest advancements must not make us forget ourselves and our place, nor the familiarity which the covenant of grace admits us to. [2.] To interpose in a kind or degree of presumption. Secondly, It was an instruction to others of his relations, (many of whom were present here,) that they must never expect him to have any regard to his kindred according to the flesh, in his working of miracles, or that therein he should gratify them, who in this matter were no more to him than other people. In the things of God we must not know our kindred. Thirdly, against that idolatry which he foresaw his church would in after-ages sink into, in giving undue honours to the virgin Mary; a crime which the Roman catholics, as they call themselves, are notoriously guilty of, when they call her the queen of heaven, the salvation of the world, their mediator, their life and hope; not only depending upon her merit and intercession, but beseeching her to command her son to do them good; Monstra te esse matrem
—Show that thou art his mother. Jussu matris immuntera salvatoris—Lay thy maternal commands on the Saviour. Does he not here expressly say, when a miracle was to be wrought, even in the days of his humiliation, and his mother did but tacitly hint an intercession, Woman, what have I to do with thee? This was plainly designed either to prevent or aggravate such gross idolatry, such an act of blasphemy. The Son of God is appointed our Advocate with the Father! but the mother of our Lord was never designed to be our advocate with the Son.

[2.] The reason of this reprove; Mine hour is not yet come. For every thing Christ did, and that was done to him, he had his hour, the fixed time and the fittest time, which was punctually observed. First, “My hour is not yet come,” before he was born; he lays his claim from thence upwards; now, that I have begun to act as a Prophet!” So Gregory Nyssen. Fourthly, “Mine hour for working this miracle is not yet come.” His mother moved him to help them when the wine began to fail; (so it may be read, v. 3.) but his hour was not yet come till it was quite spent, and there was a total want; not only to prevent any suspicion of mixing some of the wine which was left, with the water, but to teach us that man’s extremity is God’s opportunity to appear for the help and relief of his people. Then his hour is come, when we are reduced to the utmost strait, and know not what to do. This encouraged those that waited for him, to believe that thong his hour was not yet come, it would come. Note, The delays of mercy are not to be construed the denials of prayer. At the end it shall be known. (3.) Notwithstanding this, she encouraged herself with expectation that he would help her friends in this strait, for she bid the servants observe his orders, v. 5. 1. She took the reproof very submissively, and did not reply to it. It is best not to deserve reprove from Christ, but next best to be meek and quiet under it, and to bear it a kindness, Ps. 141. 5. 2. She kept her hope of Christ’s mercy, that he would yet grant her desire. When we come to God in Christ for any mercy, two things discourage us. First, Sense of our own follies and infirmities; Surely such imperfect prayers as ours cannot speed. Secondly, Sense of our Lord’s frowns and rebukes. Afflictions are continued, deliverances delayed, and God seems angry at our prayers; this was the case of the mother our Lord here, and yet she encourages herself with hope that he will at length give in an answer of peace; to teach us to wrestle with God by faith and fervency in prayer, even when he seems in his providence to walk contrary to us. We must against hope believe in hope, Rom. 4. 18. 3. She directed the servants to have an eye to him immediately, and not to make their applications to an invading multitude, it is possible, before he had done. She quits all pretensions to an influence upon him, or intercession with him; let their souls wait only on him, Ps. 62. 5. 4. She directed them punctually to observe his orders, without disputing, or asking questions. Believing herself to a fault in presuming to him, she cautions the servants to take heed of the same fault, and to attend both his time and his word for supply; “Whatever he saith unto you, do it, even at the end it shall be known. If he saith, Give the guests water, when they call for wine, do it. If he saith, Pour out from the bottoms of the vessels that are spent, do it. He can make a few drops of wine multiply to so many draughts.” Note, These that expect Christ’s favours, must with an implicit obedience observe his orders. The way of duty is the way to mercy; and Christ’s mercies must be obtained by the way of duty. (4.) Christ did at length miraculously supply them; for he is often better than his word, but never worse.

[1.] The miracle itself was, turning water into wine; the substance of water acquiring a new form, and having all the accidents and qualities of wine. Such a transformation is a miracle; but the popish transsubstantiation, the substance changed, the accidents remaining the same, is a monstros. By this Christ showed himself to be the God of nature, who maketh the earth to bring forth wine, Ps. 104. 14, 15. The extracting of the blood of the grape every year from the moisture of the earth, is no less a work of power, though, being according to the common law of nature, it is not such a work of wonder, as that of Christ. The water before was pure, but was not turned into wine; but in this case Christ did it, and by his precept ordered it returned to the water-pots; (so it may be read, v. 6.) There were set there six water- pots of stone. Observe, 1. For what use these water pots were intended—for their legal purifications from ceremonial pollutions, enjoined by the law of God, and many more by the tradition of the elders. The Jews eat not; except they wash often, (Mark 7. 3.) and they used much water in their washing, for which reason there were six large water-pots provided. It was a saying among the Jews, Quod multum conseruit qua super addita—He who uses much water in washing, will gain much wealth in this world. 2. To what use Christ put them, quite different from what they were intended; to be the receptacles of the miraculous wine. Thus Christ came to bring in the grace of the gospel, which is as wine, that cheers God and man, (Judg. 9. 13.) instead of the shadows of the law, which were water, weak and beggarly elements. These were water-pots that had never been used to have wine in them; and of stone, which is not apt to retain the scent of former liquors, if ever they had had wine in them. They contained two or three firkins apiece; or two or three measures, baths, or ephahs; the quantity is uncertain, but very considerable. We may be sure that it was not intended to be all drunk at once, but for a further kindness to the new married couple, as the multiplied oil was to the poor widow, out of which she might pay her debt, and live of the rest, 2 Kings 4. 17. Christ gives himself; gives abundantly, according to his riches in glory. It is the penman’s language to say, They contained two or three firkins, for the Holy Spirit could have ascertained just how much; thus ch. 6. 19. to teach us to speak cautiously, and not confmently, of those things whereof we have not good assurance.
Secondly, the water-pots were filled up to the brim by the servants at Christ's word, v. 7. As Miriam, the servant of the Lord, when God bid him, went to the rock, to draw water; so these servants, when Christ bid them, went to the water, to fetch wine. Note, Since no difficulties can be opposed to the arm of God's power, no improbabilities are to be objected against the word of his command.

Thirdly, The miracle was wrought suddenly, and in such a manner greatly magnified. As soon as Christ had filled the water-pots, presently he said, 

*Draw out now;* (v. 8.) and it was done.

1. Without any ceremony, in the eye of the speculators. One would have thought, as Naaman, he should have come out, and stood, and called on the name of God, 2 Kings 5. 11. No, he sits still in his place, says not a word, but *wills* the thing, and so works it. Note, Christ does great things and marvellous works without noise and commotion, in a hidden way. Sometimes Christ in working miracles, used words and signs, but it was for their sakes that *stood by, ch. 11. 47.*

2. Without any hesitation or uncertainty in his own breast. He did not say, *Draw out now;* and let me taste it, questioning whether the thing were done as he willed it or no; but, with the greatest assurance and confidence, he *willed* it to be done. He recommended it to the master of the feast first. As he knew what he *would* do, so he knew what he *could* do, and made no essay in his work; but as was good, very good, even in the beginning.

Our Lord Jesus directed the servants,

(1.) To *draw it out;* not to let it alone in the vessel, to be admired, but to *draw it out,* to be drank. Note, [1.] Christ's works are all for use; he gives no man a talent to be buried, but to be traded with. Has he turned thy water into wine, given thee knowledge and grace? It is to profit withal; and therefore, *draw out now.* [2.] Those that would know Christ, must make trial of him, must attend upon him in the use of ordinary means, and then may expect extraordinary influences. That which is laid up for all that *fear God, is wrought for them that trust in him, (Ps. 31. 19.)* that by the exercise of faith draw out what is laid up.

(2.) To present it to the governor of the feast. Some think that this governor of the feast was only the chief guest, that sat at the upper end of the table; but if so, surely our Lord Jesus should have had that place, for he was, upon all accounts, the principal Guest; but it seems another had the upper hand; and therefore, in this case, he *laid it, (Matt. 23. 6.)* and chose it, Luke 14. 7. And Christ, according to his own rule, *sat down in the lowest room;* but, though he was not treated as the Master of the feast, he kindly approved himself a Friend to the feast, and if not its Founder, yet its best Benefactor. Others think that this governor was the inspector and monitor of the feast; the same with Plutarch's Symmachus; and thus anciently, that has had enough, and none did exceed, and that there were no indecencies or disorders. Note, Feasts have need of governors, because too many, when they are at feasts, have not the government of themselves. Some think that this governor was the *chaplain, some priest or Levite, that craved a blessing, and gave thanks,* and Christ would have the cup handed him first, so that he might *bless and bless for it,* for the extraordinary tokens of Christ's presence and power were not to supersede or justly out, the ordinary rules and methods of piety and devotion.

Fourthly, The wine which was thus miraculously provided, was of the best and richest wine, which was acknowledged by the governor of the feast; and that it was really so, and not his fancy, is certain, because he knew not whence it was, v. 9, 10, 11. It was certain that this was wine. The governor knew that when he drank it, though he knew not whence it was; the servants knew whence it was, but had not yet tasted it. If the taster had seen the drawing of it, or the drawers had had the tasting of it, something might have been imputed to fancy; but now no room is left for suspicion. 2. That it was the best wine. Note, Christ's works commend themselves to those that know not his Author. The products of nature are the best in their kind. This wine had a stronger body and better flavour, than ordinary. This the governor of the feast takes notice of to the bridegroom, with an air of pleasantness, as uncommon. (1.) The common method was otherwise. Good wine is brought out to the best advantage at the beginning of a feast, when the guests have their heads clear, and their appetites fresh, and can relish it, and will commend it; but when they have well drank, when their heads are confused, and their appetites pall'd, good wine is but thrown away upon them, worse will serve then. See the vanities of all the pleasures of sense; they soon surfeit, but never satisfy; the longer they are enjoyed, the less pleasant they grow. (2.) This bridegroom obliged his friends with a remarkable sign of his respect for them. He had *kept the good wine until now,* not knowing whom they were indebted to for this good wine, he returns the thanks of the table to the bridegroom. *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, Hos. 2. 8.*

Now, (1.) Christ in providing thus plentifully for the guests, though he hereby allows a sober, cheerful use of wine, especially in times of rejoicing, (Ch. 3. 8.) yet he does not invalidate his own caution nor invades it in the least, which is, that our hearts be not at any time, no not at a marriage feast, overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, Luke 21. 34. When Christ provided so much good wine for them that had well drank, he intended to try their sobriety, and to teach them how to abound, as well as how to want. Temperance *perforce,* is a thankless virtue; but if Divine Providence gives us abundance of the delights of sense, and Divine Grace enables us to use them moderately, this is self-denial that is praise-worthy. He also intended that some should be left for the confirmation of the truth of the miracle, to the faith of others. And we have reason to think that the guests at this table were so well taught, or, at least, were now so well awed by the presence of Christ, that none of them abused this licence, though it was so liberal; and these things drawn from this story, may be sufficient at least to certify us against temptations to intemperance.

First, That our meat and drink are the gifts of God's bounty to us, and we owe our liberty to use them, and our comfort in the use of them, to the mediation of Christ; it is therefore ungrateful and impious to abuse them. Secondly, That, wherever we are, Christ has his eye upon us; we should eat bread *be-fore God, (Ezek. 18. 12.)* and then we should not feed ourselves without fear. [2.]

He has given us a specimen of the method he takes, in dealing with those that deal with him, which is to reserve the best for the last, and therefore they must deal upon trust. The recompense of their services and sufferings is reserved for the other world; it is a glory to be revealed. The pleasures of this world are not for us, but for our enemies. The last bite; but the pleasures of religion will be *sacresse for evermore.*

In the conclusion of this story, v. 11. we are told, First, That this was the beginning of miracles which Jesus did. Many miracles had been wrought concerning him at his birth and baptism, and he himself was the greatest miracle of all; but this was the first that was wrought by him. He could have wrought miracles when he disputed with the doc-
tor, but his hour was not come. He had power, but there was a time of the hiding of his power.

 secondly, That herein he manifested his glory; hereby he proved himself to be the Son of God, and his glory to be that of the only-begotten of the Father. He also discovered the nature and end of his office; the power of a God, and the grace of a Saviour, appearing in all his miracles, and particularly in this, manifested the glory of the long expected Messiah.

thirdly, That his disciples believed on him. Those whom he had called, (ch. 1.) who had seen no miracle, and yet followed him, now saw this, shared in it, and had their faith strengthened by it. Note. 1. Even the faith that is true, at first is but weak. The strongest men were once babes, and are the weakest Christians. 2. The manifesting of the glory of Christ is the great confirmation of the faith of Christians.

12. After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days. 13. And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, 14. And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: 15. And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; 16. And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. 17. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. 18. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these things? 19. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. 20. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? 21. But he spake of the temple of his body. 22. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Here we have,

1. The short visit Christ made to Capernaum, v. 12. It was a large and populous city, about a day's journey from Cana; it is called his own city, (Matth. 9. 1.) because he made it his head-quarters in Galilee, and what little rest he had, was there. It was a place of concourse, and therefore Christ chose it, that the fame of his doctrine and miracles might from thence spread the farther. Observe.

i. The company that attended him thither; his mother, his brethren, and his disciples. Wherever Christ went, (1.) He would not go alone, but would take those with him, who had put themselves under his conduct, that he might instruct them, and they might attest his miracles. (2.) He could not go alone, but they would follow him, because they liked the sweetness either of his doctrine or of his wine, ch. 6. 26. His mother, though he had lately given her to understand that in the works of his ministry he should pay no more respect to her than to any other person, yet followed him; not to interfere with him, but to learn of him. His brethren also and relations, whether they could or could not, were wrought upon by the miracle there, and his disciples, who attended him wherever he went. It should seem, people were more affected with Christ's miracles at first than they were afterward, when custom made them seem less strange.

2. The continuance there, which was at this time not many days, designing now only to begin the acquaintance he would afterward improve there. Christ was there to do what he could for his usefulness to one place, because many needed him. And he would teach his followers to look upon themselves but as sojourners in this world; and his ministers to follow their opportunities, and go where their work led them. We do not now find Christ in the synagogues, but he privately instructed his friends, and thus entered upon his work by degrees. It is good for young ministers to accumulate that which they promise, to lay it down in private, that they may with the better preparation, and greater nce, approach their public work. He did not stay long at Capernaum, because the passover was at hand, and he must attend it at Jerusalem; for every thing is beautiful in its season. The less good must give way to the greater, and all the dwellings of Jacob must call to the gates of Zion.

11. The passover he kept at Jerusalem; it is the first after his baptism, and the evangelist takes notice of all the passovers he kept henceforward, which were four in all, the fourth, that at which he suffered, (three years after this,) and half a year was now past since his baptism. Christ, being made under the law, observed the passover at Jerusalem; see Exod. 23. 17. Thus he taught us by his example a strict observance of divine institutions, and a diligent attendance on religious assemblies. He went up to Jerusalem when the passover was at hand, that he might be there with the first. It is called the Jewish passover, because it was peculiar to them; (Christ is our Passover;) now shortly God will no longer own it for his. Christ kept the passover at Jerusalem yearly, ever since he was twelve years old, in obedience to the law; but now that he is entered upon his public ministry, we may expect something more from him than before; and two things we are here told he did there.

1. He purged the temple. v. 14—17. Observe here,

(1.) The first place we find him in at Jerusalem, was, the temple, and it should seem, he did not make any public appearance till he came thither; for his presence and preaching there, were that glory of the latter house, which was to exceed the glory of the former, Hag. 2. 9. Mark it, John 2. 19. I will send my messenger, John Baptist; he never preached in the temple, but the Lord, whom we seek, he shall suddenly come to his temple, suddenly after the appearing of John Baptist; so that this was the time, and the temple the place, when, and where, the Messiah was to be expected.

(2.) The first work we find him at in the temple, was, the purging of it; for so it was foretold there, (Mal. 3. 1.) I will send my messenger, John Baptist; and, according to the method of the reforming kings of Judah, he first purged out what was amiss, (and that used to be passover-work too, as in Hezekiah's time, 2 Chron. 30. 14, 15. and Josiah's, 2 Kings 23. 4, 8c. and then taught them to do well. First purge out the old leaven, and then keep the feast.)
Christ's design in coming into the world, was, to prepare the world; and he expects that all who come to him, should reform their hearts and lives, Gen. 3:15. And this he has taught us by purging the temple.

See here, [1.] What were the corruptions that were to be purged out. He found a market in one of the courts of the temple, that which was called the court of the Gentiles, within the mountain of that house. There, First, They sold oxen, and sheep, and doves, for sacrifice; we will suppose, not for common use, but for the temple. In God's providence, they came out of the country, and could not bring their sacrifices in specie along with them; see Matt. 21:26. This market perhaps had been kept by the pool of Bethesda, (ch. 5:2.) but was admitted into the temple by the chief priests, for filthy lucre; for, no doubt, the rents for standing there, and fees for searching the beasts sold there, and certifying that they were without blemish, would be a considerable revenue to them. Great corruptions in the church owe their rise to the love of money, 1 Tim. 6. 5, 10. Secondly, They changed money, for the convenience of those that were to pay a half-shekel in specie every year by way of poll, for the service of the tabernacle; (Exod. 30. 12.) and, no doubt, the temple was made use of it. (2.) Whence, of course our Lord took to purge out those corruptions. He had seen these in the temple formerly, when he was in a private station; but never went about to drive them out till now, when he had taken upon him the public character of a Prophet. He did not complain to the chief priests, for he knew they countenanced those corruptions.

But he himself,

First. Drove out the sheep and the oxen, and those that sold them, out of the temple. He never used force to drive any into the temple, but only to drive those out that profaned it. He did not seize the sheep and oxen for himself, did not distress the people, or confound them, though he found them damage suisset (actual trespassers) upon his Father's ground; he only drove them out, and their owners with them. He made a scourge of small cords, which, probably, they had filled their sheep and oxen with, and thrown them away upon the ground, hence Christians gather them. Sinners prepare the scours with which they themselves will be driven out from the temple of the Lord. He did not make a scourge to chastise the offenders, (his punishments are of another nature,) but only to drive out the cattle; he aimed no further than at reformation, See Rom. 13. 3, 4. 2 Cor. 10. 8.

Secondly. He poured out the changers' money, νημαται— the small money—the Nummorum Communis. In pouring out the money, he showed his contempt of it; he threw it to the ground, to the earth, as it was. In overthrowing the tables, he showed his displeasure against those that make religion a matter of worldly gain. Money-changers in the temple are the fathers of merchants. In reformation, it is good to make thorough work; he drove them all out and not only threw out the money, but, in overturning the tables, threw out the trade too.

Thirdly. He said to them that sold doves, (sacrifices for the poor,) Take these things hence. The doves, though they took up less room, and were a less nuisance than the oxen and sheep, yet must not be allowed there. The sparrow's and swallows were welcome, that were left to God's providence, (Ps. 84. 3.) but not the doves, that were appropriated to man's profit. God's temple must not be made a pigeon-house. But see Christ's prudence in his zeal. When he drove out the sheep and oxen, the owners might follow them; when he poured out the money, they might gather it up again; but if he had turned the doves flying, perhaps they could not have been retrieved; therefore to them that sold doves, he said, Take these things hence. Note, Discretion must always guide and govern our zeal, that we do nothing unseasonable or offensive to others.

Fourthly. He gave them a good reason for what he did; Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise. Reason why for conviction should accompany force for correction.

1. Here is a reason why they should not profane the temple; because it was the house of God, and not to be made a house of merchandise. Merchandise is a good thing; in the exchange, but not in the temple. This was, (1.) To alienate that which was dedicated to the honour of God; it was sacrilege; it was robbing God. (2.) It was to desecrate that which was solemn and awful, and to make it mean. (3.) It was to disturb and distrust those services in which men ought to be most solemn, serious, and intent. It was particularly an affront to the sons of the stranger in the temple, to be forced to herd themselves with the sheep and oxen, and to be distracted in their worship by the noise of a market, for this market was kept in the court of the Gentiles. (4.) It was to make the business of religion subservient to a secular interest; for the holiness of the place must advance the market, and promote the sale of their commodities. Those make God's house a house of merchandise, &c. Whose minds are filled with cares about worldly business, when they are attending on religious exercises, as these, Amos 8. 5. Ezek. 33. 31. (2.) Who perform divine offices for filthy hire, and sell the gifts of the Holy Ghost, Acts 8. 18.

2. Here is a reason why he was concerned to purge it; because it is my Father's house. And, (1.) Therefore he had authority to purge it. He was Lord, as Son, over it. Heb. 3. 5, 6. In calling God his Father, he intimates that he was the Messiah, of whom it was said, He shall build a house for my name, and I will be his Father, 2 Sam. 7. 12, 13. (2.) Therefore he had a zeal for the purging of it; it is my Father's house, and therefore I cannot bear to see it profaned, and him dishonoured. Note, If God be our Father in heaven, and be therefore our desire that he may be sanctified, it cannot but be our grief to see it polluted.

Christ's purging of the temple thus may justly be reckoned among his wonderful works. Interea omnia signa quaerit Dominus, hoe mibi videtur esse mirabilis—of all Christ's wonderful works, this appears to me the most wonderful. Hieron. Considering, [1.] That he did it without the assistance of his friends; probably, it had been no hard matter to have raised the moh, who had a great veneration for the temple, against these profaners of it; but Christ never countenanced any thing that was tumultuous or disorderly. There was none to uphold, but his own arm did it. [2.] That he did it without the resistance of any of his enemies, either the market-people themselves, or the rulers of them, the priests and rulers, and had the Peaceful Temple—Temple force at their command. But the corruption was too plain to be justified: sinners' own consciences are reformers' best friends; yet that was not all, there was a divine power put forth herein, a power over the spirits of men; and in this non-resistance of theirs that scripture was fulfilled, (Mal. 3. 5, 2.) Who shall stand when he appeareth? only such as have an interest in the church, or which his disciples were made upon it; (v. 17.) They remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. They were somewhat surprised at first, to see him whom they were directed to as the Lamb of God, in such a heat, and him whom they believed to be the King of Israel; take so little state upon him as to do this himself; but one scripture came to their
thoughts, which taught them to reconcile this action both with the meekness of the Lamb of God, and with the idea of the kingdom of God. But speaking of the Messiah, takes notice of his zeal for God's house, as so great, that it even ate him up; it made him forget himself, Ps. 69. 9. Observe,

(1.) The disciples came to understand the meaning of what Christ did, by remembering the scriptures; They remembered now that it was written. Note, The word of God and the works of God do mutually explain and illustrate each other. Our scriptures are expounded by their accomplishment in providence, and difficult providences are made easy by comparing them with the scriptures. See of what great use it is to the disciples of Christ, to be ready and mighty in the scriptures, and to have their memories well stored with scripture-truths, by which they will be furnished for every good work.

(2.) The scripture they remembered was very proper: The zeal of thin house has eaten me up. David was in this a type of Christ, that he was zealous for God's house, Ps. 132. 2, 3. What he did for it, was with all his might; see 1 Chron. 29. 2. The latter part of that verse, (Ps. 69. 9. ) is applied to Christ, (Rom. 15. 3. ) as the former part of it here. All the graces that were to be found among the Old Testament saints, were coincently in Christ, and particularly this of zeal for the house of God, and in the latter times there are none higher types of it. Observe, [1.] Jesus Christ was zealously affected to the house of God his church, loved it, and was always jealous for its honour and welfare. [2.] This zeal did even eat him up; it made him humble himself, and spend himself, and expose himself. My zeal has consumed me, Ps. 119. 139. Zeal for the house of God forbids us to consult our own credit, ease, and safety, when they come in competition with our spiritual service, and sometimes carries on our souls in our duty so far and so fast, that our bodies cannot keep pace with them, and makes us as deaf as our Master was to those who suggested, Share thyself. The grievances here redressed might seem small, and such as should have been connived at; but such was Christ's zeal, that he could not bear even them that sold and bought in the temple. Est hic ecclesia sacramentum adhuc futurum; see what he said to the Jews, John 2. 14, 15. If he had found drunkards in the temple, how much more would he have been displeased?

2. Christ, having thus purged the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. Observe here,

(1.) Their demand of a sign; Then answered the Jews, that is, the multitude of the people, with their leaders. Being Jews, they rather have stood by him, and assisted him to vindicate the honour of their temple; but, instead of that, they objected against it. Note, They who apply themselves in good earnest to the work of reformation, must expect to meet with opposition. And when they could object nothing against the thing itself, they questioned his authority to do it; What sign showest thou unto us, to prove thyself authorized and commissioned to do these things? It was indeed a good work to purge the temple, but what had he to do to undertake it, who was in no office there? They looked upon it as an act of jurisdiction, and that he must prove himself a prophet, yea, more than a prophet. But was not the thing itself sign enough? His ability to drive so many from their posts, without opposition, was a proof of his authority: he that was armed with such a divine power, was surely armed with a divine commission. What aided these buyers and sellers, that they fled, that they were driven back? Surely it was at the presence of the Lord. Ps. 114. 5, 7.) no less a presence.

(2.) Christ's answer to this demand, v. 19. He did not immediately work a miracle to convince them, but gives them a sign in something to come, the truth of this Elizabeth shall appear by the event, according to Deut. 18. 21.

Now, [1.] The sign that he gives them is, his own death and resurrection. He refers them to that which would be. First, His last sign. If they would not be convinced by what they saw and heard, let them wait. Secondly, The great sign to prove him to be the Messiah; for, concerning him it was foretold that he should be bruised, (Isa. 53. 5. ) cut off; (Dan. 9. 26. ) and this should be confirmed. Observe, Ps. 16. 10. These things were fulfilled in the blessed Jesus, and therefore, truly he was the Son of God, and had authority in the temple, his Father's house.

[2.] He foretells his death and resurrection, not in plain terms, as he often did to his disciples, but in figurative expressions; as afterward, when he gave this for a sign, he called it the sign of the prophet Jonas, so here, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Thus spake he to them who were willingly ignorant in parables, that they might not perceive, Matt. 13. 13, 14. They that will not see, shall not see. Nay, this figurative speech used here, proved such a stumbling-block to them, that it was produced in evidence against him, at his trial, to prove him a blasphemer, Matt. 26. 66, 61. Had they humbly asked him the meaning of what he said, no such things would have happened to them, and they might have been a savour of life unto life to them, but they were resolved to cavil, and it proved a savour of death unto death. They that would not be convinced, were hardened, and the manner of the expression of this prediction occasioned the accomplishment of the prediction itself.

First, He foretells his death by the Jews' malice, in these words, Destroy ye this temple; that is, Ye will destroy him, or both. And in another, Ye will destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Note, Christ, even at the beginning of his ministry, had a clear foresight of all his sufferings at the end of it, and yet went on cheerfully in it. It is good, at setting out, to expect the worst. Secondly, He foretells his resurrection by his own power; In three days I will raise it up. There were others that were raised, but Christ raised himself resumed his own life. Now he was to express this by destroying and re-edifying the temple, 1. Because he was now to justify himself in purging the temple, which they had profaned: as if he had said, You that defile the temple, will destroy another; and I will prove my authority to purge what you have defiled, by raising what you will destroy. The profaning of the temple is the destroying of it, and its reformation its resurrection. 2. Because the death of Christ was indeed the destruction of the Jewish temple, the procuring cause of it; and his resurrection was the raising up of another temple, the gospel-church, Zech. 6. 12. The ruins of their place and nation (ch. 11. 48.) were the riches of the world. See Ames 9. 11, Acts 15. 16.

(3.) Their cavil at this answer; (v. 20.) Forty and six years was this temple in building. Temple-work was always slow work, and canst thou make such quick work of it? Now here, [1.] They show some knowledge; they could tell how long the temple was in building. Dr. Lightfoot computes that it was just 46 years from the founding of Zerubbabel's temple, in the second year of Cyrus, to the complete settlement of the temple-service, in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes; and also, that from Herod's beginning to build this temple, in the 18th year of his reign, to this very time, when the Jews said that this was just 46 years; Forty and six years sayd they, hath this temple been built. [2.] They show more ignorance, First, Of the meaning of Christ's words. Note, Men often run into gross mistakes by under-
standing that literally which the scripture speaks figuratively. What abundance of mischief has been done by interpreting, This is my body, after a corporal and carnal manner! Secondly, Of the almighty power of Christ, as if he could do no more than another man. Had they known that this was he who built all things in six days, they would not have made it such an absurdity, that he should build a temple in three days.) The reason of Christ's answer from their cavil. The difficulty is soon solved by explaining the terms; He spake of the temple of his body, v. 21. Though Christ had discovered a great respect for the temple, in purging it, yet he will have us know that the holiness of it, which he was so jealous for, was but typical, and leads us to the consideration of another temple, which that was but a shadow of, the substance of, in the New Testament, Heb. 8. 9. Col. 2. 17. Some think, when he said, Destroy this temple, he pointed to his own body, or laid his hand upon it; however, it is certain that he spake of the temple of his body. Note, The body of Christ is the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was a type.

1. Like the temple, it was built by immediate divine direction; A body hast thou prepared me, 1 Chron. 28. 19. 2. Like the temple, it was a holy house, built together for his habitation, built, as the temple, the habitation of God's glory; there the eternal Word dwelt, the true Shechinah. He is Emmanuel—God with us. [4.] The temple was the place and medium of intercourse between God and Israel; there God revealed himself to them, there they presented themselves and their services to him. Thus by Christ God speaks to us, and we speak to him. worshippers looked toward that house, 1 Kings 8. 50, 33. So we must worship God with an eye to Christ.

3. A reflection which the disciples made upon this, long after, inserted here, to illustrate the story; (v. 22.) When he was risen from the dead, some years after, his disciples remembered that he had said this. We found them, v. 17. remembering what had been written before him, and here remembering what they had heard from him. Note, The memories of Christ's disciples should be like the treasure of the good householder, furnished with things both new and old, Matth. 13. 52. Now observe,

1. [5.] When they remembered that saying; when he was risen from the dead. It seems, they did not at this time fully understand Christ's meaning, for they were as yet but babes in knowledge; but they laid it up in their hearts, and afterward it became both intelligible and useful. Note, It is good to hear for time to come. Isa. 42. 23. The juniors in years and profession should treasure up those truths which at present they do not well understand either the meaning or use of, for they will be serviceable to them hereafter, when they come to greater proficiency. It was said of the scholars of Pythagoras, that his precepts seemed to freeze in them till they were laid up in their hearts, and afterward became both intelligible and useful. So this saying of Christ revived in the memories of his disciples, when he was risen from the dead; and why then? First, Because then the Spirit was poured out to bring things to their remembrance, which Christ had said to them, and to make them both easy and ready to them, ch. 14. 26. That very day that Christ rose from the dead, he opened their understandings, Luke 24. 45. Secondly, Because then the saying of Christ was fulfilled, when the temple of his body had been destroyed, and was raised again, and that upon the third day, then they remembered this among other words which Christ had said to this purport. Note, It contributes much to the understanding of the scripture, to observe the fulfilling of the scripture. The event will expound the prophecy.

[2.] What use they made of it; They believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had said: their belief of these was confirmed, and received fresh support and vigour. They were led by these words to believe, (Luke 24. 25. but they were sure. The scripture and the word of Christ are here put together, not because they concur and exactly agree together, but because they mutually illustrate and strengthen each other. When the disciples saw both what they had read in the Old Testament, and that they had heard from Christ's own mouth, fulfilled in his death and resurrection, they were the more confirmed in their belief of both.

23. Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast-day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. 24. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men; 25. And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.

We have here an account of the success, the poor success, of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, while he kept the passover there. Observe,

I. That our Lord Jesus, when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, did preach and work miracles. People's believing on him, implied that he preached; and it is expressly said, They saw the miracles he did. He was now in Jerusalem, the holy city, whence the word of the Lord was to go forth; his residence was most in Galilee, and therefore, when he was in Jerusalem, he was very busy. The time was holy time, the feast day, time appointed for the service of God; at the passover the Levites taught the good knowledge of the Lord, (2 Chron. 30. 22.) and Christ took that opportunity of preaching, when the company of people was great, and thus he would own and honour the divine institution of the passover.

II. That hereby many were brought to believe in his name, to acknowledge him a Teacher come from God, as Nicodemus did, (ch. 3. 2.) a great Prophet; and, probably, some of those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, believed him to be the Messiah promised, so ready were they to welcome the first appearance of that bright and morning Star.

III. That yet Jesus did not commit himself unto them; (v. 23.) deivnos +vov; eva; avtov;—He did not trust himself with them. It is the same word which is used for believing in him. So that to believe in Christ, is to commit ourselves to him and to his guidance. Christ did not see cause to repose any confidence in these new converts at Jerusalem, where he had many enemies that sought to destroy him; either, 1. Because they were false, at least, some of them, and would betray him, if they had an opportunity of it; or, 2. They were weak, and had more disciples that he could trust among the Galileans, than among the dwellers at Jerusalem. In dangerous times and places, it is wisdom to take heed whom you confide in; μιαν την εμπιστευσε ἐναθεοτότεν;—learn to distrust. Or, 2. Because they were weak, and I would hope that this was the worst of it: not that they were treacherous, and designed him a mischief; but, (2.) They were timorous, and wanted zeal and courage, and might perhaps be frightened to do a wrong thing. In times of difficulty and danger, cowards are not fit to be trusted. Or, (2.) They were tumultuous, and wanted discretion and conduct. These in Jerusalem perhaps had their expectations more raised than others of the temporal reign of the Messiah, and, in that expectation, would be ready to give some bold strokes at the
government, if Christ would have committed himself to them, and put himself at the head of them: but he would not, for his kingdom is not of this world. We should be shy of turbulent, unquiet people, as our Master here was, though they process to believe in Christ as these did.

IV. That the reason why he did not commit himself to them, was, because he knew them, (v. 25.) knew the wickedness of some and the weakness of others. The evangelist takes this occasion to assert Christ's omniscience.

1. He knew all men, not only their names and faces, as is impossible for us to know many, but their nature, dispositions, affections, designs, so as we do not know any man, scarcely ourselves. He knows all men, for his powerful hand made them all, his piercing eye sees them all, sees into them. He knows his subtle enemies, and all their secret projects; his false friends, and their true characters; what they really are, whatever they pretend to be. He knows them that are truly his, knows their integrity, and knows their infirmity too. He knew their frame.

2. He needed not that any should testify of man. His knowledge was not by information from others, but by his own infallible intuition. It is the infallibility of earthly princes, that they must see with other men's eyes, and hear with other men's ears, and take things as they are represented to them; but Christ goes openly upon his own knowledge. Angels are his messengers, but not his spies, for his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2 Chron. 16. 9. This may comfort us in reference to Satan's accusations, that Christ will not take men's characters from him.

3. He knew what was in man; in particular persons, in the nature and race of man. We know what is done by men; Christ knows what is in them, tries the heart and the reins. This is the prerogative of that essential, eternal Word, Heb. 4. 12, 13. We invade his prerogative, if we presume to judge men's hearts. How fit is Christ to be the Saviour of men, very fit to be the Physician, who has such a perfect knowledge of the patient's state and case, temper and distemper; knows what is in him! How he also to be the Judge of all? For the judgment of him who knows men, all in men, must needs be according to truth.

Now this is all the success of Christ's preaching and miracles at Jerusalem, in this journey. The Lord comes to his temple, and none come to him, but a parcel of weak, simple people, that he can neither have credit from, nor put confidence in; yet he shall at length see of the travail of his soul.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's discourse with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, concerning the great mysteries of the gospel, which he here privately let him into, v. 1. . 21. II. John Baptist's discourse with his disciples concerning Christ, upon occasion of his coming into the neighbourhood where he was. (v. 22, 26.) in which he fairly and faithfully resigns all his honour and interest to him. (v. 27.)

THERE was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. 9. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10. Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? 13. And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven. 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; 15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. 19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: 21. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

We found, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that few were brought to Christ at Jerusalem; yet here was one, a considerable one; it is worth while to go a great way for the salvation though out of one soul. Observe, I. What this Nicodemus was. Not many mighty and noble are called; yet some are, and here was one. Not many of the rulers, or of the Pharisees; yet, 1. This was a man of the Pharisees, bred to learning, a scholar. Let it not be said that all Christ's followers are unlearned and ignorant men. The principles of the Pharisees and the peculiar
ties of their sect, were directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity; yet there were some in whom even those high thoughts were cast down, and brought into obedience to Christ. The grace of Christ is able to subdue the greatest opposition. 2. He was a ruler of the Jews, a member of the great sanhedrin, a senator, a privy-councillor, a man of authority in Jerusalem. Bad as things were, there were some rulers well inclined, who yet could do little good, because the stream was so strong against them; they were terrorized by the majority, and yoked with those that were corrupt, so that the good with God would do, they could not do; yet Nicodemus continued in this place, and did what he could, when he could not do what he would.

II. His solemn address to our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 2. See here,

1. When he came; He came to Jesus by night. Or, [1.] He made him a private and particular address to Christ, and did not think it enough to hear his public discourses. He resolved to talk with him by himself, where he might be free with him. Personal converse with skilful, faithful ministers about the affairs of our souls, would be of great use to us, Mal. 2. 7.

2. He made him address by night, which may be considered, either, [1.] As an act of prudence and discretion. Christ was engaged all day in the public work, and he would not interrupt him then; nor expect his attendance then, but observed Christ's hour, and waited on him when he was at leisure. Note, Private advantages to ourselves and our own families, must give way to those that are public and of more general use. The greater good must be preferred before the less. Christ had many enemies and persecutors; yet he would not come to him, lest if the chief priests had known it, they should have been the more enraged against Christ. [2.] As an act of zeal and forwardness. Nicodemus was a man of business, and could not spare time all day to make Christ a visit, and therefore he would rather take time from the diversions of the evening, or the rest of the night, than not converse with Christ. Then, when others were sleeping, he was getting knowledge, as David by meditation, Ps. 1. 2. 6, and 119. 148. Probably, it was the very next night after he saw Christ's miracles, and he would not slip the first opportunity of pursuing his convictions. He knew not how soon Christ might leave the town, nor what might happen betwixt that and another feast, and therefore would lose no time. In the night, his converse with Christ would be more free, and less liable to disturbance. These were Notae Christianae.—Christian nights; much more instructive than the Notae Atticae.—Attic nights. Or, [3.] As an act of fear and cowardice. He was afraid, or ashamed, to be seen with Christ, and therefore came in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites, especially among the rulers, who have a better affection to Christ than they own. But the great heart and the good would of God is here. But observe, First, Though he came by night, Christ bid him welcome, accepted his integrity, and pardoned his infirmity; he considered his tender, which perhaps was timorous, and the temptation he was in from his place and office; and hereby taught his ministers to become all things to all men, and to encourage good beginnings, though they are wearisome. Paul furnished partly to them of reparation, Gal. 2. 2. Secondly, Though now he came by night, yet afterward, when there was occasion, he owned Christ publicly, ch. 7. 50.—19. 39. The grace which is at first but a grain of mustard-seed, may grow to be a great tree. 2. What he said. He did not come to talk with Christ about politics and state-affairs, (though he was a ruler,) but about the concern of his own soul and its salvation, and, without circumlocutions, comes presently to the business; he calls Christ Rabbi, which signifies a great Man; see Isa. 19. 15. 23. Shall he send them a Saviour, and a great Saviour and a Rabbi; so the word is. There are hopes of those who have a respect for Christ, and think and speak honourably of him. He tells Christ how far he had attained; we know that thou art a Teacher. Observe,

(1.) His assertion concerning Christ; Thou art a Teacher, which signifies he was not acquainted or ordained by men, as other teachers, but supplied with divine inspiration and divine authority. He that was to be the sovereign Ruler, came first to be a Teacher; for he would rule with reason, not with rigour, by the power of truth, not of the sword. The world lay in ignorance and mistake; the Jewish teachers were corrupt, and caused them to err; it is time for a better Teacher. He came a Teacher from God, the Lord our Teacher. He came a Saviour from God, the Father of mercies, in pity to a dark, deceived world; from God as the Father of lights, and Fountain of truth; all the light and truth which we may venture our souls upon.

(2.) His assurance of it; We know, not only I, but others; so he took it for granted, the thing being so plain and self-evident. Perhaps he knew that there were divers of the Pharisees and rulers with whom he had converse, that they were sensible of Christ's power and victories, but had not the grace to own it. Or, we may suppose that he speaks in the plural number, (We know,) because he brought with him one or more of his friends and pupils, to receive instructions from Christ, knowing them to be of common concern. “Master,” saith he, “we come with a desire to be taught to be thy scholars, for we are fully satisfied that thou art a Teacher, that thou art a Teacher as the Saviour and the Teacher.”

(3.) The ground of this assurance; No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Here, [1.] We are assured of the truth of Christ's miracles, and that they were not counterfeit. Here was Nicodemus, a judicious, sensible, inquisitive man, one that had all the reason and opportunity imaginable to take an invidious view of Christ and his discourses, so fully satisfied that there were real miracles, that he was wrought upon by them to go contrary to his interest, and the stream of those of his own rank who were prejudiced against Christ.

[2.] We are directed what inference to draw from Christ's miracles; Therefore we are to receive him as a Teacher come from God. His miracles were his credentials. The course of nature could not be altered but by the power of the God of nature, who, we are sure, is the God of truth and goodness, and would never set his seal to a lie or a cheat.

[3.] The discourse between Christ and Nicodemus hereupon, or, rather, the sermon Christ preached to him; the contents of it, and that perhaps an abstract of Christ's public preaching; see v. 11, 12.

Four things our Saviour here discourses of.

I. Concerning the necessity and nature of regeneration and the new birth, v. 3—8.

Now we must consider this, 1. As pertinently answered to Nicodemus's address. Jesus answered, v. 3. This answer was either, (1.) A rebuke of what he saw defective in the address of Nicodemus. It was not enough for him to admire Christ's miracles, and acknowledge his mission, as only a Teacher; it is plain that he expected the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah, now shortly to appear; he is betimes aware of the dawning of that day; and, according to the common notion of the Jews, he expects it to appear in external pomp and power; he doubts not but this Jesus who works these miracles, is either the Messiah, or his Prophet, and
therefore makes his court to aim, compliments him, and so hopes to secure a share to himself of the advantages of that kingdom. But Christ tells him that he can have no benefit by that change of the state, unless there be a change of the Spirit, of the principles and dispositions, equivalent to a new birth. Nicodemus came by night; "But this will not do," saith Christ. His religion must be owned before men; so Dr. Hammond. Or. (2.) A reply to what he saw designed in his address. When Nicodemus owned Christ a Teacher come from God, one intrusted with an extraordinary revelation from heaven, he plainly intimated a desire to know what it was, and a readiness to receive it; and Christ gives it him.

2. We may consider this as positively and velumiously settled by our Lord Jesus; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, I, the Amen, the Amen, say it; so it may be read: "I the faithful and true Witness. This matter is settled irreversibly, that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. "I say it to thee, though a Pharisee, though a master in Israel. Observe,

(1.) What it is that is required; to be born again; that is, [1.] We must live a new life. Birth is the beginning of life. We must be born anew for a new life, as those that have hitherto lived either much amiss, or to little purpose. We must not think to patch up the old building, but begin from the foundation.

[2.] We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, new aims. We must be born anew, which signifies both denovo—again, and desiderant—have from above. First, We must be born anew; so the word is taken, Gal. 4. 9. and in v. 6. —from the beginning, Luke 1. 3. By our first birth we were corrupt, shaped in sin and siniquity; we must therefore undergo a second birth, our souls must be fashioned and enlivened anew. Secondly, We must be born from above, (so the word is used by the evangelist; ch. 3. 31. —19. 11.) and I take it to be especially intended here, not excluding the other; for to be born from above, supposes being born again. But this new birth has its rise from heaven, (ch. 1. 13.) and its tendency to heaven: It is to be born to a divine and heavenly life, a life of communion with God and the upper world, and, in order to this, it is to partake of a divine nature, and bear the image of the heavenly.

(2.) The indispensable necessity of this; "Except a man (any one that partakes of the human nature, and, consequently, of the corruptions of that, except he, be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God; the kingdom of the Messiah began in grace, and perfected in glory." Except we be born from above, we cannot see this. That is, [1.] We cannot understand the nature of it. Such is the nature of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, (in which Nicodemus desired to be instructed,) that the soul must be new-modelled and moulded; this new nature is a spiritual one. If he be capable of receiving and understanding them, 1. Cor. 2. 14. [2.] We cannot receive the comfort of it; cannot expect any benefit by Christ and his gospel, absolutely necessary to our happiness here and hereafter. Considering what we are by nature, how corrupt and sinful; what God is, in whom alone we can be happy, and what heaven is, to which the perfection of our happiness is reserved; it is not by our natural birth that we can be born again; we must be born again; because it is impossible that we should be happy, if we be not holy; see 2 Cor. 6. 11, 12.

This great truth of the necessity of regeneration being thus solemnly laid down,

First, It is objected against by Nicodemus, (v. 4.) How can a man be born when he is old, old as I am? [2.]—being an old man? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? He can appears. 1. His weakness in knowledge; what Christ spake spiritually, he seems to have understood after a corporeal and carnal manner; as if there were no other way of regenerating and new-moulding an immortal soul, than by new- framing the body, and bringing that back to the rock out of which it was hewn; as if there were such a connexion between the soul and the body, that there could be no fashioning the heart anew but by forming the bones anew. Nicodemus, as the other Jews, valued himself, no doubt, very much on his first birth, and the dignities and privileges of that; the place of it, the holy land, perhaps the holy city; his parentage, such as that which Paul could have gloried in, Phil. 3. 5. And therefore it is a great surprise to him to hear Jesus say, that he must be born again. It is folly to think that he could be better bred and born, than bred and born an Isaac, or born any other birth stand fairer for a room in the kingdom of the Messiah? Indeed they looked upon a proselyted Gentile to be as one born again, or born anew; he could not imagine how a Jew, a Pharisee, could ever better himself by being born again: he therefore thinks if he must be born again, it must be of that bare him first. They that are proud of their first birth, or their parentage, are most in need of a second birth. His willingness to be taught. He does not turn his back upon Christ because of this hard saying, but ingenuously acknowledges his ignorance, which implies a desire to be better informed; and so I take this, rather than that he had such gross notions of the new birth Christ spake of; "Lord, make me to understand this, for it is a riddle to me; I am such a fool as to know no other way for a man to be born than of his mother." When we meet with that in the things of God, which is dark, and hard to be understood, we must with humility and industry continue our attendance upon the means of knowledge, till God shall reveal even that unto us.

Secondly, It is opened and further explained by our Lord Jesus, v. 3. —3. From the objection he takes occasion, 1. To repeat and confirm what he had said; (v. 3.) "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, the very same that I said before." Note, The word of Christ is not yea and nay, but yea and amen; what he hath said he will abide by, whoever saith against it; nor will he retract any of his sayings for the ignorance and mistakes of men. Though Nicodemus understood not the mystery of regeneration, yet Christ asserts the necessity of it as positively as before.

Note. It is folly to think that new birth is of all evangelical precepts, by pleading that they are unintelligible, Rom. 3. 3, 4.

2. To expound and clear what he had said concerning regeneration; for the explication of which he further shows,

(1.) The Author of this blessed change, and who it is that works it. To be born again is to be born of the Spirit, v. 5. It is folly to think that any wisdom or power of our own, but by the power and influence of the blessed Spirit of grace. It is the sanctification of the Spirit, (1 Pet. 1. 2.) and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Tit. 3. 5. The word he works by, is his inspiration, and the heart to be wrought on, he has access to.

(2.) The nature of this change; and what that is which is wrought; it is spirital, Tit. 3. 5. That are generated to a new life, and refined from the dross and dregs of sensuality. The dictates and interests of the rational and immortal soul have retrieved the dominion they ought to have over the flesh. The Pharisees placed their religion in external purity, and external performances; and it would be a mighty change indeed with them, no less than a new birth, to become spiritual.

(3.) The necessity of this change.
ST. JOHN, III.

[1.] Christ here shows that it is necessary in the nature of the thing, for we are not fit to enter into the kingdom of God till we are born again; (v. 6.) That which is born of the flesh, is flesh. Here is our malady, and the causes of it, which are such as spoil what there is not remedy but we must be born again.

First. We are here told what we are; we are flesh, not only corporeal, but corrupt, Gen. 6. 3. The soul is still a spiritual substance, but so wedded to the flesh, so captivated by the will of the flesh, so in love with the delights of the flesh, so employed in making provision for the flesh, that it is justly called flesh; it is carnal. And what communion can there be between God, who is a Spirit, and a soul in this condition?

Secondly. How we came to be so; by being born of the flesh. It is a corruption that is bred in the bone with us, and therefore we cannot have a new nature, but we must be born again. The corrupt nature, which is flesh, takes rise from our first birth; and therefore the new nature, which is Spirit, must take rise from a second birth. Nicodemus spake of entering again into his mother's womb, and being born; but, if he could do so, to what purpose? If he were born of his mother a hundred times, that would not mend the matter, for still that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; a clean thing cannot be made clean, and another original, must be born of the Spirit, or he cannot become spiritual. The case is, in short, this; though man is made to consist of body and soul, yet his spiritual part had then so much the dominion over his corporeal part that he was denominated a living soul; (Gen. 2. 7.) but by indulging the appetite of the flesh, in eating forbidden fruit, he prostituted that just dominion of the soul to the tyranny of sensual lust, and became no longer a living soul, but a flesh; Dust thou art. The living soul became dead and inactive; thus in the day he sinned, he surely died, and so he became earthly. In this degenerate state, he beget a son in his own likeness, he transmitted the human nature, which had been entirely deposited in his hands, thus corrupted and depraved: and in the same plight it is still propagated. Corrupt nature is transmitted from father to son, Eph. 2. 3. shaped in iniquity, which makes it necessary that the nature be changed. It is not enough to put on a new coat, or a new face, but we must put on the new man, we must be new creatures.

[2.] Christ makes it further necessary, by his own word; (v. 7.) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. First, Christ had said it, and he as himself never did, nor ever will, unsay it, so all the world cannot gainsay it; that we must be born again. He who is the great Lawgiver, whose will is a law; he who is the great Mediator of the new covenant, and has full power to settle the terms of our reconciliation to God and happiness in him; he who is the great Physician of souls, knows their case, and what is necessary to their cure, hath said, Ye must be born again; and said unto thee that which all are concerned in, Ye must, ye all, one as well as another, ye must be born again; not only the common people, but the rulers, the masters in Israel. Secondly, We are not to marvel at it; for, when we consider the holiness of the God with whom we have to do, the great design of our redemption, the depravity of our nature, and the power of purification of the happiness set before us, we shall not think it strange that so much stress is laid upon this as the thing needful, that we must be born again.

(4.) This change is illustrated by two comparisions.

[1.] The regenerating work of the Spirit is compared to water; v. 5. To be born again is to be born of water, and of the Spirit, that is, of the Spirit working like water; (as Matt. 3. 11.) with the Holy Ghost and with fire, means, with the Holy Ghost as with fire.

First. That which is primarily intended here, is to show that the Spirit, in sanctifying a soul, 1. Cleanses and purifies it as water; takes away its filth, by which it was unfit for the kingdom of God. It is the washing of regeneration, Tit. 3. 5. Ye are washed, I Cor. 6. 11. See Ezek. 36. 25. 2. Cools and refreshes it, as water doth the hunted and the weary traveller. The Spirit is compared to water, Isa. 44. 3. ch. 7. 38. 39. In the first creation, God made the world out of the water, Gen. 1. 6. In the second creation, he made the world out of the water, Gen. 3. 20. in allusion to which, perhaps, they that are born from above, are born of water.

Secondly. It is probable that Christ had an eye to the ordinance of baptism, which John had used and he himself had begun to use. You must be born again of the Spirit, which regeneration by the Spirit should be signified by washing with water, as the visible sign of that spiritual grace; not that all they, and they only, that are baptized, are saved; but without that new birth which is wrought by the Spirit, and signified by baptism, none shall be looked upon as the protected, privileged subjects of the kingdom of heaven. The Jews cannot partake of the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom they had so long looked for, unless they first were justified by being justified by the works of the law, and submit to the baptism of repentance, the great gospel-duty, for the remission of sins, the great gospel-privilege.

[2.] It is compared to wind; (v. 7.) The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is every man that is born of the Spirit. The same word (πνεύμα) signifies both the wind and the Spirit. The Spirit came upon the apostles in a rushing mighty wind, Acts 2. 2. He stirreth up plagues of conscience on the hearts of sinners, as computed to the breathing of the wind, (Ezek. 37. 9.) and his sweet influences on the souls of saints, to the north and south wind, Cant. 4. 16. This comparison is here used to show, First. That the Spirit, in regeneration, works arbitrarily, and as a free Agent. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and doth not attend man's will. If the wind listeth to sweep over the corn, it doeth it; God directs it, it fulfilh his word, Ps. 148. 8. The Spirit dispenses his influences where and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree, he pleases: dividing to every man severally as he will, I Cor. 12. 11. Secondly. That he works powerfully, and with evident effects; Thou hearest the sound thereof, though its causes are hidden, its effects are manifest. When the soul is brought to mourn for sin, to groan under the burden of corruption, to breath after Christ, to cry, Abba—Father, then we hear the sound of the Spirit; we find he is at work, as Acts 9. 11. Behold, he prays.

Thirdly. That he works mysteriously, and in secret, hidden ways: Thou canst not tell whence it comes, or whither it goeth. How great Nicodemus' riddle was, a riddle to us; so the manner and methods of the Spirit's working are a mystery. Which way went the Spirit? 1 Kings 22. 24. See Eccl. 11. 5. and compare it with Ps. 139. 14. 11. Here is a discourse concerning the certainty and subtlety of gospel-truths, which Christ takes occasion for from the weakness of Nicodemus.

Here is, 1. The objection which Nicodemus still made to the doctrine, before we consider these things he? Christ's explication of the doctrine of the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it never the clearer to him. The corruption of nature, which makes it necessary, and the way of the Spirit, which makes it practicable, are as much mysteries to him as the thing itself: though he had in general owned Christ a divine Teacher, yet he was unwilling to receive
his teachings, when they did not agree with the no-
tions he had imbibed. Thus many profess to ad-
imit the doctrine of Christ in general, and yet will
never believe the truths of Christianity, nor sub-
mit to the laws of it, further than they please. Christ
shall be their Teacher, provided they may choose
their lesson. Now here,
(1.) No man knew himself ignorant of Christ's
message, after all: "How can these things be? They
are things I do not understand, my capacity will not
reach them." Thus the things of the Spirit of God
are foolishness to the natural man. He is not only
estranged from them, and therefore they are foolish-
ness; but prejudiced against them, and therefore
they are foolishness to him.
On the other hand, the truth was unintelligible to
him, (so he was pleased to make it,) he questions
the truth of it: as if, because it was a jurisprud
ce to him, it was a chimney in itself. Many have such
an opinion of their own capacity, as to think that
that cannot be proved, which they cannot believe;
by wisdom they knew not Christ.
2. The reproof which Christ gave him for his
disputes and ignorance; "Are you a master in Israel?
said the ignorant teacher, or tutor, one who sits in Mesec's
chair, and yet not only unacquainted with the doc-
tine of regeneration, but incapable of understand-
ing it. This word is a reproof, (1.) To those that
undertake to teach others, and yet are ignorant and
unskilful in the word of righteousness themselves.
(2.) To those that spend their time in learning and
teaching notions and ceremonies in religion, natures and
breeds; which though they say they are of which is practical, and tends to reform the
and life. Two words in the reproof are very
emphatical. [1.] The place where his lot was cast ; in
Israel, where there was such great plenty of the
means of knowledge, where divine revelation was.
He might have learned this out of the Old Testa-
ment. [2.] The things he was thus ignorant in;
these things, these necessary things, these great
things, these divine things; he never could read Ps.
3. Christ's discourse, hereupon, of the certainty
and sublimity of gospel-truths; (v. 11.—13.) to show
the folly of those who make strange of these things,
and to recommend them to our search. Observe
here,
(1.) That the truths Christ taught, were very
certain, and what we may venture upon; (v. 11.)
We speak that we do know, we; whom does he
mean beside himself? Some understand it of those
that bore witness to him, and with him, on earth,
the prophets and John Baptist; they spake what
they knew, and had seen, and were themselves
abundantly satisfied in: divine revelation carries its
own proof along with it. Others, of those that bore
witness from heaven, the Father and the Holy
Ghost; the Father was with him, the Spirit of the
Lord was upon him; therefore he speaks in the
plural number, as ch. 14. 23. We will come unto
him. Observe, [1.] That the truths of Christ are
of undoubted certainty. We have all the reason in
the world to be assured, that the sayings of Christ
are faithful sayings, and such as we may venture our
safety on. The divine Witness, who would not go about to deceive us, but con-
tent Witness, who could not himself be deceived;
We testify that we have seen. He spake not upon
hearsay, but upon the clearest evidence, and there-
fore with the greatest assurance. What he spake of
God, of the invisible world, of heaven and hell, of
the divine will concerning us, and the counsels of
peace, was what he knew and had seen, for he was
by him, as one brought up with him, Prov. 8. 30.
Whatever Christ spake, he spake of his own know-
l edge. [2.] That the unbelief of sinners is greatly
aggravated by the infallible certainty of the truths
of Christ. The things are thus sure, thus clear;
and yet ye receive not our witness. Multitudes to be
unbelievers of that, which yet (so eminent are the
motives of credibility) they cannot disbelieve!
(2.) The truths Christ taught, though communi-
cated in language and expressions borrowed from
the common modes of human thought, are yet so
sublime and heavenly; this is intimat
v. 12. "If I have told them earthly things, I have
told them the great things of God, in similitudes taken
from earthly things, to make them the more easy
dintelligible, as that of the new birth and the
wind, if I have thus accommodated myself to your
(capacities, and inspired to you in your own language,
you cannot misunderstand what I said; for if you
were good, and do not understand, I should accomodate
myself to the nature of the things, and speak with
the tongue of angels, that language which mortals
cannot utter? If such familiar expressions be stum-
bling-blocks, what would abstract ideas be, and
spiritual things, painted properly?" Now we may
learn hence. [1.] To admire the height and depth of
the textbook of the New Testament, and its great
truths of truthness. The things of the gospel are heavenly
things, out of the road of the inquiries of human
reason, and much more out of the reach of its dis-
covers. [2.] To acknowledge with thankfulness the
condescension of Christ, that he is pleased to suit the
manner of the gospel-revelation to our ca-
pacities, to speak as to children. He considers
our frame, that we are of the earth, and our place,
that we are among earthly things, not heavenly
things; but he speaks us earthly things, and makes things sensible
the vehicle of things spiritual, to make them the more
easy and familiar to us. Thus he has done both in
parables and in sacraments. [3.] To lament the
corruption of our nature, and our great unaptness
to receive and entertain the truths of Christ. Earthly
things are despised because they are vulgar, and
heavenly things because they are abstruse; and so
whatever method is taken, still some fault or other
is found with it; (Matth. 11. 17.) but Wisdom is, and
will be, justified of her children, notwithstanding.
(3.) Our Lord Jesus, and he alone, was fit to re-
veal to us a doctrine thus certain, thus sublime;
(v. 13.) No man besides hath ascended up into
heaven.
[3.] None but Jesus Christ was able to reveal to
us the will of God for our salvation. Nicodemus
addressed Christ as a Prophet; but he must know
that he is greater than all the Old-Testament
prophets, for none of them had ascended into heaven.
They wrote by divine inspiration, but we: of their
own knowledge; see ch. 1. 18. Moses ascended into the
mount, but not into heaven. No man hath
attained to the certain knowledge of God and heav-
ens things so as Christ has; see Matth. 11. 17.
It is not for us to send to heaven for instructions,
we must wait to receive what instructions Heaven
will send to us; (see Prov. 30. 4. Dext. 30. 12.
[2.] Jesus Christ is able, and fit, and every way
qualified, to reveal the will of God to us; for it is he
that came down from heaven, and is in heaven. He
had said, (v. 12.) How shall ye believe, if I tell you
of heavenly things, now from an invisible to those heavenly things which he
could tell them of, when he tells them of one that
came down from heaven, and yet is the Son of
Man; is the Son of man, and yet is in heaven.
If the regeneration of the soul of man was such
a mystery, what then is the incarnation of the Son of
God? These are divine and heavenly things indeed.
We have here an intimation of Christ's two distinct
natures in one person; his divine nature, in that he
came down from heaven; his human nature, in that
he is the Son of man; and that of these two,
in that, while he is the Son of man, yet he is in heaven. Secondly, He gives them a proof of his ability to speak to them heavenly things, and to lead them into the arcana of the kingdom of heaven, by telling them,

1. That he came down from heaven. The intercourse settled between God and man, began above; the beginning of it was that he did not come from this earth, but came down from heaven. We love him, and send to him, because he first loved us, and sent to us. Now this speaks, (1.) Christ’s divine nature. He that came down from heaven, is certainly more than a mere Man; he is the Lord from heaven, 1 Cor. 15. 47. (2.) His intimate acquaintance with the divine counsels; for, coming from the court of heaven, he was a minister of eternity conversant with them. (3.) It speaks God manifest. Under the Old Testament God’s favours to his people are expressed by his hearing from heaven, (2 Chron. 7. 14.) looking from heaven, (Ps. 80. 14.) speaking from heaven, (Neh. 9. 13.) sending from heaven, Ps. 57. 3. But the New Testament shows us God coming down from heaven, to teach and save us. That there thus descended from heaven for God, and cannot change places, nor did he bring his body from heaven; but that he thus condescended for our redemption, is a more admirable mercy: herein he commended his love.

2. That he is the Son of man, that Son of man spoken of by Daniel, (7. 13.) by which the Jews always understand to be meant the Messiah. Christ, in calling himself the Son of man, shows that he is the representative of that Man, as he was the form of man. And of all the Old Testament titles of the Messiah he chose to make use of this, because it was most expressive of his humility, and most agreeable to his present state of humiliation.

3. That he is in heaven. Now at this time, when he is talking with Nicodemus on earth, yet as God, he is in heaven; the Son of man, as such, was not in heaven till his ascension; but he that was the Son of man by his divine nature, was now every where present, and particularly in heaven. Thus the Lord of glory, as such, could not be crucified, nor could God as such shed his blood; yet that person who was the Lord of glory, was crucified, (1 Cor. 2. 8.) and God purchased the church with his own blood, Acts 20. 28. So close is the union of the two natures in one person, that there is a communication of person from one to the other, as he was crucified for the children of man; and as the church is his body, so he is crucified for the church. GOD is the SAME—he that is in heaven is the habitation of his holiness.

III. Christ here discourses of the great design of his own coming into the world, and the happiness of those that believe in him, v. 14—18. Here we have the very marrow and quintessence of the whole gospel; that faithful saying, (1 Tim. 1. 15.) that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the children of men from death, and to recover them to life. Now sinners are dead men, upon a twofold account, 1. As one that is mortally wounded, or sick of an incurable disease, is said to be a dead man, for he is dying; and so Christ came to save us, by healing us, as the brazen serpent healed the Israelites, v. 14. 2. As one that is justly condemned to die for an unpardonable crime, is a dead man, he is dead in law, and in retribution, a just sentence of death, is passed upon him; and he is dead, says Christ, who use me as a Prince or Judge, publishing an act of indemnity, or general pardon, under certain provisions; this saving here is opposed to condemning, v. 16—18.

(1.) Jesus Christ came to save us by healing us, as the children of Israel that were stung with fiery serpents, were cured and lived by looking up to the brazen serpent; we have the story of it, Num. 21. 6—9. It was the last miracle that passed through the hand of Moses before his death.

Now in this type of Christ we may observe,

[1.] The deadly and destructive nature of sin, that is implied here. The guilt of sin is like the pain of the biting of a fiery serpent; the power of corruption is like the venom diffused thereby. The devil is the old serpent, subtle at first, (Gen. 3. 1.) seductive, and his temptations fiery darts; his assaults terrifying, his devilish deceits shapely. Ask awakened consciences, ask damned sinners, and they will tell you, how charming soever the allurements of sin are, at the last it bites like a serpent, Prov. 23. 30—32. God’s wrath against us for sin is a those fiery serpents which God sent among the people, to punish them for their murmurings. The branches now are as fiery serpents, so are all the tokens of divine wrath.

[2.] The powerful remedy provided against this fatal malady. The case of poor sinners is deplorable; but is it desperate? Thanks be to God, it is not; there is balm in Gilead. The Son of man is lifted up, as the serpent of brass was by Moses, which cured the stung Israelites. First, it was a serpent of brass, that cured them. Brass is bright; it shows the glory of God. Christ is thus sent up to us, v. 19. It is durable, Christ is the same. It was made in the shape of a fiery serpent, and yet had no poison, no sting; fitly representing Christ, who was made Sin for us, and yet knew no sin; was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and yet not sinful; as harmless as a serpent of brass. The serpent was a cursed creature, Christ was made a Curse. That which was cursed is purchased with an infinite price, and so the Sin of the world was purchased with the precious Blood of Christ. Sin is set before us most fiery and formidable. Secondly, It was lifted up upon a pole, and so must the Son of man be lifted up; thus it behoved him, Luke 24. 26. 46. No remedy now. Christ is lifted up, 1. In his crucifixion; he was lifted up upon the cross. His death is called his being lifted up, ch. 12. 32. 33. He was lifted up as a Spectacle, as a Mark; lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he had been unworthy of either, and abandoned by both. 2. In his exaltation: he was lifted up to the Father’s right hand, to give repentance and remission; he was lifted up to the cross, to be further lifted up to the crown. 3. In the publishing and preaching of his everlasting gospel, Rev. 41. 6. The serpent was lifted up, that all the thousands of Israel might see it. Christ in the gospel is exhibited to us, evidently for this; Christ is lifted up as a Banner, Isa. 11. 19. Thirdly, It was lifted up by Moses; Christ was made under the law of Moses, and Moses testified of him. Fourthly, Being thus lifted up, it was appointed for the cure of those that were bitten by fiery serpents; he that sent the plague provided the remedy; none could redeem and save us but he whose justice had condemned us. It was God himself that found that reason, and the efficacy of it depended upon his appointment. As he was lifted up as a Serpent, so the Serpents were sent to punish them for their tempting Christ; (so the apostle saith, 1 Cor. 10. 9.) and yet they were healed by virtue derived from him. He whom we have offended, is our Peace.

[3.] The way of applying this remedy, and that is by believing; which plainly alludes to the Israelites looking up to the brazen serpent, in order to being healed by it. The brazen serpent is lifted up; and as either so little sensible of his pain and peril, or had so little confidence in the word of Moses, as not to look up to the brazen serpent, justly did he die of his wound; but every one that looked up to it, did well, Num. 21. 9. If any so far slight either their disease by sin, or the method of cure by Christ, as not to embrace Christ upon his own terms, their blood is upon their own heads. He hath said, Look and be saved, (Isa. 45. 22.) look, and live. We come to a complacency in, and give consent to, the methods which Infinite Wisdom has taken of saving a guilty
world, by the mediation of Jesus Christ, as the great Sacrifice and Intercessor.

[4.] The great encouragements given us by faith to look up to him. First, It was for this end that he was lifted up, that his followers might be saved; and he will pursue his end. Secondly, The offer that is made of salvation by him, is general, that whosoever believes in him, without exception, might have benefit by him. Thirdly, The salvation offered is complete. 1. They shall not perish, shall not suffer a single kind of death, yet God's giving of all mortal and ill-frequented, iniquity shall not be their bin. But that is not all. 2. They shall have eternal life. They shall not only not die of their wounds in the wilderness, but they shall reach Canaan, (which they were then just ready to enter into,) they shall enjoy the promised rest.

(2.) Jesus Christ came to save us, condemning our pardoning sins, that we might not die by the sentence of the law, v. 16, 17. Here is gospel indeed, good news, the best that ever came from heaven to earth. Here is much, here is all in a little ; the word of reconciliation in miniature.

[1.] Here is God's love, in giving his Son for the world, (v. 16,) where we have three things: First, The great gospel-mystery revealed; God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son. The world is here put for all its children and inhabitants. Second, The main object of that love, and the regeneration by the Spirit, and our reconciliation by the lifting up of the Son. Note, 1. Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God. This magnifies his love in giving him for us, in giving him to us; now know we that he loves us, when he has given his only-begotten Son for us, which speaks not only his dignity in himself, but his dearness to his Father; he was always his delight. 2. In order to the redemption and salvation of man, it pleased God to give his only-begotten Son. He not only gave him, sent him into the world with full and ample power to negotiate a peace between heaven and earth, but he gave him, he gave him up to suffer and die for us, as the great Propitiation or expiatory Sacrifice. It comes in here as a reason why he must be lifted up; for so it was determined and designed by the Father, who gave him for this purpose, and prepared him a body in order to be lifted up therefor. If he loved us, and if his Father had not given him. Though he was not yet crucified, yet in the determinate counsel of God he was given up. Acts 2. 23. Nay further, God has given him, that is, he has made an offer of him, to all, and given him, to all true believers, to all the intents and purposes of the new covenant. He has given him to be our Prophet, a Witness to the people; the High-Priest of our profession; to be our Peace; to be the Head of the church; to head over all things to the church; to be to us all that we need. 3. Herein God has commended his love to the world; God so loved the world; so really, so richly. Now his creatures shall see that he loves them, and wishes them well. He so loved the world of fallen man, as he did not love that of fallen angels; see Rom. 5. 8. 1 John 4. 10. Behold, and wonder, that the great God should love such a worthless world! That the holy God should love such a wicked world with a love of good will, when he could not look upon it with any complacency! This was a time of love indeed, Ezek. 16, 6, 8. The Jews vainly conceived that the Messiah should be sent only in love to their nation, and to advance that upon the ruins of their neighbours; but Christ tells them that he came in love to the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews, 1 John 2. 2. Though many of the world, men of unkind purposed, yet God's giving of his only-begotten Son was an instance of his love to the whole world, because through him there is a general offer of life and salvation made to all. It is love to the revolted, rebellious province, to issue out a proclamation of pardon and indemnity to all that will come in and take it upon their knees, and return to their allegiance. So far God loved the apostate, perished world, that he sent his Son with this fair proposal, that whosoever believes in him, one or other, shall not perish. Salvation has been of the Jews, but now Christ is known as Salvation to the ends of the earth, a common Salvation.

Secondly, Here is the great gospel-duty, and that is to believe in Jesus Christ, when God hath thus made him to be enthroned in heaven, given to us, to accept the gift, and answer the intention of the Giver. We must yield an unequivocal assent and consent to the record God hath given in his word concerning his Son, God having given him to us to be our Prophet, Priest, and King, we must give up ourselves to be ruled, and taught, and saved, by him.

Thirdly, Here is the great gospel-benefit. That was, we believe in Christ, shall not perish. This he had said before, and here repeats it. It is the unspeakable happiness of all true believers, which they are eternally indebted to Christ for. 1. That they are saved from the miseries of hell, delivered from going down to the pit, they shall not perish. God has taken away their sin, they shall not die; a pardon is purchased, and so the attainer is reversed. 2. They are entitled to the joys of heaven; they shall have everlasting life. The crucified traitor is now made a favourite, and treated as one whom the King of kings delights to honour. Out of prison he cometh to reign, Execl. 4. 14. If believers, then children; and if children, then heirs.

[2.] Here is God's design in sending his Son into the world; it was, that the world through him might be saved. He came into the world with salvation in view, and that was in his heart. Therefore the aforesaid offer of life and salvation is sincere, and shall be made good to all that by faith accept it; (v. 17.) God sent his Son into the world, this guilty, rebellious, apostate world; sent him as his Agent or Ambassador; not as sometimes he had sent angels into the world, as visitants, but as resident. Ever since man sinned, he has dreaded the approach and appearance of any special messenger from heaven, as bearing conscious of guilt, and looking for judgment. Therefore the Son of God, as God's Ambassador, or as that great judge himself, can never fail to find a home. If therefore the Son of God himself come, we are concerned to enquire on what errand he comes; Is it peace? Or, as they asked Samuel trembling, Comest thou peaceably? And this scripture returns the answer, Peaceably.

First, He did not come to condemn the world. We had reason enough to expect that he should, for it is a guilty world; it is convicted, and what use can be shown by any judgment should not be given, and execution awarded, according to law? That one blood of which all nations of men are made, (Acts 17. 26.) is not only tainted with a hereditary disease, like Gehazi's leprous, but it is tainted with a hereditary guilt, like that of the Amalekites, with whom God had war from generation to generation; and justly may such a world as this be condemned; and if God said he would destroy it, he had angels at command, to pour out the vials of his wrath; a cherubim with a flaming sword, ready to do execution. If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have sent his Son among us. He came with full powers indeed to execute judgment, (ch. 5. 22, 27.) but did not begin with a judgment of condemnation, did not proceed upon the outlawry, nor take advantage against us for the breach of the covenant of covenant, but puts us upon a new trial before a throne of grace.

Secondly, He came that the world through him might be saved; that a door of salvation might be opened to the world, and whenever would might enter
in by it. It was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and so saving it. An act of indemnity is procured by him. Through Christ a remedial law made; and the world of mankind dealt with, not according to the rigours of the first covenant, but according to the riches of the second; that the world through him might be saved, for it could never be saved but through him; there is no salvation in any other. This is good news to a convinced conscience, healing to broken bones and bleeding wounds, that Christ has died to condemn man, but to save.

(3.) From all this is inferred the happiness of true believers; (v. 18.) He that believeth on him, is not Condemned. Though he has been a sinner, a great sinner, and stands convicted, (habeas confitentem reum—by his own confession,) yet, upon his believing, process is stayed, judgment is arrested, and he is not Condemned. This speaks more than a re- cive; he is not condemned, that is, he is acquitted; he stands upon his deliverance, (as we say,) and if he be not Condemned, he is discharged: * Si vivere—he is not judged, not dealt with in strict justice, according to the desert of his sins. He is excused, and he cannot plead not guilty to the indictment, but he can plead in bar, can plead a noli prossequi upon the indictment, as blessed Paul does, Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ, the Father, the Judge, Chariot of God, persecuted by the world; but he is not Condemned. The cross perhaps lies heavy upon him, but he is saved from the curse: condemned by the world, it may be, but not condemned with the world. Rom. 8. 1. 1 Cor. 11. 32.

IV. Christ, in the close, discourses concerning the deplorable condition of those that persist in unbelief and wilful ignorance, v. 18—21.

1. Read here the doom of those that will not believe in Christ; they are Condemned already. Observe, (1.) How great the sin of unbelievers is; it is aggravated from the dignity of the Person they slight; they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, who is infinitely true, and deserves to be believed; infinitely good, and deserves to be embraced. God sent one to save us, that was nearest to himself; and shall not he be dearest to us? Shall we not believe on his name, who has a name above every name? (2.) How great the misery of unbelievers is; they are Condemned already; which speaks, [1.] A certain condemnation. They are as sure to be condemned in the judgment of the great day as if they were Condemned already. [2.] A present condemnation. The curse has already taken hold of them, and is now afflicting them. And, [3.] A Condemnation grounded upon their former guilt; he is Condemned already, for he lies open to the law for all his sins; the obligation of the law is in full force, power, and virtue, against him, because he is not by faith interested in the gospel-delance; he is Condemned already, because he has given his own soul to defiance, to truancy, and to the great damning sin, because it leaves us under the guilt of all our other sins; it is a sin against the remedy, against our appeal.

2. Read also the doom of those that would not so much as know him, v. 19. Many iniquitous people had knowledge of Christ and his doctrine and miracles, but they were prejudiced against him, and would not believe in him, while the gospel was a stroke of light, a word of cleaving, and a word they would not know him. And this is the condemnation, the sin that ruined them, that light is come into the world, and they loved darkness rather. Now here observe, (1.) That the gospel is light, and, when the gospel came, light came into the world. Light is self-evidencing; so is the gospel, it proves its own divine original. Light is discovering, and truly the light is sweet, and rejoices the heart. It is a light shining in a dark place, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is come into all the world, (Col. 1. 6.) and not confined to one corner of the world. Testament light was. (2.) It is the unspeakable folly of the most of men, that they loved darkness rather than light, rather than this light. The Jews loved the dark shadows of their law, and the instructions of their blind guides, rather than the doctrine of Christ. The Gentiles loved their superstitious services of idols; God, whom they ignorantly worshipped, rather than the reasonable service the gospel enjoins. Sinners that were wedded to their lusts, loved their ignorance and mistakes, which supported them in their sins, rather than the truths of Christ, who would have parted them from their sins. Man's apostacy began in an affection of forbidden knowledge, but is kept up by an affection of forbidden ignorance. Wretched man is in love with his sickness, in love to his slavery, and will not be made free, will not be made whole. (3.) The true reason why men love darkness rather than light is, because their deeds are evil. They love darkness because they think it is an excuse for their evil deeds, and they hate the light, because it robs them of the good opinion they had of themselves, by showing them their sinfulness and misery. Their hearts are so blinded, that they cannot see and will not mend it, they are resolved that they will not see it. (4.) Wilful ignorance is so far from excuseing sin, that it will be found, at the great day, to aggravate the condemnation; This is the condemnation, this is it that ruins souls, that they shut their eyes against the light, and will not so much as admit a parley with Christ and his gospel; they set God so far at a distance, that they desire not the knowledge of his ways, Job 21. 14. We must account in the judgment, not only for the knowledge we had, and used not, but for the knowledge we might have had, and would not; not only for the knowledge we sinned against, but for the knowledge we sinned away.

For the further illustration of this, he shows, (v. 20—21.) that according as men's hearts and lives are good or bad, accordingly they stand affected to the light Christ has brought into the world.

[1.] It is not strange, if these that do evil, and resolve to persist in it, hate the light of Christ's gospel; for it is a common observation, that every one that doeth evil, hateth the light, v. 20. Evil-doers seek concealment, out of sense of shame, and fear of punishment; see Job 24. 13, &c. Sinful works are works of darkness, they have to do with the darkness that is in this world, Job 31. 33. The light shakes the wicked, Job 38. 12, 13. Thus the gospel is a terror to the wicked world; They come not to this light; but keep as far off as it can, lest their deeds should be reproved. Note, First, The light of the gospel is sent into the world, to reprove the evil deeds of sinners; to make them manifest, (Eph. 5. 13.) to show people their transgressions, to show them in what a state of sin they live, and to call them to show them the evil of their transgressions, that sin by the new commandment might appear exceeding sinful. The gospel has its convictions, to make way for its consolations. Secondly, It is for this reason that evil-doers hate the light of the gospel. There were those who had done evil, and were sorry for it, who bade this light welcome, as the publications that were coming, it was to be burned and resolved to go on in it, hate the light, cannot bear to be told of his faults. All that opposition which the gospel of Christ has met with in the world, comes from the wicked heart, influenced by the wicked one. Christ is hated because sin is loved. Thirdly, They who do not come to the light, thereby evince a secret hatred of the light. If they had not an antipathy to saving knowledge, they would not sit down so contentedly in damning ignorance.
[2.] On the other hand, upright hearts, that approve themselves to God in their integrity, bid this sight welcome; (v. 21.) He that doeth truth, cometh to the light. It seems, then, though the gospel had many enemies, it had some friends. It is a common observation, that truth seeks no corners. They who mean and act honestly, dread not a scrutiny, but desire it rather; now this is applicable to the gospel-light: as it convinces and terrifies evil-doers, so it confirms and comforts those that walk in their integrity. Observe here,

First, The character of a good man. 1. He is one that doeth truth; that is, he acteth truly and sincerely in all his doings. Though sometimes he come short of doing good, the good he would do yet, he doeth truth; he aims honestly, he has his infirmities, but holds fast his integrity; as Gains, that did faithfully; (5 John 5.) as Paul, (2 Cor. 1. 12.) as Nathanael, (ch. 1. 47.) as Asa, 1 Kings 15. 14.

2. He is one that cometh to the light. He is ready to receive and entertain divine revelation, as far as it appears to him to be so, what unenesssoever it may create him. He that doeth truth, is willing to know the truth by himself, and to have his deeds made manifest. A good man is much in trying himself, and desires that God would try him, Ps. 26. 2. He is solicitous to know what the will of God is, and resolves to do it, though ever so contrary to his own will and interest.

Secondly, Here is the character of a good work; it is wrought in God, in union with him by a covenant of faith, and in communion with him by devout affections. Our works are then good, and will bear the test, when the will of God is the rule of them, and the glory of God the end of them; when they are done in his strength, and for his sake, to him, and not to men; and if by the light of the gospel it be manifest to us that our works are thus wrought, then shall we have rejoicing, Gal. 6. 2. 4 Cor. 1. 23.

Thus far we have Christ's discourse with Nicodemus; it is probable that much more passed between them, and it had a good effect, for we find, ch. 19. 39. that Nicodemus, though he was puzzled at first, yet afterward became a faithful disciple of Christ.

22. After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. 23. And John also was baptizing in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came, and were baptized: 24. For John was not yet cast into prison. 25. Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying. 26. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. 27. John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. 28. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. 29. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. 30. He must increase but I must decrease. 31. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. 33. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. 34. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. 35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him.

In these verses, we have,

I. Christ's removal into the land of Judea; (v. 22.) and there he tarried with his disciples. Observe,

1. Our Lord Jesus, after he entered upon his public work, travelled much, and removed often, as the patriarchs in their sojournings. As it was a good part of his humiliation, that he had no certain dwelling-place, but was, as Paul, in journeyings often, so it was an instance of his unwearied industry in the work for which his own election and appointment went about in procession of it: many a weary step he took to do good to souls. The Sun of righteousness took a large circuit to diffuse his light and heat, Ps. 19. 6.

2. He was not wont to stay long at Jerusalem, though he went frequently thither, yet he soon returned into the country; as here; after these things, as before, he had had this discourse with Nicodemus, he came into the land of Judea; not so much for greater privacy, (though mean and obscure places best suited the humble Jesus in his humble state,) but for greater usefulness; his preaching and miracles, perhaps, made most noise at Jerusalem, the fountain-head of news, but did least good there, where the most considerable men of the Jewish church had so much the ascendancy.

3. When he came into the land of Judea, his disciples came with him; for these were they that were inwardly united with him in his temptations. Many that flocked to him at Jerusalem, would not follow his motions into the country, they had no business there, but his disciples attended him. If the ark remove, it is better to remove and go after it (as they did, Josh. 3. 3.) than sit still without it, though it be in Jerusalem itself.

4. There he tarried with them, henceforward—He conversed with them, discoursed with them. He did not retire into the country for his ease and pleasure, but for more free conversation with his disciples and followers. See Cant. 7. 11, 12. Not, Those that are ready to go with Christ, shall find him as ready to stay with them. It is supposed that he now stayed five or six months in this country.

5. There he baptized; he admitted disciples, such as believed in him, and had much honesty and courage than those had at Jerusalem, ch. 2. 24. John began to baptize in the land of Judea, (Matth. 3. 1.) therefore Christ began there, for John had said, There cometh one after me. He baptized not himself, with his own hand, but his disciples by his order and directions, as appears, ch. 4. 2. But his disciples baptizing was his baptizing. Holy ordinances are Christ's, though administered by weak men.

II. John's continuance in his work, as long as his opportunities lasted. v. 23, 24. Here we are told,
1. That John was baptizing. Christ's baptism was, for substance, the same with John's, for he bore witness to Christ, and therefore they did not at all clash or interfere with each other. But (1.) Christ began to preach and baptize before John, and it is not possible that he might be ready to receive John's disciples when he should be taken off, and so the wheels might be kept going. It is a comfort to useful men, when they are going off the stage, to see those rising up, who are likely to fill up their room. (2.) John continuing to preach and baptize, though Christ had taken it up, he would still, according to the measure given to him, advance the interests of God's kingdom. There was still work for John to do, for Christ was not yet generally known, nor the minds of people thoroughly prepared for him by repentance. From heaven John had received his commission, and he would go on in his work till from thence he received his countermand, and would have his commission from the same hand that gave him his commission. He does not come in to Christ, lest what had formerly passed, should look like a combination between them; but he goes on with his work, till Providence lays him aside. The greater gifts of some do not render the labours of others, that come short of them needless and useless; there is work enough for all hands. They are sullen, that will sit down and do nothing, when they see themselves cut-shone. Though he have not the talent, we must account for that; and when we see ourselves going off, must yet go on to the last.  

2. That he baptized in Enon near Salim, places we find no where else mentioned; and therefore the learned are altogether at a loss where to find them; whenever it was, it seems that John removed from place to place, he did not think that there was any virtue in Jordan, because Jesus was baptized there, which should engage him to stay there; but, as it saw cause, removed to other waters. Ministers must follow their opportunities; and he chose a place where there was much water; *πανίνω—many waters, that is, many streams of water; so that wherever he met with any that were willing to submit to his baptism, water was at hand to baptize them with; shallow, perhaps, as is usual where there are many brooks, but such as would serve his purpose. And in that country, plenty of water was a valuable thing.  

3. That other people came to him, and were baptized. Though they did not come in such vast crowds, as they did when he first appeared, yet now he had a great, without encouragement, but there were still those that attended and owned him. Some refer this both to John and to Jesus; They came, and were baptized; that is, some came to John, were baptized by him, some to Jesus, and were baptized by him, and, as their baptism was one, so were their hearts.  

4. It is noted, (v. 24.) that John was not yet cast into prison, to clear the order of the story, and to show that these passages related here, (ch. 2. and 3. in the harmony,) to come some before Matth. 4. 12. John never desisted from his work, as long as he had his liberty; may, he seems to have been the more industrious, because he foresaw his time was short; he was not yet cast into prison, but he expected it ere long, ch. 9. 4.  

12. A contest between John's disciples and the Jews, about purifying; v. 25. See how the gospel of Christ came to send peace upon earth, but division. Observe.  

1. Who were the disputants; some of John's disciples, and the Jews who had not submitted to his baptism of repentance. Penitents and impenitents divide this sinful world. In this contest, it should seem, John's disciples were the aggressors, and gave the challenge; and it is a sign that they were no

vices, who had more zeal than discretion. The truths of God have often suffered by the rashness of some that have undertaken to defend them before they were able to do it.

2. What was the matter in dispute; about purifying, or religious washing. (1.) We may suppose that John's disciples cried up his baptism, his purifying, as instancing minister to all others, and gave the preference to that as purifying and superseding all the purifications of the Jews; and they were in the right; but young converts are too apt to boast of their attainment, whereas he that has found the treasure, should hid it till he is sure that he has it, and not talk of it too much at first. (2.) No doubt the Jews, with as much assurance applauded the purifying, because they use among them, both those that were instituted by the law of Moses, and those that were imposed by the tradition of the elders; for the former they had a divine warrant, and for the latter the usage of the church. Now it is very likely that the Jews in this dispute, which they could not defend the excellent nature and design of John's baptism, raised an objection against it from Christ's baptism, and that the common ground was purging; (y. 26.) "Here is John baptizing in one place, (say they,) and Jesus at the same time baptizing in another place; and therefore John's baptism, which his disciples so much applaud, is either," [1.] "Dangerous, and of ill consequence to the peace of the church and state. For, if it opens a door to endless parties.

Now that John is begun, we shall have every little teacher set up for a baptist preacher. But, (2.) "At the best, it is defective and imperfect. If John's baptism, which you cry up thus, have any good in it, yonder the baptism of Jesus goes beyond it, so that for your parts you are shaded already by a greater light, and your baptism is soon gone out of fashion; Thus objections are made against the gospel, from the advancement and improvement of gospel-light, as if childhood and manhood were contrary to each other, and the superstructure were against the foundation. There was no reason to object Christ's baptism against John's, for they consisted very well together.

IV. A complaint which John's disciples made to their master concerning Christ and his baptizing, v. 26. This purifying non-plussed by the fore-mentioned objection, and put into a heat by it, come to their master; "Rabbi, he that was with thee, and was baptized of thee, is now set up for himself; he baptizeth, and all men come to him; and wilt thou suffer it?" Their itch for disputing occasioned this. It is common for men, when they find themselves run aground in the heat of disputation, to fall foul upon those that do no harm. If these disciples of John had not undertaken to dispute about purifying, before they understood the doctrine of baptism, they might have answered the objection without being put into a passion. In their complaint, they speak respectfully to their own master, Rabbi; but speak very slightly of our Saviour, though they do not name him.

3. They suggest that Christ's setting up a baptism of his own, was a piece of presumption, very unaccountable; as if John having first set up this rite of baptizing he must have the monopoly of it, and, as it were, a patent for the invention; "He that was with thee beyond Jordan, as a disciple of thine, behold, and wonder, the same, the very same, baptizes, and takes thy work out of thy hand," thus the voluntary condensations of the Lord Jesus, as that he being baptized by John, are often unjustly and very unkindly turned against his approach.

2. They suggest that it was a piece of insolence to John. He to whom thou bearest witness, baptizest; as if Jesus owed all his reputation to the honorable
character John gave of him, and yet had very un-.
worthily improved it to the prejudice of John. But
Christ needed not John's testimony, ch. 3. 36. He
reflected more honour upon John than he received
from him; yet thus it is incident to us to think that
others more indebted to him than Christ really was.
And besides, Christ's baptism was not in the least an
impeachment, but indeed the greatest improve-
ment, of John's baptism; which was but to lead the
way to Christ's. John was just to Christ, in bearing
witness to him; and Christ's answering of his testi-
mony did rather enrich than impoverish John's min-
istry.

They conclude that it would be a total eclipse to
John's baptism; "All men come to him; they
that used to follow with us, now flock after him, it
is therefore time for us to look about us." It was
not indeed strange that all men came to him. As far
as Christ is manifested, he will be magnified; but
why should John's disciples grieve at that? Note,
Aiming at the monopoly of honour and respect, has
been in all ages the bane of the church, and the
shame of its members and ministers; as also a giving
of interests, and a jealousy of rivalry and competi-
tion. We mistake if we think that the excelling
gifts and graces, and labours and usefulness of one,
are a diminution and disparagement to another that
has obtained mercy to be faithful; for the Spirit is
a free Agent, dispensing to every one severally as he
will. Paul rejoiced in the usefulness even of those
that offend, Rom. 14. 3. 2 Cor. 10. 15. 18. 1 are
God to choose, employ, and honour his own instru-
ments as he pleaseth, and not covet to be placed alone.
V. Here is John's answer to this complaint which
1 s disciples made, v. 27. &c. His disciples expected
that he would have resented this matter as they did;
but Christ's manifestation to Israel was no sur-
prise to John, but what he looked for; it was no
dinned gift to him, but what he was wont for. He
therefore checked the complaint, as Moses, Enviest
thou for my sake? And took this occasion to confirm
the testimonies he had formerly borne to Christ as
superior to him, cheerfully resigning and turning
over to him all the interest he had in Israel. In this
discourse here, the first minister of the gospel (for
so John was) is an excellent pattern to all ministers,
to humble themselves and to exalt the Lord Jesus.
Thus St. John bas ingeniously illustrated his
Christ, v. 27-30. The more others magnify us,
the more we must humble ourselves, and fortify
ourselves against the temptation of flattery and appl-
plause, and the jealousy of our friends for our ho-
nour, by remembering our place, and what we are,
1 Cor. 3. 5.

(1.) John acquires in the divine disposal, and
satisfies himself with that; (v. 27.) A man can
receive nothing except it be given him from heaven,
whence every good gift comes; (James 1. 17.) a
general truth very applicable in this case. Different
employments are according to the direction of Di-
vine Providence; different endowments according to
the distribution of the Divine Grace. No man
can take any true honour to himself, Heb. 5. 4. We
have as necessary and constant a dependence upon
the power of God for these, as we do for the spir-
ual life, as we have upon the providence of God
in all the motions and actions of the natural life:
now this comes in here as a reason, [1.] Why we
ought not envy those that have a larger share of
gifts than we have, or move in a larger sphere of
usefulness. John remarks his disciples that Jesus
had not thus excelled him, except he had received
it from heaven, for as Man and Mediator, he re-
ered nothing to himself, but what he had received
measure, (v. 34.) shall they grudge at it? The same
reason will hold as to others. If God is pleased
to give to others more ability and success than to us,
shall we be displeased at it, and reflect upon him as
unjust, unwise, and partial? see Matth. 20. 15. [2.]
Why we should not be discontented, though we be
inferior to others in gifts and usefulness, and be
eclipsed by their excellences. John was ready to
own that it was the gift, the grace of God that made
him a preacher, a prophet, a baptist; it was God
that gave him the interest he had in the love and es-
ceni of the people, and if now his interest de-
cline, God's will be done! He that gives, may take.
What we receive from heaven we must take as it
is given. Now John never received a commission for
a standing, perpetual office, but only for a tem-
porary one, he is a munificent gift; and therefore,
when he has fulfilled his ministry, he can con-
tentedly see it go out of date. Some give quite an-
other sense of these words; John had taken pains
with his disciples, to teach them the reference which
his baptism had to Christ, who should come after
him, and yet be preferred before him, and do that
for them, which he could not do; and yet, after all,
they date upon John; and grudge that preference of
Christ above him; Well, saith John, I see a man
can receive, that is, perceive, nothing, except it be
given him from heaven. The labour of ministers is
all lost labour, unless the grace of God make it ef-
f active. Men do not understand that which is made
most plain, nor believe that which is made most evi-
dent, unless it be given them from heaven to under-
stand and believe it.

(2.) John's words do not disturb the testimony
he had formerly given concerning Christ; (v. 18.)
You can hear me witness, that I said again and again, I am not
the Christ, but I am sent before him. See how steady
and constant John was in his testimony to Christ, and
not as a reed shaken with the wind; neither the
frowns of the chief priests, nor the flatteries of his
own disciples, could change his note. See how that
note was true, [1.] As it chiefly relates to his
disciples, of the unreasonableness of their complaint.
They had spoken of the witness which their master
bore to Jesus; (v. 26.) "Now," saith John, "do not
you remember what the testimony was that I did
hear? Call that to mind, and you will see your own
caval answered. Did I not say, I am not the Christ?
Why then do you set me up as a rival with him that is?
Did I not say, I am sent before him? Why then
do you apply this to Christ, and give way to him? [2.]
It is a comfort to him-
self, that he had never given his disciples any occa-
sion thus to set him up in competition with Christ:
but, on the contrary, had particularly cau-
tioned them against this mistake, though he might have
made a hand of it for himself. It is a satisfaction to
faithful ministers, if they have done what they could
in their places to prevent any extravagances that
their people ran into. John had not only not encour-
gaged them to hope that he was the Messiah, but
had plainly told them the contrary; which was
now a satisfaction to him. It is a common excuse
for those who have undue honour paid them, St. po-
fulus wulcns decipiri, decipitur,—If the people will be
decedet, let them; but that is an ill maxim for them
to go by whose business it is to undeceive people.

(3.) John professes the great satisfaction he had
in the advancement of Christ and his interest. He
was so far from regretting it, as his disciples did,
that he rejoiced in it. This he expresses (v. 29.) by
an elegant similitude. [1.] He compares our Sa-
vior to the bridegroom; "He that has the bride, is
the Bridegroom? Do all men come to him?" It is
well, whither else should they go? Has he got the
bride in men's affections, and Christ of himself, or
it? Is it his right: to whom should the bride be
brought but to the Bridegroom? Christ was pro-
phesied of in the Old Testament as a Bridegroom, P.'
The word was made Flesh, that the disparity of nature might not be a bar to the match. Provision is made for the purifying of the church, that the defilement of sin might be no bar. Christ espouses his church to himself; he has the bridegroom's suit, and he has the bride. He, his own promise; the church is subject to Christ. As far as particular souls are devoted to him in faith and love, so far the Bridegroom has the bride. [2.] He compares himself to the friend of the Bridegroom, who attends upon him, to do him honour and service, assists him in prosecuting the match, speaks a good word for him, uses his interest in his affairs, and his good will, to the securing of hers, as much of all the point is gained, and he has the bride. All that John had done in preaching and baptizing, was to introduce him; and now that he was come, he had what he wished for; The friend of the Bridegroom stands, and hears him: stands expecting him, and waiting for him; rejoices with joy because of the Bridegroom's voice, because he is come to the marriage after he had been long expected. Note, First, Faithful ministers are friends of the Bridegroom, to recommend him to the affections and choice of the children of men; to bring letters and messages from him, for he courts by proxy; and herein they must be faithful to him. Secondly, The friends of the Bridegroom must stand, and hear the Bridegroom's voice; must receive instructions from him, wish well and attend his orders; must desire to have proofs of Christ's speaking in them, and with them; (2 Cor. 13. 8.) that is the Bridegroom's voice. Thirdly, The espousing of souls to Jesus Christ in faith and love, is the fulfilling of the joy of every good minister. If the day of Christ's espousals be the day of the gladness of his heart, (Cant. 3. 11.) it cannot but be theirs too, who love him, and deal with him in honour and kingdom. Sure, they have no greater interest. (4.) He owns it highly fit and necessary that the reputation and interest of Christ should be advanced, and his own diminished; (v. 30.) He must increase and I must decrease. If they grieve at the growing greatness of the Lord Jesus, they will have more and more occasion to grieve, as they have, that mutilage themselves in envy and emulation. John speaks of Christ's increase and of his own decrease, not only as necessary and unavoidable, which could not be helped, and therefore must be borne, but as highly just and agreeable, and is entirely satisfied in it. [1.] He was well pleased to see the kingdom of Christ getting ground; * He must increase. You think he has gained a deal, but it is nothing to what he will gain. Note, The kingdom of Christ is, and will be, a growing kingdom, like the light of the morning, like the grain of mustard-seed. [2.] He was not at all displeased that the effect of this was, the diminishing of his own interest; * I must decrease. Created excellences are under this law, they must decrease, I have seen an end of all perfection. Note, First, The shining forth of the glory of Christ eclipses the lustre of all other glory. The glory that stands in itself is dark, and that can shine itself is short-lived, and the flesh, decreases and loses ground, in the soul, as the knowledge and love of Christ increase, and get ground; but it is here spoken of that which is subervient to him. As the light of the morning increases, that of the morning-star decreases. Secondly, If our diminution and abasement may but in the least contribute to the advancement of Christ's name, we must cheerfully submit to it, and be content to be any thing, to be nothing, so that Christ may be all.

2. John Baptist here advances Christ, and instructs his disciples concerning him, that they might be so far from grieving that so many come to him, that they might come to him themselves.

(1.) He instructs them concerning the dignity of Christ's person; (v. 31.) He that cometh from above, that cometh from heaven, is above all. Here, [1.] He supposes his divine original, that he came from above, from heaven, which speaks not only his divine extraction, but his divine nature. He had a being before his conception, a heavenly being, but he that came from heaven, was fit to show us the will of heaven, or the way to heaven. When God would save man, he sent from above. [2.] Hence he inverts his sovereign authority; he is above all, above all things and all persons, God over all, blessed for evermore. It is daring presumption to dispute predestination, but his divine nature. When we come to speak of the honours of the Lord Jesus, we find they transcend all conception and expression, and we can say but this, He is above all. It was said of John Baptist, There is not a greater among them that are born of women. But the descent of Christ from heaven put such a dignity upon him as he was not divested of by his being made Flesh; still he was above all.

This he further illustrates by the meanness of those who stood in competition with him; * He that is of the earth is earthly, 5. 5. * is not, is not; is not even; * He that is of the earth, is of the earth; he that has his original of the earth, has his end out of the earth, has his converse with earthly things, and whose concern is for them. Note, First, Man has his rise out of the earth, and has his end out of the earth, and we also but still are formed out of the clay, Job 33. 6. Look to the rock whence we were hewn. Secondly, Man's constitution is therefore earthly; not only his body frail and mortal, but his soul corrupt and carnal, and its bent and bias strong towards earthly things. The prophets and apostles were of the same mould with other men; they were but earthen vessels, though they had a rich treasure and honour, and power, yet their conversation was in earth, and they were not ascensioned to heaven; and shall these be set up for rivals with Christ? Let the potshers rise up with the potshers of the earth; but let them not cope with him, that came from heaven.

(2.) Concerning the excellency and certainty of his doctrine. His disciples were displeased that Christ's preaching was admired and attended upon, more than his; but he tells them that there was reason enough for the case; For, [1.] He, for his part, spoke of the earth, and so do all those that are of the earth. The prophets were men, and spake like men; of themselves they could not speak but of the earth, 2 Cor. 3. 5. The preaching of the prophets and of John was but low and flat compared with Christ's preaching; as heaven is high above the earth, so were his thoughts above theirs. By them God spake on earth, but in Christ he speaketh from heaven.

[2.] But he that cometh from heaven, is not only in his person, but in his doctrine, above all the prophets that ever lived on earth; none teacheth like him. The doctrine of Christ is here recommended to us, First, As infallibly sure and certain, and to be entertained accordingly; (v. 32.) What he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. See here, 1. Christ's divine knowledge; he testifieth nothing but what he had seen and heard, what he was perfectly apprized of, and thoroughly acquainted with. What he discovered of the divine nature and of the invisible world, was what he had seen; what he revealed of the mind of God, was what he had heard. Secondly, the spirit of a second hand. The prophets testified what was made known to them in dreams and visions by the mediation of angels, but not what they had seen and heard. John was the viceroy's voice, that said, "Make room for the witness, and keep silence while the charge is given," but then leaves it to the witness to give in his testimony himself, and the judge to give the charge himself. The
gospel of Christ is not a doubtful opinion, like a hypothesis, or new notion in philosophy, which every one is at liberty to believe or not; but it is a revelation of the mind of God, which is of eternal truth in itself, and of infinite concern to us. 2. His divine grace and goodness; that which he had sent and had heard, because he knew it nearly concerned us, he was pleased to make known to us. What Paul had seen and heard in the third heavens, he could not testify; (2 Cor. 12. 4.) but Christ knew how to utter what he had seen and heard. Christ's preaching is here called his testifying, to denote, (1.) The convincing evidence of it; it was not reported as news by hearsay, but it was testified as evidence before God. (2.) The affectionate earnestness of the delivery of it; it was testified with concern and importunity, as Acts 18. 5.

From the certainty of Christ's doctrine, John takes occasion, [1.] To lament the infidelity of the most of men; though he testifies what is infallibly true, yet no man receiveth his testimony, that is, very few, next to none, none in comparison with those that refuse it. They receive it not, they will not hear it, they do not heed it, or give credit to it. This he speaks of, not only as matter of wonder, that such a testimony should not be received; (Who hath believed our report? How stupid and foolish are the greatest part of mankind, what enemies to themselves?) but as matter of grief; John's disciples grieved that all men came to Christ, (v. 26.) they thought his followers too many. But John grieves that no man came to him, he thought them too few. Note, The unbelief of sinners is the grief of saints. It was for this that St. Paul had great heaviness, Rom. 9. 2. [2.] He takes occasion to commend the faith of the chosen remnant; (v. 33.) He that hath received his testimony, (and some such there were, though very few,) hath set to his seal that God is true. God is true, though we do not set our seal to it; he believeth, all Christ's truth needs not our faith to support it, but by faith we do ourselves the honour and justice to subscribe to his truth, and hereby God reckon himself honoured. God's promises are all yea and amen, by faith we put our amen to them, as Rev. 22. 20. Observe, He that receives the testimony of Christ, subscribes not only to the truth of Christ, but to the truth of God, for his name is the word of God; the confidence of those that believe God's word, and who are put together, Rev. 12. 17. By believing in Christ we set to our seal, First, That God is true to all the promises which he has made concerning Christ, that which he spake by the mouth of all his holy prophets; what he snower to our fathers, is all accomplished, and not one iota or tittle of it fallen to the ground, Luke 1. 70, &c. Acts 13. 32, 33. Secondly, That he is true to all the promises he has made concerning the Gospel Church; his grace and truth, always being satisfied that he is true; we are willing to deal with him upon trust, and to quit all in this world for a happiness in reversion and out of sight. By this we greatly honour God's faithfulness. Whom we give credit to, we give honour to.

Secondly, It is recommended to us as a divine doctrine; not his own, but his that sent him; (v. 34.) For he that believeth on God hath sent, speaketh with God of God, which he spake before, and from whom he enabled to speak, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure in him. The prophets were as messengers that brought letters from heaven; but Christ came under the character of an Ambassador, and treats with us as such; for, 1. He spake the words of God, and nothing he said, savoured of human infirmity; both substance and language were divine. He proved himself sent of God, (ch. 3. 2.) and therefore his words are to be received as the words of God. By this rule we may try the spirits; those that speak on the oracles of God, and prophecy according to the proportion of faith, are to be received as sent of God. 1. He spake so as no other prophet did; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. None can speak the words of God, without the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 10, 11. The Old-Testament prophets had the Spirit, and in different degrees, 2 Kings 2. 9, 10. But whereas God gave them the Spirit by measure, (1 Cor. 12. 4.) he gave him to Christ without measure; all fulness dwelt in him, the fulness of the Godhead, an unmeasurable fulness. The Spirit was not in Christ as in a vessel, but as in a fountain, as in a bottomless ocean. The prophets spoke as men, Christ speaks as God, only with respect to some particular revelation, sometimes spake of themselves, but he that had the Spirit always residing in him without stint, always spake the words of God." So Dr. Whitby.

(3.) Concerning the power and authority he is invested with, which gives him the pre-eminence above all others, and a more excellent name than they.

[1.] He is the beloved Son of the Father; (v. 35.) The Father loveth the Son. The prophets were faithful as servants, but Christ as a Son; they were employed as Servants, but Christ beloved as a Son, always his Delight, Prov. 8. 30. The Father was well pleased in him; not only did he love him, but he doth love him; he continued his love to him even in his estate of humiliation, loved him never the less for his poverty and sufferings.

[2.] He is Lord of all. The Father, as an evidence of his love to him, hath given all things into his hand. Love is generous. The Father took such a complacency and had such a confidence in him, that he constituted him the great Froffee in trust for mankind. Having given him the Spirit without measure, he gave him all things; for he was thereby qualified to be Master and Manager of all. Note, In the honour of Christ, and the unspeakable comfort of all christians, that the Father hath given all things into the hands of the Mediator. First, All power; so it is explained, Matth. 28. 18. All the works of creation being put under his feet, all the affairs of redemption are put into his hand; he is Lord of all. Angels are his servants, devils are his captives. He has power over all flesh; the heathen is given him for his inheritance. The kingdom of the world is given to the Son of man, that he should reign as King over kings, Dan. 7. 14. He has power to settle the terms of the covenant of peace as the great Plenipotentiary, to govern his church as the great Lawgiver, to dispense divine favours as the great Almoner, and to call all to account as the great Judge. Both the golden sceptre and the iron rod are given into his hand. Secondly, All grace is given into his hand as the channel of conveyance; all things, all those good things which God intended to give to the children of men; eternal life, and all its preliminaries. We are unworthy that the Father should give those things into our hands, for we have made ourselves the children of his wrath; he hath therefore appointed the Son of his love to be Trustee for us, and the things he intended for us he gives into his hands, who is worthy, and has merited both honours for himself, and favours for us, and he that gives it, he is the one who is to be given into ours. This is a great encouragement to faith, that the riches of the new covenant are deposited in so sure, so kind, so good a hand, the hand of him that purchased them for us, and us for himself; who is able to keep all that which both God and believers have agreed to commit to him.

[5.] He is the Object of that faith which made the great condition of eternal happiness, and herein he has the pre-eminence above all others; (v. 36.)
ST. JOHN, IV.

He that believeth on the Son, hath life. We have here the application of what he had said concerning Christ and his doctrine; and it is the conclusion of the whole matter. If God has put his honour upon the Son, we must by faith give honour to him. As God offers and conveys good things to us by the testimony of Jesus Christ, whose word is the vehicle of divine favours, so we receive and partake of those favours, by believing the testimony, and entertaining the word of life, and in this way of receiving fidy answers that way of giving. We have here the sum of that gospel, which is to be preached to every creature, Mark 16. 16. Here is,

First, The blessed state of all true christians; He that believes on the Son, hath everlasting life. Note, 1. It is the character of every true christian, that he believes on the Son of God; not only believes he, but that heareth it, and believes on it, confesses to him, and confides in him. The benefit of true christianity is no less than everlasting life; that is it which Christ came to purchase for us, and confer upon us; it can be no less than the happiness of an immortal soul in an immortal God. 2. True believers, even now, have everlasting life; not only they shall have it hereafter, but they shall have it now. For, (1.) They have very good security for it. The deed by which it passeth, is sealed, and delivered to them, and so they have it, though the use be not yet transferred into possession. They have the Son of God, and in him they have life; and the Spirit of God the Earnest of this life. (2.) They have the comfortable forerun of it, in present communion with God and the tokens of his love. Grace is given, begun, secondly. The wretched and miserable condition of unbelievers; He that believeth not the Son, is undone. (v. 35.) The word includes both incredulity and disobedience. An unbeliever is one that gives not credit to the doctrine of Christ, nor is in subjection to the government of Christ. Now those that will neither be taught nor ruled by Christ, 1. They cannot be happy in this world, or that to come; He shall not see life, that life which Christ came to bestow. He shall not enjoy it, he shall not have any comfortable prospect of it, shall never come within ken of it, except to aggravate his loss of it. 2. They cannot but be miserable; The wrath of God abideth upon an unbeliever. He is not only under the wrath of God, which is as surely the soul's death, as his favour is its life; but it abideth upon him. He is a sinner, and the law of the divine justice and holiness, by the violation of the law, if not removed by the grace of the gospel, is bound upon him. God's wrath for his daily actual transgressions, lights and lies upon him. Old scores lie undischarged, and new ones are added: something is done every day, to fill the measure, and nothing to empty it. Thus the wrath of God abideth, for it is treasured up against the day of wrath.

CHAP. IV.

It was, more than any thing else, the glory of the land of Israel, that it was Emmanuel's land; (Isa. 8. 8.) not only the place of his birth, but the scene of his preaching and miracles. This land in our Saviour's time was divided into three parts; Judea in the south, Galilee in the north, and Samaria lying between them. Now, in this chapter, we have Christ in each of these three parts of that land.

1. Departing out of Galilee, Mark 1. 21. a. He passed through Samaria, which, though a visit in transitur, here takes up most room. 1. His coming into Samaria, v. 4. 2. His discourse with the Samaritan woman at a well, v. 7. 26. 3. His commission of two of his disciples to the Samaritans at a well, v. 27. 30. 4. Christ's talk with his disciples in the mean time, v. 31. 38. 5. The good effect of this among the Samaritans, v. 39. 42. 6. We find him residing for some time in Galilee, (v. 43. 46.) and his curing of a nobleman's son there that was at death's door, v. 46. 54. 1.

I. WHEN therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciple than John, 2. (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) 3. He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee.

We read of Christ's coming into Judea, (ch. 3. 23.) after he had kept the feasts at Jerusalem; and now he left Judea four months before harvest, as is said here; (v. 35.) so that it is computed that he staid in Judea about six months, to build upon the foundation John had laid there. We have no particular account of his sermons and miracles there, only in general, v. 1.

1. That he made disciples; he prevailed with many to embrace his doctrine, and to follow him as a Teacher come from God. His ministry was successful, notwithstanding the opposition it met with; (Ps. 110. 2, 3.) μαθητας ποιει; it signifies the same with μαθητας— to disciple. Compare Gen. 12. 5. The souls which they had gotten; which they had made, (so the word is,) which they had made proselytes. Note, It is Christ's prerogative to make disciples, and to build up a kingdom both of Jews and Gentiles, and to form and fashion them to his will. Vit, non nascitur, christianus— The christian is made such, not born such. Tertullian.

II. That he baptized those whom he made disciples; admitted them by washing them with water; not himself, but by the ministry of his disciples, v. 2. 1. Because he would put a difference between his baptism and that of John, who baptized all himself; for he baptized as a servant, Christ as a Master. 2. He would apply himself more to preaching-work, which was the more excellent, 1 Cor. 1. 17. 3. He would put honour upon his disciples, by empowering and employing them to do it; and so train them up to further services. 4. If he had baptized some himself, they would have been apt to value themselves upon that, and despise others, which he would prevent, as Paul, 1 Cor. 1. 13, 14. 3. He would reserve himself for the honour of baptizing with the Holy Ghost, Acts 1. 5. 6. He would teach us that the efficacy of sacraments depends not on any virtue in the hand that administers them; as also, that what is done by his ministers according to his direction, he owns as done by himself.

III. That he made and baptized more disciples than John; and how more than John did at this time, but more than he had done at any time. Christ's converse was more winning than John's. His miracles were convincing, and the cure he wrought gratis, very inviting.

IV. That the Pharisees were informed of this; they heard what multitudes he baptized, for they had, from his first appearing, a jealous eye upon him, and waited not to spies them or to concern him. Observe, 1. When the Pharisees thought they had got rid of John, (for he was by this time clapped up,) and were pleasing themselves with that, Jesus appears, who was a greater vexation to them than ever John had been. The witnesses will rise again. 2. That which grieved them, was, that Christ made so many disciples. The success of the gospel exasperates their minds, and it is a sign that it is getting ground, when the powers of darkness are enraged against it.

V. That our Lord Jesus knew very well what informations were given in against him to the Pharisees. It is likely that the informers were willing to have their names concealed, and the Pharisees loath to have their designs known; but none can do so deeply to en hide their counsels from the Lord, (Ps. 29. 15.) and Christ is here called the Lord. He knew what was told the Pharisees, and how much
it is likely, it exceeded the truth; for it is not likely
that Jesus had yet baptized more than John; but so
the thing was represented, to make him appear the
more formidable; see 2 Kings 6. 12.
VI. That, hereupon, our Lord Jesus left Jataea,
and departed again, to go to Galailee.
1. He left Jataea, because he was likely to be per-
secuted there even to the death; such was the rage
of the Pharisees against him, and such their impli-
city of designing to devour the Man-child in his in-
fancy. To escape their designs, Christ quitted the country,
and went thither, where what he did would be less pro-
voking than just under their eye. For, (1.) His hour
was not yet come, (ch. 7. 30.) the time fixed in the
counsels of God, and the Old-Testament prophecies,
for Messiah's being cut off. He had not finished his
testimony, and therefore would not surrender or ex-
pose himself. (2.) The disciples he had gathered in
Judea, were not able to bear hardships, and there-
fore he would not expose them. (3.) Hereby he
gave an example to his own rule; When they persecute
you in one city, flee to another. We are not
called to suffer, while we may avoid it without sin;
and therefore, though we may not, for our own pre-
servation, change our religion, yet we may change
our place. Christ secured himself, not by miracle,
but in a way common to men, for the direction and
encouragement of his suffering people.
2. He departed into Galailee, because he had work
to do there, and many friends and fewer enemies.
He went to Galilee now, (1.) Because John's minis-
try had now made way for him there; for Galilee,
which was under Herod's jurisdiction, was the last
scene of John's imprisonment. (2.) Because John's im-
prisonment had now made room for him there.
That light being now put under a bushel, the minds
of people would not be divided between him and
Christ. Thus both the liberties and restraints of
good ministers are for the furtherance of the gospel,
Phil. 1. 12. But to what purpose does he go into
Galilee for safety? Herod, the persecutor of John,
will never be the protector of Jesus. Chemnitz
here notes, Pius in hac visa quos fugiit habet; ad
quos vero fugiit ut in tuto sint, non habent, nisi ad
Deus, qui solus refugium nostrum est.—The sons
have those, in this life, to whom they can fly; but
they have none to fly to, who can afford them refuge,
except thee, O God.
3. And he must needs go through Samar-
ia. 5. Then cometh he to a city of Sa-
maria, which is called Sychar, near to the par-
cel of ground that Jacob gave to his son
Joseph. 6. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus
therefore, being wearied with his
journey, sat thus on the well; and it was
about the sixth hour. 7. There cometh a
woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus
saith unto her, Give me to drink. 8. (For
his disciples were gone away into the city
to buy meat.) 9. Then saith the woman
of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou,
being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am
a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no
dealings with the Samaritans. 10. Jesus
answered and said unto her, If thou knewest
the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee,
Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee
living water. 11. The woman saith unto
him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with,
and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? 12. Art thou
greater than our father Jacob, which gave
us the well, and drank thereof himself, and
his children, and his cattle? 13. Jesus an-
swered and said unto her, Whosoever
drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but
the water that I shall give him shall be in
him a well of water springing up into ever-
lasting life. 15. The woman saith unto
him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst
not, neither come hither to draw. 16. Je-
sus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband,
and come hither. 17. The woman an-
swered and said, I have no husband. Jesus
said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have
no husband: 18. For thou hast had five
husbands; and he whom thou now hast is
not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.
19. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I per-
ceive that thou art a prophet. 20. Our
fathers worshipped in this mountain; and
ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where
mens ought to worship. 21. Jesus saith unto
her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh,
when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor
yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22.
Ye worship ye know not what: we know
what we worship; for salvation is of the
Jews. 23. But the hour cometh, and now
is, when the true worshippers shall worship
the Father in spirit and in truth: for the
Father seeketh such to worship him. 24.
God is a spirit: and they that worship him
must worship him in spirit and in truth. 25.
The woman saith unto him, I know that
Messias cometh, which is called Christ:
when he is come, he will tell us all things.
26. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto
thee am he.

We have here an account of the good Christ did
in Samaria, when he passed through that coun-
y, in his way to Galilee. The Samaritans, both in
blood and religion, were mingled Jews; the pos-
terity of those colonies which the king of Assyria
planted there after the captivity of the ten tribes,
with whom the poor of the land that were left be-
hind, and many other Jews afterward, incorporated
themselves. They worshipped the God of Israel
only, to whom they erected a temple on mount Geri-
zin, in competition with that at Jerusalem. There
was a great enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews; the
Samaritans would never admit Christ, when they saw
he was going to Jerusalem, Luke 9. 53. The Jews
thought they could not give him a worse name than
to say, He is a Samaritan. When the Jews were in
prosperity, the Samaritans claimed kindred to them,
(Ezra 4. 2.) but when they were in distress, they
were Medes and Persians; see Joseph. Antiq. lib. 11.
cap. 8. lib. 12. cap. 7. Now observe,
1. Christ's coming into Samaria. He charged the
disciples not to enter into any city of the Samaritans,
(Matth. 16. 13) not to preach the gospel, or work miracles; nor did he here preach publicly, or work any miracle, his eye being to the last sheets of the house of Israel. What kindness he here did them, was accidental; it was only a crumb of the children's bread that casually fell from the master's table.

1. His road from Judea to Galilee lay through the country of Samaria; (v. 4.) He must needs go through the city, because there were no highways; he would have fetched a compass on the other side Jordan, a great way about. The wicked and profane are at present so intermixed with God's Israel, that, unless we will go out of the world, we cannot avoid going through the company of such, 1 Cor. 5. 10. We have therefore need of the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, that we may stand, and not be pulled by them. It was happy for Samaria, that it lay in Christ's way, which gave him an opportunity of calling on them. When I passed by thee, I said unto thee, Live, Ezek. 16. 2.

2. His bating place happened to be at a city of Samaria. Now observe,

(1.) The place described. It was called Sychem, or Shechem, a place which we read much of in the Old Testament. Thus are the names of places commonly corrupted by tract of time. Shechem yielded the first prosecutor that ever came into the church of Israel, (Gen. 34.) and now it is the first place where the gospel is preached out of the commonwealth of Israel; so Dr. Lightfoot observes; as also that the valley of Achor, which was given for a door of hope, hope to the poor Gentiles, ran along by this city, Hos. 2. 15. Abimulech was made king here; it was Jeroboam's royal sent; but the evangelist, when he would give us the antiquities of the place, takes notice of Jacob's interest there, which was more its honour than its crowned heads. [1.] Here lay Jacob's ground, the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph, whose bones were buried in it, Gen. 48. 22. Josh. 24. 32. Probably this is mentioned, to intimate that Christ, when he repose himself hard by here, took occasion from the ground which Jacob gave Joseph, to meditate on the good report which the elders by faith obtained. Jerome chose to live in the land of Canaan, that the sight of the places might affect him the more with scripture-stories. [2.] Here was Jacob's well which he digged, or at least used, for himself and his family. We find no mention of this well in the Old Testament; but the tradition was, that it was Jacob's well.

(2.) The posture of our Lord Jesus at this place; Being weary with his journey, he sat thus on the well. We have here our Lord Jesus,

[1.] Labouring under the common fatigue of travellers. He was weary with his journey. Though used, for himself and his familiars. We find not men, but half his day's journey, yet he was weary; or, because it was the sixth hour, the time of the heat of the day, therefore he was weary. Here we see,

First, That he was a true Man, and subject to the common infirmities of the human nature. Toll came in with sin, (Gen. 3. 19.) and therefore Christ, having made himself a Curse for us, submitted to it. Secondly, That he was a poor Man, else he might have travelled on horseback, or in a chariot. To this instance of meanness and mortification, he humbled himself for us, that he went all his journeys on foot. When servants were on horses, princes walked as servants on the earth, Exod. 10. 7. When we are carried easily let us think on the weariness of our Master. Thirdly, It should seem, he was but a tender Man, and not of a robust constitution; it should seem, his disciples were not tired, for they went into the town without any difficulty, when their Master sat down, and could not go a step further. However, there are some infirmities of body, that are more sensible of fatigue, and can worst bear it.

[2.] We have him here betaking himself to the common relief of travellers; Being weary, he sat thus on the well. First, He sat on the well, an easy place, cold and hard; he had no couch, no easy chair to repose himself in, but took to that which was next hand, to teach us to be nice and curious to meditate on this life, and the mean things. Secondly, He sat thus, in an uneasy posture; sat carelessly—inequino et neglectissim; or, he sat so as people that are weary with travelling, are accustomed to sit.

II. His discourse with a Samarian woman, which is here recorded at large, while Christ's dispute with the doctors, and his discourse with Moses and Elias on the mount, are best suited to be set forth in silence.

This discourse is reducible to four heads:

(1.) They discourse concerning the water, v. 7—15. Notice is first taken of the circumstances that gave occasion to this discourse.

First, There comes a woman of Samaria to draw water. This intimates her poverty, she had no servant to be a drawet of water; and her industry, she could do it herself. Secondly, How God owns and approves of honest, humble diligence in our places. Christ was made known to the shepherds when they were keeping their flock. 2. How the Divine Providence brings about glorious purposes by events which seem to us fortuitous and accidental. This woman's meeting with Christ at the well, may remind us of the stories of Rebekah, Rachel, and Jethro's daughter, who all met with husbands, good husbands, no worse than Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, when they came to the wells for water. 3. How the preventing grace of God sometimes brings people unexpectedly under the means of conversion and salvation. He is found of them that sought him not. Secondly, His disciples were gone away into the city to buy meat. Hence learn a lesson, 1. Of justice and honesty. This is a notable text to the poor, 2 Thess. 3. 8. Of daily dependence upon Providence; Take no thought for the morrow. Christ did not go into the city to eat, but sent his disciples to fetch his meat thither; not because he scrupled eating in a Samaritan city, but, 1. Because he had a good work to do at that well, which might be done while they were eating. It is wisdom to fill up our vacant minutes with that which is good, that the fragments of time may not be lost. Peter, while his dinner was getting ready, fell into a trance, Acts 10. 10. (2.) Because it was more private and retired, more cheap and homely, to have his dinner brought him thither, than to go into the town for it. Perhaps his purse was low, and he would teach us good husbandry; to spend according to what we have, and not go beyond it. He knew he could not live on the things of the world; Christ could eat his dinner as well upon a draught well, as in the best inn in the town. Let us comfort with our circumstances.

Now this gave Christ an opportunity of discourse with this woman about spiritual concerns, and he improved it; he often preached to multitudes that crowded after him for instruction, yet here he condescends to teach a single person, a woman, a poor woman, a stranger, a Samaritan, to teach his ministers to do likewise; as those that know what a glo
rious achievement it is, to help to save, though but one soul, from death.

Let us observe the particulars of this discourse.

1.1 Jesus begins with a modest request for a draught of water; Give me to drink. He that for our sakes became poor, here becomes a Beggar, that they who are in want, and cannot sign, may not be balked from the enjoyments of heaven, because he needed it, and needed her help, to come at it, but because he would draw on further discourse with her, and teach us to be willing to be beholden to the meanest when there is occasion. Christ is still begging in his poor members, and a cup of cold water, like this here, given to them in his name, shall be to receive his reward.

2.1 This he did, though she does not deny his request, yet quarrels with him because he did not carry on the humour of his own nation; (v. 9.) How is it?

Observe, First, What a mortal feud there was between the Jews and the Samaritans; The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. The Samaritans were the adversaries of Judaism, (Exzra 4. 1.) were upon a difference how it would have been done. The Jews were extremely malicious against them, "looked upon them as having no part in the resurrection; excommunicated and cursed them by the sacred name of God, by the glorious writing of the tables, and by the curse of the upper and lower house of judgment;" with this law, That no Israelite eat of any thing that is a Samaritan's, for it is as if he eat swine's flesh. So Dr. Lightfoot, out of Rabh Tanchum. Note, Quarrels about religion are usually the most implacable of all others. Men were made to have dealings one with another; but if men, because one worships at one temple, and another at another, will deny the offices of humanity, and charity, and common civility, will be morose and unnatural, scornful and censorious, and this under colour of zeal for religion, they plainly show that however their religion may be true, they are not truly religious; but, pretending to stickle for religion, subvert the design of it.

Secondly, How ready the woman was to upbraid Christ with the haughtiness and ill nature of the Jewish nation; How is it that thou, being a Jew, asked drink of me? By his dress or dialect, or both, she knew him to be a Jew, and thinks it strange that he should ask for water, as a Samaritan with other Jews. Note, Moderate men of all sides, are, like Joshua and his fellows, (Zech. 3. 8.) men wondered at. Two things this woman wonders at, 1. That he should ask this kindness; for it was the pride of the Jews, that they would endure any hardship rather than be beholden to a Samaritan. It was part of Christ's humiliation, that he was born of the Jewish nation, which was not only in an ill state, subject to the Romans, but in an ill name among the nations. With what disdain did Pilate ask, Am I a Jew? Thus he made himself not only of no reputation, but of ill reputation; but herein he has set us an example of swimming against the stream of common corruptions. We must, like our Master, put on goodness and kindness, though it should be ever so much the genius of our country, or the humour of our party, to be morose and ill-natured. This woman expected that Christ should be as other Jews were; but it is unjust to charge upon every individual person the common faults of the community; no rule but has some exceptions.

2. She wonders that he should expect to receive this kindness from her that was a Samaritan; You Jews could deny it to one another, why should we grant it to one of yours? Thus quarrels are propagated endlessly by revenge and retaliation.

3. Christ takes this occasion to instruct her in divine things; (v. 10.) If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked. Observe, First, He waves her objection of the feud between the Jews and Samaritans, and takes no notice of it. Some differences are best healed by being sighted, and by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them. Christ will convert this woman, now by her religion against her, and she will be more converted by her religion against herself, (though really it was so,) but by showing her own ignorance and immorality, and her need of a Saviour. Secondly, He possesses her with an apprehension that she had now an opportunity (a fairer opportunity than she was aware of) of gaining which would be of unspeakable advantage to her. She had not the helps that the Jews had, to deter her from this. Christ tells her expressly, she had now a season of grace; this was the day of her visitation.

1. He hints to her what she should know, but was ignorant of; If thou knewest the gift of God, that is, as the next words explain it, who it is that saith, Give me to drink. If thou knewest who I am. She saw him to be a Jew, a poor weary Traveller; but if she had known him, she should have been more concerning him than did yet appear. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is the Gift of God, the richest Token of God's love to us, and the richest Treasure of all good for us: a Gift, not a Debt which we could demand from God; not a Loan, which he will demand from us again, but a Gift, a free Gift, ch. 3. 16. (2.) It is an unspeakable privilege to have this gift of grace proposed and offered us; to have an opportunity of embracing it; "He who is the Gift of God is now set before thee, and addresses himself to thee; it is he that saith, Give me to drink; this Gift comes a begging to thee." (3.) Though Christ is set before us, and sues to us in and by his gospel, yet there are multitudes that know him not. They know not who it is that speaks to them in the gospel, that says, Give me to drink; they perceive not that it is the Lord that calls them.

2. His hopes concerning her, what she would have done if she had known him; to be sure, she would not have given him such a rude and uncivil answer; may, she would have been so far from affecting him, that she would have made her addresses to him; Thou wouldest have asked. Note, (1.) Those that would have any benefit by Christ, must ask for it of him, and must be earnest in prayer to God for it. (2.) Those that have a right knowledge of Christ, will seek to him, and if we do not seek unto him, it is a sign that we do not know him, Ps. 9. 10. (3.) Christ knows what they that want the means of knowledge, would have done, if they had had them, Matth. 11. 21.

3. He assures her what he would have done for her if she had applied herself to him; "He would have given thee (and not have upbraided thee, as thou dost me) living water." By this living water is meant the Spirit, who is not like the water in the bottom of the well, which he asked for some of, but like living or running water, which was much more valuable.

Note, (1.) The Spirit of grace is as living water, see ch. 7. 38. Under this similitude the blessings of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament, Is. 12. 3. 33. 7.—44. 3. 15.

1. Zech. 14. 8. The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul, that knows its own nature and necessity. (2.) Jesus Christ can and will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; for he received, that he might give. [4] The woman objects against, and cavils at the gracious intimation which Christ gave her; (v. 11.) Thou hast nothing. She tells him what he had besides. Art thou greater than our father Jacob? What he spake figuratively, she took literally; Nicodemus did so too. See what confused notions they have of
Secondly, She does not think it possible that he could furnish her with any better water than this which she could come at, but he could not; Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well? 1. We will suppose the tradition true, that Jacob himself, and his children, and cattle, did drink of this water; and we may observe, unless the means of the performance of it be visible; as if he were tied to our methods, and could not draw water without our buckets. She asks scornfully, Whence hast thou this living water? I see not whence thou canst have it. Note, The springs of that living water which Christ has for those that come to him, are secret and undiscovered. The fountain of life is hid with Christ. Christ has enough for us, though we see not whence he has it.

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First, The water of Jacob's well yielded but a short supply; But this, and drinker of this water, shall thirst again. It is no better supply, nor satisfy, than other water; it will quench the present thirst, but the thirst will return, and in a few hours a man will have as much need, and as much desire, of water as ever he had. This speaks, 1. The infirmities of our bodies in this present state; they are still necessities, and ever craving. Life is a fire, a lamp, which will soon go out, without continual supplies of fuel and oil. The natural heat preys upon itself.

2. The imperfections of all our comforts in this world; they are not lasting, nor our satisfaction in them remaining. Whatever waters of comfort we drink of, we shall thirst again. Yesterday's meat and drink will not do today's work.

Secondly, That the living water he would give, should yield a lasting satisfaction and bliss, v. 14. Christ's gifts appear most valuable, when they come to be compared with the things of this world; for there will appear no comparison between. Whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the everlasting gospel, 1. He shall never thirst again But he that is filled with the fullness of the Spirit, shall never thirst, which will abundantly satisfy his soul's desires, and not languishing. A sounding thirst he has, nothing more than God, still more and more of God; but not a desolating thirst. Therefore he shall never thirst, because this water that Christ gives, shall be in him a well of water. He can never be reduced to extremity, that has in himself a fountain of supply and satisfaction. (1.) Ever ready, for it shall be in him. The principle of grace planted in him, is the spring of his comfort; see ch. 7. 38. A good man is satisfied from himself, for Christ dwells in his heart. The anointing abides in him; he needs not seek to the world for comfort; the work, and the witness of the Spirit in the heart furnish him with a firm foundation of hope, and an abiding peace. He has in Christ in whom he believes, it shall be in him a well of water. He that has at hand but a bucket of water, needs not thirst as long as that lasts, but that will soon be exhausted; believers have in them a well of water, overflowing, ever flowing. The principles and affections which Christ's holy religion forms in the souls of those that are captivated to the power of it, are this well of water, that supersedes all others.

But, 
2. It is springing up untolasting life; which speaks, First, the aims of gracious acting. A sanctified soul has its eye upon heaven; means that, designs that, does all for that, will take up with nothing short of that. Spiritual life springs up towards its own perfection in eternal life. Secondly, The constancy of those acting; it will continue springing up till it come to perfection. Thirdly, the crown of them, eternal life at last. The living water rises from heaven, and therefore rises toward heaven; see Exod. 23. 25, 26. In all this, it is not this water better than that of Jacob's well.

[6.] The woman (whether in jest or earnest is hard to say) begs of him to give her some of this water; (v. 13.) Give me this water, that I thirst not. First, Some think that she speaks tauntingly, and ridicules what Christ had said as mere stuff; and, in derision of it, not desires but challenges him to give her some of this water. But there is a different way of laying it. If he does not give me, in your name, a great deal of pain if I thirst not, and a deal of pains if I never come hither to draw. But Secondly, Others think that it was a well-meant, but weak and ignorant desire. She apprehended that he meant something very good and useful, and therefore said, Amen, at a venture. Whatever it be, let me have it: who can say that any good thing is given to men who wishes for it? If this be a valuable good to poor labouring people. Note, 1. Even those that are weak and ignorant may yet have some faint and fluctuating desires towards Christ and his gifts, and some good wishes of grace and glory. 2. Carnal hearts, in their best wishes, look no higher than carnal ends. Give it me, said she, not that I may have everlasting life, (which Christ proposed,) but that I come not hither to draw.
(2.) The next subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning her husband, v. 16—18. It was not to let fall the discourse of the water of life, that Christ started this, as many who will bring in any iniquity in conversation, that they may drop a serious subject; but it was with a gracious design that Christ mentioned it. What he had said concerning his grace and eternal life, he found, had made little impression upon her, because she had not been convinced of sin; therefore, waving the discourse about the living water, he sets himself to awaken her conscience, to open the wound of guilt, and then she would more easily apprehend the remedy with joy; and this is the method of dealing with souls; they must first he made weary and heavy-laden under the burden of sin, and then brought to Christ for rest; first pricked to the heart, and then healed. This is the course of spiritual physic; and if we proceed not in this order, we begin at the wrong end.

Observe, First, How discreetly and decently Christ introduces this discourse; (v. 16.) Go, call thy husband, and come hither. Now, 1. The order Christ gave her, had a very good colour; "Call thy husband, that he may teach thee, and help thee to understand these things, which thou art so ignorant of." The wives that will learn, must ask their husbands, (1 Cor. 14. 35.) who must dwell with them, as men of knowledge, 1 Pet. 3. 7. "Call thy husband, that he may learn with thee; that ye may be heirs together of the grace of life." Call thy husband, that he may be witness to what passes between us." Christ would thus teach us to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and to study that which is of good report. 2. As it had a good colour, so it had a good design; for from hence he would take occasion to call her sin to remembrance. There is need of art and prudence in giving reproofs; to fetch a compass, as the woman of Tekoa, 2 Sam. 14. 29—31.

Secondly, How industriously the woman seeks to evade the conviction, and yet insensibly convicts herself, and, ere she is aware, owns her fault; she said, I have no husband. Her saying this intimated no more than that she did not care to have her husband spoken of nor that matter mentioned any more. She would not have her husband come thither, lest, in further discourse, the truth of the matter should come out, to her shame and the reproach of her own case. She was ready, on the least provocation, to call her sin to remembrance. She would thence be thought a maid or a widow, whereas, though she had no husband, she was neither. The carnal mind is very ingenious to shift off convictions, and to keep them from fastening; careful to cover the sin.

Thirdly, How closely our Lord Jesus brings home the conviction to her conscience. It is probable, that he said more than is here recorded, and that she did more than is here said. (v. 29.) But that which is here recorded, is concerning her husband.

Here is, 1. A surprising narrative of her past conversation; Thou hast five husbands. Doubtless, it was not her affliction, (the burying of so many husbands,) but her sin, that Christ intended to upbraid her with; either she had eloped, (as the law speaks,) had run away, from her husbands, and married others, or by some unfruitful, uncertain, dishonest conduct, had procured them to divorce her, or by indirect means had, contrary to law, divorced them. Those who make light of such scandals as practices as these, as no more but nine days' wonder, and as if the guilt were over as soon as the tusk is over, should remember that Christ keeps account of all. 2. A severe reproof of her present state of life; He whom thou hast had, is not thy husband. Either she was never married to him at all, or he had some other wife; or, which is most probable, her former husband or husbands were living; so that, in short, she lived in adultery. Yet observe how mildly Christ tells her of it; he doth not call her a strumpet, but tells her, He with whom thou livest, is not thy husband; and this is equivaient to say the thing. Note, Reproofs are ordinarily most profitable when they are least provoking. 3. Yet in this he puts a better construction than it would well bear, upon what she said by way of shuffle and evasion; Thou hast well said, I have no husband; and again, In that saidst thou truly. What she intended as a denial of the fact, (that she had none with whom she lived as a husband,) he favourably interpreted, or at least turned upon her as a confession of the fault. Note, Those who would win souls, should make the best of them, whereby they may hope to work upon their good-nature; for if they make the worst of them, they certainly exasperate their ill-nature.

(3.) The next subject of discourse with this woman, is concerning the place of worship, (v. 19—24,) where we may observe,

First, A case of conscience proposed to Christ by the woman, concerning the place of worship, v. 19. 20. And there, 1. The inducement she had to put this case; Sir, I perceive that thou art a Prophet. She does not deny the truth of what he had charged her with, but by her silence owns the justice of the reproof; nor is she put into a passion by it, as many are when they are touched in a sore place; does not impute it to the general disgust the Jews have of Samaritans; but (which is a rare thing) can hear to be told of a fault. But that is not all, she goes further, (1.) She speaks respectfully to him, calls him Sir. Thus should we honour those that deal faithfully with us. This was the effect of Christ's meekness in reproving her, he gave her no ill language, and then she gave him none. (2.) She acknowledges him to be a Prophet, one that had a correspondence with Heaven. Note, The power of the word of Christ in searching the heart, and convincing the conscience of secret sins, is a great proof of its divine authority, 1 Cor. 14. 24, 25. (3.) She desires some further instruction from him. Many that are not angry at their reprovers, nor fly in their faces, yet are afraid of them, and keep out of their way; but this woman was willing to have some more discourse with him that told her of her faults.

2. The case itself that she proposed concerning the place of religious worship in public. Some think that she started this, to shift off further discourse concerning her sin. Controversies in religion often prove great prejudices to serious godliness; but, it should seem, she proposed it with a good design; she knew she must worship God, and desired to do it aright; and therefore, meeting with a Prophet, begs his direction. Note, It is our wisdom to improve all opportunities of getting knowledge in the things of God. When we are in company with those that are fit to teach, let us be forward to learn; and have a good question ready to put to those who are able to give a good answer.

It was agreed between the Jews and the Samaritans, that God is to be worshipped; (even those who were such fools as to worship false gods, were not such brutes as to worship none;) and that religious worship is a subject fit for argument; and the Lord Jesus, not contented about it, if they were not concern about it. But the matter in variance was, where they should worship God. Observe how he states the case:

(1.) As for the Samaritans; Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, near adjoining to this city; and this well; there the Samaritan temple was built by Sunballat; in favour of which he insinuates, [1.] That, whatever the temple was, the place was holy;
it was mount Gerizim, the mountain on which the blessings were pronounced; and, some think, the same on which Abraham built his altar, (Gen. 12. 6, 7.) and Jacob his, Gen. 33. 18. [2.] That it might plead prescription; Our fathers worshipped here. She thinks they have antiquity, tradition, and succession, on their side. A vain conversation often supports itself with this, that it was received by tradition. But as she had little reason to boast of their fathers; for, when Antiochus crucified the Jews, the Samaritans, for fear of sharing with them in their sufferings, not only renounced all relation to the Jews, but surrendered their temple to Antiochus, with a request that it might be dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, and called by his name. Joseph. Antiq. lib. 12. cap. 7.

(2.) As to the Jews; Ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place of worship. The Samaritans governed themselves by the five books of Moses, and (some think) received them only as canonical. Now, though they found frequent mention there of the place God would choose, yet they did not find it named there; and they saw the temple at Jerusalem stripped of many of its ancient glories, and therefore think themselves at liberty to set up another place, altar against altar. Therefore to answer to this case of conscience, v. 21, &c. Those that apply themselves to Christ for instruction, shall find him meek, to teach the meek his way. Now here.

1. He puts a slight upon the question, as she had proposed it, concerning the place of worship; (v. 21.) "Woman, believe me as a prophet, and mark what I say. Thou art expecting the hour to come, when, either by some divine revelation, or some sacred tradition, they shall be decided in favor either of Jerusalem or of mount Gerizim; but I tell thee, the hour is at hand, when it shall be no more a question; that which thou hast been taught to lay so much weight on, shall be set aside as a thing indifferent." Note, It should cool us in our contests, to think that those things which now fill us, and which we make such a noise about, shall shortly vanish, and be no more; the very things we are striving about, are passing away; The hour comes when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. (1.) The Object of worship is supposed to continue still the same—God, as a Father; under that notion the very heathen worshipped God, the Jews did so, and, probably, the Samaritans. (2.) But a period shall be put to all niceness and all differences about the place of worship. The approaching dissolution of the Jewish economy, and the erecting of the evangelical state, shall set this matter at large, and lay all in common, so that it shall be a thing perfectly indifferent, whether in either of these places, or any other, men worship God, for they shall not be tied to any place; neither here nor there, but both, and any where, and every where. Note, The worship of God is not now, under the gospel, appropriated to any place, as it was in the law, but it is God's will that God be worshiped every where, 1 Tim. 2. 8. Mal. 1. 11. Our reason teaches us to consult decency and convenience in the places of our worship; but our religion gives no preference to meek place above another, in respect of holiness and acceptableness to God. They who prefer any worship merely for the sake of the house or building in which it is performed, (though it were magnificent, and as a temple, Solomon's temple was,) forget that the hour is come, when there shall be no difference put in God's account; no, not between Jerusalem, which had been so famous for sanctity, and the mountain of Samaria, which had been so infamous for impiety.

2. He lays a stress upon other things, in the matter of religious worship. When he made so light of the place of worship, he did not intend to lessen our concern about the thing itself, which therefore he takes occasion to discourse of more fully. (1.) As to the present state of the controversy, he determines against the Samaritan worship, and in favour of the Jews, v. 22. He tells her here,

[1.] That the Samaritans are certainly in the wrong; not merely because they worshipped in this mountain, though, while Jerusalem's choice was in force, the Samar Frankfurt, but because they were on the Object of their worship; if the worship itself had been as it should be, its separation from Jerusalem might have been excused at the high places were in the best reigns; But ye worship ye know not what; or that which ye do not know; they worshipped the God of Israel, the true God, (Ezra 4. 2. 2 Kings 17. 32.) but they were sunk into gross ignorance, and worshipped God of that land, (2 Kings 17. 27, 33.) as a local Deity, like the gods of the nations, whereas God must be served as God, as the universal Cause and Lord. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the murderer of it. Those that worship God ignorantly, offer the blind for sacrifice, and it is the sacrifice of fools. (2.) That the Jews were certainly in the right. For,

First, "We know what we worship. We go upon sure grounds in our worship, for our people are catechised and trained up in the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in the scripture." Note, Those who by the scriptures have obtained some knowledge of God, (a certain through not a perfect knowledge,) may worship him comfortably to themselves, and acceptably to him, for they know what they worship. Christ elsewhere condemns the corruptions of the Jews' worship, (Matt. 15. 9.) and yet here defends the worship itself; the worship may be true where yet it is not pure and entire. Observe, Our Lord Jesus was pleased to reckon himself among the worshipers of God; We worship, Though he were a Son, (and then are the children free;) yet learned he this obedience, in the days of his humiliation. Let not the greatest of men think the worship of God be below them, when the Son of God himself did not.

Secondly, Salvation is of the Jews; and therefore they know what they worship, and what ground they go upon in their worship. Not that all the Jews were saved, or that it was not possible but that many of the Gentiles and Samaritans might be saved, for in every nation he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him; but, 1. The author of eternal salvation comes of the Jews, appears among them, (Rom. 9. 8.) and is sent first to bless them. 2. The means of eternal salvation are afforded to them. The word of Salvation (Acts 13. 26.) was of the Jews. It was delivered to them, and was through them derived to other nations. This was a sure guide to them in their devotions, and the fellowship they therefore knew that was worshiped. To them were committed the oracles of God, (Rom. 3. 2.) and the service of God, Rom. 9. 4. The Jews therefore being thus privileged and advanced, it was presumption for the Samaritans to vie with them.

(2.) He describes the evangelical worship, which alone God would accept of, and be well pleased with; having showed that the place is indifferent, he comes to the substance of the matter, and shows what it is that we worship God in spirit and in truth, v. 23, 24. The stress is not to be laid upon the fact where we worship God, but with what mind we worship him. Note, The most effectual way to take up differences in the lesser matters of religion, is to be more seaulm in the greater. They who daily make it the matter of their care to worship in the Spirit, ene would
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him, should not make it the matter of their strife whether he should be worshipped here or there. [2] Chris had justly preferred the Jewish worship before the Samaritan, yet here he intimates the impec-

The servant answered, 'She is Mrs. pital of that. The worship was ceremonial, Heb. 10. 1. It was not carnal and much strangers to the inward part of divine worship. Note, It is possible that we may be better than our neighbours, and yet not as good as we should be. It concerns us to be right, not only in the Object of our worship, but in the manner of it; and that is it which Christ here instructs us in.

[1.] The great and glorious revolution which so suddenly excites this change: The hour cometh, and now is—this, fixed, stated time, concerning which it was of old determined when it should come, and how long it should last. The time of its appearance is fixed to an hour, so punctual and exact are the divine counsels; the time of its continuance is limited to an hour, so close and pressing is the opportunity of divine grace, 2 Cor. 6. 2. This hour cometh, it is coming in its full strength, lustre, and perfection, it now is in the embryo and infancy. The perfect day is coming, and now it dawns. [2] The blessed change itself. In gospel-times the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. As creatures, we worship the Father of all; as Christians, we worship the Father of our Lord Jesus. Now the change shall be,

First, In the nature of the worship. Christians shall worship God, not in the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, but in spiritual and new consisting less in bodily exercise, and animated and invigorated more with divine power and energy. The way of worship which Christ has instituted, is rational and intellectual, and refined from those external rites and ceremonies with which the Old Testament worship was both clouded and cloaked. This is called true worship, in opposition to that which was typical. The legal services were figures of the true, Heb. 9. 9, 10. They that revolted from Judaism to Christianity, are said to begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh, Gal. 3. 3. Such was the difference between Old-Testament and New-Testament institutions.

Secondly, In the temper and disposition of the worshipers; and so the true worshipers are good Christians, distinguished from hypocrites; all should, and they will, worship God in spirit and in truth, so spoken of, (v. 18.) and their character, (v. 24.) Note, It is required of all that worship God, that they worship him in spirit and in truth. 1. We must worship God in spirit, Phil. 3. 3. We must depend upon God's Spirit for strength and assistance, laying our souls under his influences and operations: we must devote our own spirits to, and employ them in, the service of God; (Rom. 1. 9.) must worship him with fixedness of thought, and a flame of affection, with all that is spiritual, and the kind of spirit that is in opposition to the flesh, which is the corrupt nature, and so to worship God with our spirit, is to worship him with our graces, Heb. 12. 28. 2. In truth, that is, in sincerity; God requires not only the inward part in our worship, but truth in the inward parts, Ps. 31. 6. We must mind the power more than the form; must aim at God's glory, and not to be seen of men; draw near with a true heart, Heb. 12. 28. [3] The reason why God must be thus worshipped.

[1.] Because in gospel-times they, and they only, are accounted the true worshipers. The gospel erects a spiritual way of worship, so that the pro-

fessors of the gospel are not true in their professions, do not live up to gospel-light and laws, if they do the worship God in spirit and in truth.

[2.] Because the Father seeketh such worshipers of him. This intimates, First, That such worshipers are very rare, and seldom met with, Jer. 30. 21. The gate of spiritual worshiping is strait. Secondly, That such worship is necessary, and what the God of God's,ElementException, though When it becomes the time to inquire for worshipers, the question will not be, "Who worshipped at Jerusalem?" but, "Who worshipped in spirit?" That will be the touchstone. Thirdly, That God is greatly well pleased with, and graciously accepts of such worship and such worshipers. I have desired it, Ps. 132. 13. 14. Cant. 2. 14. Fourthly, That there has been, and will be to the end, a remnant of such worshipers; his seek-

of such worshipers, intimates, that not so much as the making of such God is in all ages gathering in to himself a generation of spiritual worshipers.

[3.] Because God is a Spirit. Christ came to declare God to us, ch. 1. 18. And this he has declared concerning him, he declared it to this poor Samaritan woman, for the meanest are concerned to know God; and with this design, to rectify her mistakes concerning religious worship, to which nothing would contribute more than the right knowledge of God. Note, First, God is a Spirit, for he is an infinite and eternal Mind; an intelligent Being, incorporeal, immaterial, invisible, and incorruptible. It is easier to say what God is not, than what he is; a spirit has not flesh and bones, but who knows the way of a spirit? If God were not a Spirit, he could not be perfect, nor infinite, nor eternal, nor independent, nor the Father of spirits. Secondly, The spiritual worship and the worship of the divine nature is a very good reason for the spirituality of divine worship. If we do not worship God, who is a Spirit, in the spirit, we neither give him the glory due to his name, and so do not perform the act of worship; nor can we hope to obtain his favour and acceptance, and so we miss of the end of worship, Matth. 15. 8, 9. [4.] The last subject of discourse with this woman, is, concerning the Messias, v. 25, 26. Observe here First, The faith of the woman, by which she expected the Messiah; I know that Messias cometh—and he will tell us all things. She had nothing to object against what Christ had said; his discourse was, for aught she knew, what might become the Messiah then expected; but from him she should receive it, and in the mean time she thinks it best to suspend her belief. Thus many have no heart to the prize of the high calling, which are thus thought they have a better in their eye, and deceive themselves with a promise that they will learn that hereafter, which they neglect now. Observe here Second, Whom she expects; I know that Messias cometh. The Jews and Samaritans, though so much at variance, agreed in the expectation of the Messiah and his kingdom. The Samaritans received the writings of Moses, and were strangers to the prophets, not to the types of the Jewish nation; these who knew least, knew this, that Messias was to come; so general and uncontested was the expectation of him, and at this time more raised than ever; (for the sceptic was departed from Judah, Daniel's weeks were near expiring;) so that she concludes not only, He will come, but also—"He comes, he is just at hand;" Messias which is called Christ, This is the Greek word Messias, (which the woman used in honour to the holy language, and to the Jewish church, that used it familiarly;) yet, writing for the use of the Gentiles, he takes care to render it by a Greek word of the same signification, which is called Christ—Anointed; giving an example to the apostle's rule, that, whatever is spoken in an unknown or less vulgar tongue, should be interpreted, 1 Cor. 14. 27, 28.
2. What she expects from him: "He will tell us all things relating to the service of God, which are needful for our salvation, he will tell us that which will supply our defect, rectify our mistakes, and put an end to all our disputes. He will tell us the mind of God fully and clearly, and keep back nothing." Now this implies an acknowledgment, (1.) Of the deficiency and imperfection of the discovery they now had of the divine will, and the rule they had of the divine worship; it could not make the comers there wise and perfect, and therefore they expected some great advance and improvement in matters of religion, a time of reformation. (2.) Of the sufficiency of the Messiah to make this change; "He will tell us all things which we want to know, and about which we grumble in the dark. He will introduce peace, by leading us into all truth, and dispelling the mists of error." It seems this was the comfort of good people in those dark times, that light would arise; if they found themselves at a loss, and run a-ground, it was a satisfaction to them to say, When Messiah comes, he will tell us all things; as it may be to us now with reference to his second coming; now we see through a glass, but then face to face.

Secondly, the favour of our Lord Jesus in making himself known to him, (v. 26.) That speak to thee, and be assured, we never make him known to himself so expressly as any as he did here to this poor Samaritan, and to the blind man; (ch. 9. 37.) no, not to John Baptist, when he sent to him; Matth. 11. 4, 5.) no, not to the Jews, when they challenged him to tell them whether he was the Christ, ch. 10. 24. But, 1. Christ would thus put an honour upon such as were poor and despised, (v. 26.) This woman, though she knew, had never had an opportunity of seeing Christ's miracles, which were then the ordinary method of conviction. Note, To those who have not the advantage of the external means of knowledge and grace, God hath secret ways of making up the want of them; we must therefore judge charitably concerning such; God can make the light of grace shine into the heart, even where he doth not make the light of the gospel shine in the face. 3. This woman was better prepared to receive such a discovery than others were; she was big with expectation of the Messiah, and ready to receive instruction from him. Christ will manifest himself to those who with an honest, humble heart desire to be acquainted with him; I that speak to thee, am he. See here, (1.) How near Jesus Christ was to her, when she knew not who he was. Gen. 28. 15. Many are lamenting Christ's absence, and longing for his presence, when at the same time he is speaking to them. (2.) How Christ makes himself known to us by speaking to us; I that speak unto thee so closely, so convincingly, with such assurance, with such authority, I am he.

27. And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? 28. The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, 29. Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ? 30. Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. 31. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? 34. Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. 35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. 36. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. 37. And herein is that saying true, One soweth and another reapeth. 38. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. 39. And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. 40. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. 41. And many more believed of his own word; 42. And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

We have here the remainder of this story of what happened when Christ was in Samaria, after the long conference he had with the woman.

I. The interruption given to this discourse by the disciples coming. It is probable that much more was said than is recorded; but just when the discourse was brought to a head, when Christ had made himself known to her as the true Messiah, then came the disciples. The daughters of Jerusalem shall not stir up, nor awake my love till he please. 1. They wondered at Christ's converse with this woman; marvelled that he talked thus earnestly (as perhaps they observed at a distance) with a woman, a strange woman, alone, he used to be more reserved; especially with a Samaritan woman, that was not of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Many should be as shy of the Samaritans as the other Jews were, at least, that he should not preach the gospel to them. They wondered he should condescend to talk with such a poor, contemptible woman, forgetting what despicable men they themselves were when Christ first called them into fellowship with himself. 2. Yet they acquiesced in it; they knew it was for some good reason, and some good end, which he was not bound to give them an account of, and therefore none of them asked, What seest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her? Thus when particular difficulties occur in the word and providence of God, it is good to satisfy ourselves with this in general, that all is well which Jesus Christ saith and doeth. Perhaps there was something amiss in the marvel that Christ spake to the woman, and that it was something like the Pharisees being offended at his eating with publicans and sinners. But, whatever they thought, they said nothing; If thou hast thought evil, at any time, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, to keep that evil thought from turning into an evil word, Prov. 30. 32. Ps. 39. 12.

II. The notice which the woman gave to her neighbours, of the extraordinary person she had happily met with, v. 28, 29. Observe here; 1. How she forgot her errand to the well, v. 28.
Therefore because the disciples were come, and broke up the discourse, and perhaps she observed that he was not pleased with her; she went herself. She withdrew, in civility to Christ, that he might have leisure to eat his dinner. She delighted in his discourse, but would not be rude; every thing is beautiful in its season. She supposed that Jesus when he had dined, would go forward in his journey, and therefore hastened to tell her neighbours, that they might come quickly; Yet a little while is the light, and she improved the favour done her; one good work was done, she applied herself to another. When opportunities of getting good cease, or are interrupted, we should seek opportunities of doing good; when we have done hearing the word, then is a time to be speaking of it.

Notice is taken of her leaving her water-pot, or fail. (1.) She left it in kindness to Christ, that he might have to drink with his dinner; for fair water was his drink; he turned water into wine, but not for himself. Compare this with Rebecca's civility to Abraham's servant, (Gen. 24. 18.) and see that promise, Matth. 10. 42. (2.) She left it, that she might make the more haste into the city, to carry thither these good tidings. Those whose business it is to publish the name of Christ, must not encumber or entangle themselves with any thing that may hinder them therein. When the disciples were to be made fishers of men, they must forsake all. (3.) She left her water-pot, as one careless of it, being wholly taken up with better things. Note, Those who are brought to the knowledge of Christ, will show it by a holy contempt of this world, and the things of it. And those who are newly acquainted with the things of God, must be excused, at first they be so taken up with that new world into which they are brought, that the things of this world seem to be for a time wholly neglected. Mr. Hildersham, in one of his sermons on this verse, from this instance, largely justifies those who leave their worldly business on week days to go to hear sermons.

How she minded her errand to the town, for her heart was upon it; she went into the city, and said to the men, probably she desired, the men in authority, whom, it may be, she found met together upon some public business; or to the men, that is, to every man she met in the streets; she proclaimed it in the chief places of concourse, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ? Observe,

(1.) How solicitous she was to bring her friends and neighbours acquainted with Christ. When she had found that treasure, she called together her friends and neighbours, (as Luke 15. 2.) not only to rejoice with her, but to share with her; knowing there was enough to enrich herself and all that would partake with her. Note, They that have been themselves with Jesus, and have found comfort in him, should do all they can to bring others to him. Has he done us the honour to make himself known to us, and do we not do him the honour to make him known to others; nor can we do ourselves a greater honour. This woman becomes an apostle. Quae scortum fuerat egressa, regreditur magistra evangelica—She who went forth, a specimen of impiety, returns, a teacher of evangelical truth, saith Arethius. Christ had bid her call her husband, which she thought was warrant enough to call every body. She went into the city, the city where she dwelt, among her kindred and acquaintance. Though every man is my neighbour, that I have opportunity of doing good to, yet I have most opportunity, and therefore lie under the most of obligations, to do good to those that live near me. Where the tree falls, there let it be made useful.

(2.) How fair and ingenuous she was in the notices she gave them concerning the stranger she had met with.

She tells them plainly what induced her to admire him: He has told me all things that ever I did. No more is recorded than what he told her of her husbands; but it is improbable that he had told her of more of her faults. Or, his telling her of that which she knew he could not by any ordinary means come to the knowledge of, convinced her that he could have told her of all that ever she did. If he had not known that it was a divine power, what could have made him to tell her of so many things that she knew he must have known.

He told her that which none knew but God, and her own conscience. Two things affected her, First, The extent of his knowledge. We ourselves cannot tell all things that ever we did; (many things pass unheeded, and more pass away and are forgotten;) but Jesus Christ knows all the thoughts, words, and actions, of all the children of men; see Heb. 4. 13. He hath said, In thy mouth, O thou worker of all, The power of his word. This made a great impression upon her, that he had told her her secret sins with such an unaccountable power and energy, that, being told of one, she is convinced of all, and judged of all. She does not say, Come, see a man that has told me strange things concerning religious worship, and the laws of it, that has decided the controversy between this mountain and Jerusalem, a man that calls himself the Messiah, but a man that knew all of my sins. She fastens upon that part of Christ's discourse, which one would think she should have been most shy of repeating; but experimental proofs of the power of Christ's word and Spirit are of all others the most cogent and convincing; and that knowledge of Christ into which we are led by the conviction of sin and humiliation, is most likely to be sound and serviceable.

[2.] She invites them to come, and see him whom she had conceived so high an opinion of. Not barely, "Come, and look upon him," (she does not invite them to him as a show,) but, "Come, and converse with him; come, and hear his wisdom, as I have done, and you will be of my mind." She would not undertake to manage the arguments which had convinced her, in such a manner as to convince others; all that see the evidence of truth themselves, are not able to make others see it; but, "Come, and talk with him, and you will find such a power in his word as far exceeds all other evidence." Note, Those who can do little else toward the conviction and conversion of others, may and should bring them to those means of grace which they themselves have found effectual. Jesus was now at the town's end; "Now come see him." When opportunities of getting the knowledge of God are brought to our doors, we are inexusable if we neglect them; shall we not go over the threshold to see him, whose day prophets and kings desired to see?

[3.] She resolves to appeal to themselves, and their own sentiments upon the trial; Is not this the Christ? She does not peremptorily say, "He is the Messiah," how clear seer she was in her own mind, and yet she does not say; "He is the Messiah, whom otherwise they would not have thought of, and then refers it to themselves; she will not impose her faith upon them, but only propose it to them. By such fair, but forcible appeals as these, men's judgments and consciences are sometimes taken hold of ere they are aware.

(3.) What success she had in this invitation; (v. 30.) They went out of the city, and came to him. Though it might seem very improbable that a woman of so small a figure, and so ill a character, should have the honour of the first discovery of the Messiah among the Samaritans, yet it pleased God to incline their hearts to take notice of her report, and not to slight it as an idle tale. Time was, when heivers were the first that brought tidings to Samaria.
of a great deliverance, 2 Kings 7. 3, &c. They came unto him; did not send for him into the city to them; but, in token of their respect to him, and the earnestness of their desire to see him, they went out to him. Those that would know Christ, must meet him where he records his name.

III. Christ's discourse with his disciples, while the woman was absent, v. 31-34. See how industrious our Lord Jesus was to redeem time, to husband every minute of it, and to fill up the vacancies of it. When the disciples were gone into the town, he found two things admirably suited to his will, and suited to her case; when she was gone into the town, his discourse with them was no less edifying, and suited to their case; it was well if we could thus gather up the fragments of time, that none of it may be lost.

Two things are observable in this discourse:

1. How Christ expresses the delight which he himself had in his work. His work was to seek and save that which was lost, to go about doing good. Now this work we here find him wholly taken up with.

For, (1.) He neglected his meat and drink for his work. When he sat down upon the well, he was weary, and needed refreshment; but this opportunity of saving souls made him forget his weariness and hunger. And he minded his food so little, that, [v. 2.] His disciples forsook their meat in his absence. They prayed him, they pressed him, saying, Master, eat. It was an instance of his love to them, that they invited him, lest he should be faint and sick for want of some support; but it was a greater instance of his love to souls, that he needed invitation; let us learn hence a holy indifference even to the helpful supports of life, in comparison with spiritual things. [2.] He minded it so little, that they suspected that he would not eat in their absence. (v. 33.) Has any man brought him ought to eat? He had so little appetite to his dinner, that they were ready to think he had dined already. They that make religion their business, when any of its affairs are to be attended, will prefer them before their food; as Abraham's servant, that would not eat till he had told his errand, (Gen. 24. 33.) and Samuel, who never sat down till David was appointed. 1 Sam. 16. 11.

(2.) He made his word his meat and drink. The work he had done in instructing the woman; the work he had to do among the Samaritans; the prospect he now had of doing good to many, this was meat and drink to him; it was the greatest pleasure and satisfaction imaginable. Never did a hungry man, or an epicure, expect a plentiful feast with so much desire, nor feed upon its dainties with so much delight, as our Lord Jesus expected and improved an opportunity of doing good to souls. Concerning this he saith, [1.] That it was such meat as the disciples knew not of. They did not imagine that he had any design or prospect of planting his gospel among the Samaritans; this was a piece of usefulness they never thought of. Note, Christ by his gospel is the meat that is new made, to satisfy the souls of men, but his own disciples knew not of it. [2.] He made his word his meat and drink, was, because it was his Father's work. His Father's will (v. 34.) My meat is to do the will of him that sent me. Note, First, The salvation of sinners is the will of God, and the instruction of them in order thereunto is his work. See 1 Tim. 2. 4. There is a chosen remnant whose salvation is in a particular manner his will. Secondly, Christ was sent into the world on this errand, to bring people to God; to know him, and to be happy in him. Thirdly, He alone has the key of the door of life, and he alone has the food. His body needed food, his mind was so taken up with this, that he forgot both hunger and thirst, both meat and drink. Nothing could be more grateful to him than doing good; when he was invited to meat, he went, that he might do good, for that was his meat always. Fourthly, He was not only ready upon all occasions to go to his work, but he was earnest and in heart to the work; he did not take it up in all the parts of it. He resolved never to quit it, or lay it down, till he could say, It is finished. Many have zeal to carry them out at first, but not zeal to carry them on to the last; but our Lord Jesus was intent upon finishing his work. Our master has herein left us an example, that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; 1. With diligence and close application, as those that make a business of it. 2. With delight and pleasure in it, as in our element. 3. With constancy and perseverance; not only willing to do, but aiming to finish, our work.

2. See here, how Christ, having expressed his delight in his work, excites his disciples to diligence in their work; they were workers with him, and therefore should be workers like him, and make the harvest of their work; every man that had to do was to, preach the gospel, and by it to open the kingdom of the Messiah. Now this work he here compares to harvest-work, which is the gathering in of the fruits of the earth; and this similitude he procures throughout this discourse, v. 35-38. Note, Gospel-time is harvest-time, and gospel-work harvest-work. The harvest is before appointed and expected; so was the gospel. Harvest-time is busy work; the disciples must be employed in the work; every man must work for himself, that he may reap of the graces and comforts of the gospel; ministers must work for God, to gather in souls to him. Harvest-time is opportunity, a short and limited time which will not last always; and harvest-work is work that must be done then, or not at all; so the time of the enjoyment of the gospel is a particular season, which must be improved for its proper purposes; for, once past, it cannot be recalled.

The disciples were to gather in a harvest of souls for Christ. Now he here suggests three things to them to quicken them to diligence.

(1.) That it was necessary work, and the occasion for it very urgent and pressing; (v. 35.) Ye say, It is four months to harvest; but I say, The fields are already white. Here is, [1.] A saying of Christ's concerning the corn-harvest; there are yet four months, and then comes harvest, which may be taken either generally; "You say, for the encouragement of the sower at seed-time, that it will be but four months to the harvest." With us it is but about four months between the barley-seediness, and the barley-harvest, probably it was so with them to other grain; or, [2.] Particularly now at this time to raise up a workmen, the four months that followed according to the ordinary course of Providence. The Jews' harvest began at the passover, about Easter, much earlier in the year than ours; by which it appears that this journey of Christ from Judea to Galilee was in the winter, about the end of November, for he travelled all weathers, to do good. God has not only promised us a harvest every year, but he has appointed the remind of the harvest; that we know when to expect it, and take our measures accordingly. [2.] Here is a saying of Christ's concerning the gospel-harvest; his heart was as much upon the fruits of his gospel as the hearts of others were upon the fruits of the earth; and to that he would lead the thoughts of his disciples; Look, the fields are already white unto the harvest.
First, Here in this place where they now were, there was harvest-work for him to do. They would have him to eat, (v. 31.) "Eat!" saith he, "I have other work to do, that is more needful; look what crowds of Samaritans are coming out of the town over the fields, that are ready to receive the gospel," probably, there were many now in view. People's forwardness to hear the word, is a great excitement to ministers' diligence and liveliness in preaching it.

Secondly, In other places, all the country over, there was harvest-work enough for them all to do. "Consider the regions; think of the state of the country, and you will find there are multitudes as ready to receive the gospel as a field of corn that is fully ripe, as ready to be reaped." The fields were now made white to the harvest, 1. By the decree of God revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament, their own hearts, Lam. 5. 4. Christ's having ascended to heaven, the gathering of the people should be to Christ, (Gen. 44. 16.) when great acclamations should be made to the church, and the bounds of it should be enlarged, and therefore it was time for them to be busy. It is a great encouragement to us to engage in any work for God, if we understand by the signs of the times that this is the proper season for that work, for then it will prosper. 2. By the dispersion of the church out of all lands, the reapers from the fire prepared for the Lord, Luke 1. 17. Since he began to preach the kingdom of God, every man pressed into it, Luke 16. 15. This therefore was a time for the preachers of the gospel to apply themselves to their work with the utmost vigour; to thrust in their sickle, when the harvest was ripe, Rev. 14. 13. It was necessary to work now; pity that such a season should be let slip. If the corn that is ripe be not reaped, it will perish and be lost, and the fowls will pick it up. If souls that are under convictions, and have some good inclinations, be not helped now, their hopeful beginnings will come to nothing, and they will be a prey to pretenders. It was also easy to work now; when the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly, 2 Chron. 29. 35. It cannot but quicken ministers to take pains in preaching the word, when they observe the time is so favouring their labour.

(2.) That it was profitable and advantageous work, which themselves would be gainers by; (v. 36.) "He that reapeth, receiveth wages, and so shall you." Christ has undertaken to pay those well whom he employs in his work; for he will never do as Jehoshaphat did, who used his neighbour's service without wages, (Jer. 22. 13.) or those who by fraud kept back the hire of those particularly who reaped down the harvest, 2 Chronicles 19. 3. Christ's having ascended to heaven, though they cry to him day and night, shall never have cause to cry against him, nor to say that they served a hard Master. He that reapeth, not only shall receive wages, but doth receive it. There is a present reward in the service of Christ, and his work is its own wages.

[1.] Christ's reapers have fruit; He gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that is, he shall both save himself and them that hear him. 1 Tim. 4. 16. 17. The faithful reaper save his own soul, that is fruit abounding to his account, it is fruit gathered to life eternal. And if, over and above this, he be instrumental to save the souls of others too, there is fruit gathered; souls gathered to Christ are good fruit, the fruit that Christ seeks for; (Rom. 1. 13.) it is gathered for Christ, (Cant. 8. 11, 12.) it is gathered to life eternal. This is the comfort of faithful reapers, their increase of the fruit of the field, the eternal salvation of precious souls.

[2.] They have joy; that he that sows, and they that reap, may rejoice together. The minister who is the happy instrument of beginning a good work, is he that sows, as John Baptist was; he that is employed to carry it on and perfect it, is he that reaps; and both shall rejoice together. Note, First, Though God is to have all the glory of the success of the gospel, yet faithful ministers may themselves take the comfort of it. The reapers share in the joy of harvest, though the profits belong to the master, 1 Thess. 2. 19. 2. Those ministers who are variously gifted and employed, should be so far from envying one another, that they should rather mutually rejoice in each other's success and usefulness. Christ's ministers are not all like serviceable, nor alike successful, yet, if they have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, they shall all enter together into the joy of their Lord at last.

(3.) That it was easy work, and work that was half done to their hands by those that were gone before them; (v. 37, 38.) One sowed, and another reaped. This sometimes speaks a grievous judgment upon him that sows, Mic. 6. 15. Deut. 24. 20. Thou shalt sow, and another shall reap; as Deut. 6. 11. House full of all good things which thou fillest not. So here, Moses and the prophets and John Baptist had paved the way to the gospel, had sown the good seed which the New-Testament ministers did in effect but gather the fruit of. I send you to reap that wherein ye bestowed, in comparison, no labour; Isa. 5. 6. 7.

1. This speaks two things concerning the Old-Testament ministry. First, That it was very much short of the New-Testament ministry. Moses and the prophets sowed, but they could not be said to reap, so little did they see of the fruit of their labours. Their writings have done much more good since they left us than ever their preaching did. Secondly, That it was very much serviceable to the New-Testament, and prepared the way for the Old. The writings of the prophets, which were read in the synagogues every sabbath-day, raised people's expectations of the Messiah, and so prepared them to bid him welcome. Had it not been for the seed sown by the prophets, this Samaritan woman would not have said, We know that the Messiah cometh. The writings of the Old-Testament are in some respects more useful to us than they could be to those whom the prophets spake. We may better understand the accomplishment of them. See, Pet. 1. 12. Heb. 4. 2. Rom. 16. 25, 26.

2. This also speaks two things concerning the ministry of the apostles of Christ. First, That it was a fruitful ministry; they were reapers that gathered in a great harvest of souls to Jesus Christ, and did more in seven years towards the setting up of the kingdom of God among men, than the prophets of the Old Testament had done in twice so many ages. Secondly, That it was much facilitated, especially among the Jews, to whom they were first sent, by the writings of the prophets. The prophets sowed in tears, crying out, We have labour'd in vain; the apostles reaped in joy, saying, Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph. Note, From the labours of ministers that are dead and gone, much good fruit may be reaped by people that survive them, and the ministers that succeed them. John Baptist, and those that assisted him had laboured, and the disciples of Christ entered into their labours, built upon their foundation, and reaped the fruit of what they sowed. See what reason we have to bless God for those that are gone before us; for their preaching and their writing; for what they did and suffered in their day, for we are entered into their labours, and their ministry doth more work the easier. And when the ancient and modern labourers, those that came in the vineyard at the third hour, and those that came in at the eleventh, meet in the day of account, they will be so far from envying one another the honour of their respective services, that both
they that sowed and they that reaped shall rejoice together; and the great Lord of the harvest shall give unto them their due reward.

IV. The good effect which this visit Christ made to the Samaritans (en passant) had upon them, and the fruit which was now presently gathered among them, v. 39—42. See what impressions were made on them.

1. By the woman's testimony concerning Christ; though a single testimony, and of one of no great repute, they were not of more than this. He told me all that ever I did; yet it had a good influence upon many. One would have thought that his telling the woman of her secret sins, should have made them afraid of coming to him, lest he should tell them also of their faults; but they will venture that, rather than not be acquainted with one that they had reason to think was a prophet. And two things they were brought to.

(1.) To credit Christ's word; (v. 39.) Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman. So far they believed on him, that they took him for a Prophet, and were desirous to know the mind of God from him; this is favourably interpreted a believing on him. Now observe,

[2.1] Who they were that believed; many of the Samaritans, who were not of the hand of Israel. Their faith was not only an aggravation of the unbelief of the Jews, from whom better might have been expected, but an earnest of the faith of the Gentiles, who would welcome that which the Jews rejected.

(2.) Upon what inducement they believed, for the saying of the woman. See here, First, How God is sometimes pleased to use the very weak and vilest instruments for the beginning and carrying on of a good work. A little maid directed a great prince to Elisha, 2 Kings 5. 2. Secondly, How great a matter a little fire kindles. Our Saviour, by instructing one poor woman, spread instruction to a whole town. Let not ministers be either careless in their preaching, or discouraged in it, because their hearers are few and mean; for, by doing good to them, good may be conveyed to more, and those that are more considerable. If they teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, a great number may learn at second hand. Philip preached the gospel to a single gentleman in his chariot upon the road, and he not only received it himself, but carried it into his country, and propagated it there. Thus it is, and will be, where you may see God is able to speak experimentally of Christ and the things of God. This woman could say little of Christ, but what she did say she spake feelingly; He told me all that ever I did. Those are most likely to do good, that can tell what God has done for their souls, Ps. 66. 16.

(2.2) They were brought to court his stay among them; (v. 40.) When they were come to him, they besought him that he would tarry with them. Upon the woman's report, they believed him to be a Prophet, and came to him; and when they saw him, the meanness of his appearance, and the manifest poverty of his outward condition, did not lessen their esteem of him, and expectations from him, but still they respected him as a Prophet. Note, There are hopes of those who are got over the vulgar prejudices the men have against true religion and its professors. Upon the estate. Blessed are they that are not offended in Christ at the first sight. So far were they from being offended in him, that they begged he would tarry with them; [1.] That they might testify their respect to him, and treat him with the honour and kindness due to his character. God's prophets and ministers are welcome guests to all those who sincerely embrace the gospel; as to Lydia, Acts 16. 15. [3.] That they might receive instruction from him. Those that are taught of God, are truly desirous to

learn more, and to be better acquainted with Christ. Many would have flocked to one that would tell them only one theme, but they came to one that would tell them their faults; tell them of their need of duty. The historian seems to lay an emph: siis upon their being Samaritans; as Luke 10. 33.—17. 16. The Samaritans had not that reputation for religion that the Jews had; yet the Jews, who saw Christ's miracles, drove him from them, while the Samaritans, who saw not his miracles, nor shared in his favour; yet that he had an opportunity of doing good, he abode there. That is no real hinderance, which will further our account. Yet he abode there but two days, because he had other places to visit and other work to do, and those two days were as many as came to the share of this city, out of the few days of our Saviour's sojourning upon earth.

Secondly, We are told what impressions were made upon them by Christ's own word, and his personal converse with them; (v. 41. 42.) what he said and did there, is not related, whether he healed their sick or no; but it is intimated, in the effect, that he said and did that which convinced them that he was the Christ; and the labours of a minister are best told by the good fruit of them. Their hearing of his word had a good effect, but now their eyes see him; and the effect of that was,

1. That their number grew; (v. 41.) Many more believed; many that would not be persuaded to go out of the town to him, were yet wrought upon when he came among them, to believe in him. Note, It is comfortable to see the number of believers; and sometimes the zeal and forwardness of some may be a means to draw others, and to stir them up to a holy emulation, Rom. 11. 14.

2. That their faith grew. Those who had been wrought upon by the report of the woman, now saw cause to say, Now we believe, not for thy saying, v. 42. Here are three things in which their faith grew.

(1.) In the matter of it, or that which they did believe. Upon the testimony of the woman, they believed him to be a Prophet, or some one sent from heaven; but now that they had conversed with him, they believe that he is the Christ, the Anointed One, the very same that was promised to the fathers, and expected by them; and that being the Christ, he is the Saviour of the world; for that was the work to which he was anointed, to save his people from their sins. They believed him to be him to be a Prophet, or some one sent from heaven, but now that they have had the world, which they hoped would take them in, though Samaritans, for it was promised that he should be Salvation to the ends of the earth, Isa. 49. 6.

(2.) In the certainty of it; their faith now grew up to a full assurance; We know that this is indeed the Christ, who is come to save us, not a pretended Christ, but a real one; not a typical Saviour, as many under the Old Testament, but truly one. Such assurance as this of divine truths is what we should labour after; not only, We think it probable, and are will
Though the Jewish, the men's and the believers' faith were well-grounded, yet we believe, because we have heard himself and have had such excellent and divine truths, accompanied with such commanding power and evidence, that we are abundantly satisfied and assured that this is the Christ. This is like what the queen of Sheba said of Solomon: (1 Kings 10. 6.) *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves. They had before believed for her saying, and it was well, it was a good step; but now the faith of others was confirmed; and this further light, to *for to him that hath shall be given: he that is faithful in a little shall be trusted with more.*

In this instance we may see how faith comes by hearing. (1.) Faith comes to the birth by hearing the report of men. These Samaritans for the sake of the woman's saying, believed so far as to come and see, to come and make trial. Thus the instructions of parents and preachers, and the testimony of the church and our experienced neighbours, recommend the doctrine of Christ to our acquaintance, and incline us to entertain it as highly probable. But, (2.) Faith comes to its growth, strength, and maturity, by hearing the testimony of Christ himself; and this goes further, and recommends his doctrine to our acceptance, and obliges us to believe it as undoubtedly certain. We were induced to look into the scriptures, by the saying of those who told us that in them they had found eternal life; but when we ourselves have found it in them too, have experienced the enlightening, convincing, regenerating, sanctifying, comforting power of the word, now we believe, not for their saying, but because we have searched them ourselves; and our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 2. 5. 1 John 5. 10.

This was the seed of the gospel sown in Samaria; what effect there was of this afterward, does not appear, but we find that four or five years after, when Philip preached the gospel in Samaria, he found such blessed remains of this good work now wrought, that the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spake, Acts 8. 5, 6, 8. But as some were plausible to good, so were others to evil, when Simon Magus bewitched with his sorceries, v. 9, 10.

43. Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. 44. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country. 45. Then, when he was come into Galilee, the Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast; for they also went unto the feast. 46. So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. 47. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. 48. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. 49. The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. 50. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. 51. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. 52. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. 53. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.

In these verses, we have, 1. Christ's coming into Galilee, v. 43. Though he was as welcome among the Samaritans as he could be any where, and had better success, yet after he had done the work at Jerusalem, he proceeded thither again, because they were Samaritans, and he would not confirm these in their prejudices against him, who said, *He is a Samaritan,* (ch. 8. 48.) but because he must preach to other cities, Luke 4. 43. He went into Galilee, for there he spent much of his time. Now see here, 1. Whither Christ went; into Galilee, into the country of Galilee, but not to Nazareth, which was strictly his own country; he went among the villages, and declined going to Nazareth, the head-city, for a reason here given, which Jesus himself testified, who knew the temper of his countrymen, the hearts of all men, and the experiences of all prophets, and it is this, That a prophet has no honour in his own country. Note, (1.) Prophets ought to have honour, because God has put honour upon them, and we do or may receive benefit by them. (2.) The honour due to the Lord's prophets has very often been denied them, and contempt put upon them. (3.) This due honour is most frequently denied them in their own country; see Luke 4. 44. Matth. 13. 57. Not that it is universally true, (no rule but has some exceptions,) but it holds for the most part. Joseph, when he began to be a prophet, was most hated by his brethren; David was disowned by his brother; (1 Sam. 17. 28.) Jeremiah was malignantly by the men of Anathoth; (Jer. 20. 14.) Paul by his countrymen the Jews; and Christ's near kinsman spake most slightly of him, ch. 7. 5. Men's pride and envy make them scorn to be instructed by those who once were their school-fellows and play-fellows. Desire of novelty, and of that which is far-fetched, and dear-bought, and seems to drop out of the sky to them, makes them desire those persons and things which they have long used to, and know the value of. (4.) They do not see a minister to go among a people that have no value for him or his labours. Christ would not go to Nazareth, because he knew how little respect he should have there. (5.) It is just with God to deny his gospel to those that despise the ministers of it. They that mock the messengers, forfeit the benefit of the message. Matth. 21. 35. 41.

2. What entertainment he met with among the Galileans in the country; (v. 45.) They received him, bade him welcome, and cheerfully attended on his doctrine. Christ and his gospel are not sent in vain; if they had not honour with some, they shall have with others. Now the reason given why these Galileans were so ready to receive Christ is, because they had seen the miracles he did at Jerusalem, v. 45. Observe, (1.) They went up to Jerusalem at the feast, the feast of the passover. The Galileans lay
very remote from Jerusalem, and their way thither lay through the country of the Samaritans, which was troublesome for a Jew to pass through, worse than Baca's valley of old; yet, in obedience to God's command, they went up to the feast, and there they began to be acquainted with Christ. Note, They that are diligent and constant in attending on public ordinances, some time or other meet with more spiritual benefit than they expect. (2.) At Jerusalem they saw Christ's miracles, which recommended him and his doctrine very much to their faith and affections. The miracles were wrought for the benefit of them that were in the city, and for the remembrance of those that were elsewhere. (3.) At Capernaum he膮d the water made to flow, or the patients to be made whole. Some say miracle; which we have seen of the works of Christ. 

II. His curing of the nobleman's son that was sick of a leper. This story is not recorded by any other of the Evangelists. Matthew 8: 13-16.

Observe, 1. Who the petitioner was, and who the patient; the petitioner was a nobleman, the patient was his son; there was a certain nobleman. Regularus, (so the Latin,) a little king; so called, either for the largeness of his estate, or the extent of his power, or the royalties that belonged to his manor. Some understand it as bespeaking his favoritism, he was a courtier, in some office about the king; others, as bespeaking his lofty rank, he was a Herodian, a royalist, a prerogative man, one that espoused the interest of the Herods, father and son; perhaps it was Chusa, Herod's steward, (Luke 8: 3.) or Manan, Herod's foster-brother, Acts 13: 1. There were saints in Cæsar's household. The father a nobleman, and yet the son sick; for dignities and titles of honour will be no security to persons and families. Some understand it as showing the distance of the place. He lived fifteen miles from Capernaum where this nobleman lived to Cana, where Christ was now; yet this affliction in his family sent him so far to Christ.

2. How the petitioner made his application to the Physician. Having heard that Jesus was come out of Judea to Galilee, and finding that he did not come toward Capernaum, but turned off toward the other side of the country, he went to him himself, and besought him to come and heal his son, v. 47. See here, (1.) His tender affection to his son, that when he was sick he would spare no pains to get help for him. (2.) His great respect to our Lord Jesus; that he would come himself to wait upon him, when he might have sent a servant; and that he besought him, when, as a man in authority, some would think he might have ordered his attendance. The greatest men, when they come to God, must be like beggars, as such. 

As to the craft he came upon, we may observe a mixture in his faith. [1.] There was sincerity in it; he did believe that Christ could heal his son, though his disease was dangerous. It is probable that he had physicians to him, who had given him over; but he believed that Christ could cure him when the case seemed deplorable. [2.] Yet there was some reserve in it; he would have Christ come down and heal him, expecting, as Naaman did, that he would come and strike his hand over the patient, as if he could not cure him but by a physical touch. Thus are we apt to limit the Holy One of Israel, and to stint him to our forms. The centurion, a Gentile, a soldier, was so strong in faith, as to say, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, Matt. 8: 8. This nobleman, a Jew, must have Christ to come down, though it was a good day's journey, and desairs of a cure unless he come down, as if he must teach Christ how to work. We are encouraged to pray, but we are not allowed to prescribe; Lord, heal me; but whether with a word or a touch, as he pleased. 8. This gentle rebuke he met with in this address; (v. 43.) Jesus said to him, "I see how it is; except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe, as the Samaritans did, though they saw no signs and wonders, and therefore I must work miracles among you." Though he was a nobleman, and now in grief about his son, and had showed great respect to Christ in coming so far to him, yet Christ gives him a rebuke; men's dignity in the world shall not exempt them from the rebukes of the word or providence; for Christ reproves not after the hearing of his ears, but with equity, Isa. 11: 3. Observe, Christ first shows him his sin and weakness, to prepare him for mercy, and then grants him his request. Christ humbles those first with his frowns, whom he intends to honour with his favours. The Com- fort of the poor is before the glory of the great.

9. He and his servants were to see a miracle, and this miracle brought home to him the certainty of Christ, Mark 5: 21-43. (3.) That whereas they had seen divers miracles, which they could not gainsay the evidence of, but which he sufficiently proved Christ a Teacher come from God, and should now have applied themselves to him for instruction in his doctrine, which by its native excellency would have gently led them on, in believing, to a spiritual perfection; instead of this, they would go no further in believing than they were driven by signs and wonders. The spiritual power of the word did not affect them, did not attract them, but only the sensible power of miracles, which were for them who believed not, while proaching was for them that believe, 1 Cor. 14: 22. Those that admire miracles only, and despise prophesying, rank themselves with unbelievers. 

4. His continued importunity in his address; (v. 49.) Sir, come down ere my child die. &c.—Lord; so it should be rendered. In this reply of his, we have, (1.) Something that was commendable; he took the reproof patiently, he spake to Christ respectfully; though he was one of those that were soft clothing, yet he could bear his reproof. It is none of the privileges of peacemongers to be above the reproofs of the word of Christ; but it is a sign of a good temper and disposition in men, especially in great men, when they can be told of their faults, and can even administer them to themselves, and be not affronted for an affront, so he did not take it for a denial, but still prosecuted his request, and continued to wrestle till he prevailed. Nay, he might argue thus, "If Christ heal my soul, surely he will heal my son; if he cure
by his word. He left him dying; yet, when Christ said, he lives, like the father of the faithful, against hope he believed in hope, and staggered not through unbelief.

(2.) Christ said, Go thy way; and, as an evidence of the sincerity of his faith, he went his way, and gave neither Christ nor himself any further disturbance. He did not press Christ to come down, did not say, "If he do recover, yet a visit will be acceptable? no, he seems no further solicitous, but, like Hannah, he goes his way. This is not merely; seeing so entirely satisfied, he made no great haste home; did not hurry home that night, but returned leisurely, as one that was perfectly easy in his own mind.

7. The further confirmation of his faith, by comparing notes with his servants at his return. (1.) His servants met him with the agreeable news of the child's recovery, v. 51. Probably they met him not far from him, at the house, and, knowing what their master's cares were, they were willing as soon as they could to make him easy. David's servants were loath to tell him when the child was dead. Christ said, Thy son liveth; and now the servants say the same. Good news will meet those that hope in God's word.

(2.) He inquired what hour the child began to recover; (v. 52.) not as if he doubted the influence of Christ, but with the idea of Christ's child's recovery, but he seems desirous to have his faith confirmed, that he might be able to satisfy any to whom he should relate it; for it was a material circumstance. Note, [1.] It is good to furnish ourselves with all the corroborating proofs and evidences that may be, to strengthen our faith in the word of Christ, that it may grow up to a full assurance. Show me a token for good. [2.] The diligence, and the retreating of his servants, will be of great use to us for the confirming of our faith. That was the course this nobleman took; He inquired of the servants the hour when he began to amend; and they told him, Yesterday at the seventh hour. (at one o'clock in the afternoon, or, as some think this evangelist reckons, at seven o'clock at night,) the fever left him; not only he began to amend, but he was perfectly well on a sudden; so the father, with the advice of his servants, came to Christ, who was told of his coming. The case of Jesus was said to him, Thy son liveth. As the word of God, well studied, will help us to understand his providences; so the providence of God, well observed, will help us to understand his word, for God is every day fulfilling the scripture. Two things would help to confirm his faith. First, That the child's recovery was sudden, and not gradual. They name the precise time to an hour, Yesterday, not far, but at the seventh hour. The fever left him; not it abated, or began to decrease, but it left him in an instant. The word of Christ did not work like physic, which must have time to operate, and produce the effect, and perhaps cure by expectation only; no, with Christ it was dictum factum—he spoke, and it was done; not, He spoke, and it was set a doing. Secondly, That it was just at the same time that Christ spoke to him; at that hour of his house, and the retreating of his servants, and the synchronisms and coincidences of events add very much to the beauty and harmony of Providence. Observe the time, and the thing itself will be more illustrious, for every thing is beautiful in its time; at the very time when it is promised, as Israel's deliverance; (Exod. 12. 41.) at the very time when it is prayed for, as Peter's deliverances, Acts 12. 12. In men's works, distance of place is the delay of time, and the retardation of his word. (3.) He could not gratify him so far as to go down with him, he is satisfied with the method Christ took, and reckonings he has gained his point. How quickly, how easily, is that which is lacking in our faith, perfected by the word and power of Christ. Now he sees no signs and wonders; but it is not so in the works of Christ. The pardon and peace, and comfort, and spiritual healing, which he speaks in heaven, is, if he please, at the same time effected, and wrought in the souls of believers; and when these two come to be compared, ST. JOHN, IV. 713
in the great day, Christ will be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe. 6. The glory of the church is the issue of this. The bringing of the cure to the family brought salvation to it. (1.) The nobleman himself believed. He had before believed the word of Christ, with reference to this particular occasion; but now he believed in Christ as the Messiah promised, and became one of his disciples. Thus the particular experience of the power and efficacy of one word of Christ, may be instanced as an introduction and proof of the authority of Christ's dominion in the soul. Christ has many ways of gaining the heart, and by the grant of a temporal mercy may make way for better things. (2.) His whole house believed likewise. [1.] Because of the interest they all had in the miracle, which preserved the blossom and hopes of the family; this affected them all, and endeared Christ to them, and recommended him to their best thoughts. [2.] Because of the influence the master of the family had upon them all. A master of a family cannot give faith to those under his charge, nor force them to believe, but he may be instrumental to remove external prejudices which obstruct the operation of the evidence, and then the work is more. [3. ch. 24. 15.] Probably, the conversion of this nobleman and his family at Capernaum might invite Christ to come afterward, and settle at Capernaum, as his head-quarters in Galilee. When great men receive the gospel, they may be instrumental to bring it to the places where they live. Lastly, Here is the evangelist's remark upon this cure; (v. 54.) This is the second miracle: referring to ch. 2. 11. where the turning water into wine is said to be the first; that was soon after his first return out of Judaea, this soon after his second. In Judaea he had wrought many miracles, ch. 3. 2.—4. 5. 'T hey had the first offer; but, being driven thence, he wrought miracles in Galilee. Somewhere or other Christ will find a welcome. People may, if they please, shut the sun out of their own house, but cannot shut it out of the world. This is not to be the second miracle. 1. To remind us of the first, wrought in the same place some months before. Fresh mercies should revive the remembrance of former mercies, as former mercies should encourage our hopes of further mercies. Christ keeps account of his favours, whether we do or no. 2. To let us know that this cure was before those many cures which the other evangelists mention to be wrought in Galilee, Matt. 4. 23. Mark 1. 34. Luke 4. 40. Probably, this cure (the patient being a person of quality) was the more talked of for that reason, and sent him crowds of patients; when this nobleman applied himself to Christ, multitudes followed. What abundance of good may great men do, if they be good men!  

CHAP. V.  

We have in the gospels a faithful record of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, Acts i. 1. These two are interwoven, because what he taught, explained what he did, and what he did confirmed what he taught. Accordingly, we have here a chapter of a miracle and a sermon. 1. The miracle was the cure of an impotent man that had been diseased thirty-eight years, with the circumstances of that cure, v. 1.—16. 2. The sermon was Christ's vindication of himself before the Sanhedrim, when he was prosecuted as a criminal for healing the man on the sabbath-day; in which, 1. He asserts his authority as Messiah, and Mediator between God and man, v. 17.—29. 2. He proves it by the testimony of his Father, of John Baptist, of his miracles, and of the scriptures of the Old Testament, and condemns the Jews for their unbelieving, v. 30.—47. 1. AFTER this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 2. Now there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. 3. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. 4. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. 5. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. 6. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? 7. The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. 8. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. 9. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. 10. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath-day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. 11. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. 12. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? 13. And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place. 14. Afterward Jesus foundeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. 15. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole. 16. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath-day.  

This miraculous cure is not recorded by any other of the evangelists, who confine themselves mostly to the miracles wrought in Galilee, but John relates those wrought at Jerusalem. Concerning this observe, 1. The time when this cure was wrought; it was at a feast of the Jews, that is, the passover, for that was the most celebrated feast. Christ, though residing in Galilee, yet went up to Jerusalem at the feast, ch. 1. 2. Because it was an ordinance of God, which, as a Subject, he would observe, being made under the law; though, as a Son, he might have pleaded an
exemption. Thus he would teach us to attend religious assemblies, Heb. 10. 25.

2. Because it was an opportunity of good; for

(1.) There were great numbers gathered together there at that time; it was a general rendezvous, at least, of all serious, thinking people from all parts of the country, beside proselytes from other nations; and wisdom must cry in the places of concourse, Prov. 1. 21.

(2.) It was to be hoped that they were in a good frame, for they came together to worship God and to spend their time in religious exercises. Now a mind, inclined to devotion, and sequestering itself to the exercises of piety, is very often to the further discoveries of divine light and love, and to it Christ will be acceptable.

1. The place where this cure was wrought; at the house of Bethesda, which had a miraculous healing virtue in it, and is here particularly described, v. 2—4.

Where it was situated; at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market; there, in the daytime; it might as well be rendered, the sheep-cote, where the sheep were kept; or the sheep-gate, which we read of, Neh. 3. 1.

1. Through which the sheep were brought, as the sheep-market, where they were sold. Some think it was at the west end of the city, and so it yielded a melancholy, but profitable spectacle to those that went up to the temple to pray.

2. How it was called; it was a pool, (a pond, or bath,) which is called in Hebrew, Bethesdah—The house of mercy; for therein appeareth much of the mercy of God to the sick and diseased. In a world of so much misery as this, it is well that there are some Bethesdahs—Houses of mercy, (remedies against these maladies,) that the scene is not all melancholy. An alms-house, so Dr. Hammond. Dr. Lightfoot's conjecture is, that this was the upper pool, (Isa. 7. 3.) and the old pool, Isa. 22. 11. That it had been used for washing from ceremonial pollutions, for convenience of which the porches were built to dress and undress in, but it was lately become medical.

3. How it was fitted up; it had five porches, cloisters, piazzas, or roofed walks, in which the sick lay. Thus the charity of men concurred with the mercy of God for the relief of the distressed. Nature has provided remedies, but men must provide hospitals.

4. How it was frequented with sick and cripples; (v. 3.) In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! How full of complaints are all places, and what multitudes of impotent folk! It may do us good to visit the hospitals sometimes, that we may take occasion, from the calamities of others, to thank God for our comforts. The evangelist specifies three sorts of diseased people that lay here, blind, halt, and withered, or sinew-shrunken, either in one particular part, as the man with the withered hand, or all over paralytic. It signifies, because, being least able to help themselves into the water, they lay longest waiting in the porches. Those that were sick of those bodily diseases, took the pains to come far, and had the patience to wait long, for a cure; any of us would have done the same, and we ought to do so: but O that men were as wise for their souls, and as solicitous to get their spiritual diseases healed! We tremble at and are apt to think of impotent folk in spiritual things, blind, halt, and withered; but effectual provision is made for our cure, if we will but observe orders.

5. What virtue it had for the cure of these impotent folk; (v. 4.) An angel went down, and troubled the water; and whose first stepped in was made whole. That this strange virtue in the pool was natural, or artificial rather, and was the effect of the washing of the sacrifices, which impregnated the water with I know not what healing virtue even for blind people; and that this angel was a messenger, a common person, sent down to stir the water, is altogether groundless; there was a room in the temple on purpose to wash the sacrifice in. Expositors generally agree, that the virtue this pool had, was supernatural. It is true, the Jewish writers, who are not sparing in recounting the praises of Jerusalem, do none of them make the least mention of this healing pool; of which silence in this matter, perhaps this was the reason, that it was taken for a prestige of the near approach of the Messiah, and therefore, they who denied him to be come, industriously concealed such an indication of his coming; so that this is the all the account we have of it. Observe, (1.) The preparation of the medicine by an angel, who went down into the pool, and stirs the water. Angels are God's servants, and friends to mankind; and perhaps are more active in the removing of diseases, (as evil angels in the infecting of them,) than we are aware of. Raphael, the apocryphal name of an angel, signifies, medicina Dei—God's phials, or physician rather. See what mean offices the holy angels descend to, for the good of their brethren. Christ's holy angels, the angels do it, we must think nothing below us but sin. The troubling of the water was the signal given of the descent of the angel; as the going upon the top of the mulberry tree was to David, and then they must bear themselves. The waters of the sanctuary are then healing, when they are put in motion. Ministers must stir up the gift that is in them. When they are cold and dull in their ministrations, the waters are cold and are not apt to heal. The angels descended, to stir the water, not daily, perhaps not frequently, but at a certain season; some think, at the three solemn feasts, to grace those solemnities; or, now and then; as Infinite Wisdom saw fit. God is a free Agent in dispensing his favours.

(2.) The operation of the medicine; Whosoever first stepped in, was made whole. Here is, [1.] A miraculous extent of the virtue, as to the diseases cured; what disease soever it was, this water cured it. Natural and artificial baths are as hurtful in some cases as they are useful in others, but this was a remedy for every malady, even for those that came from contrary causes. The power of miracles succeeds, where the power of nature succumbs. (2.] A miraculous limitation of the virtue, as to the persons cured; he that first stepped in, had the benefit; it is amazing, when it is considered, that God is in this case no God of uncertainty; not those that lingered and came in after. This teaches us to observe and improve our opportunities, and to look about us, that we slip not a season which may never return. The angel stirred the waters, but left the diseased to themselves to get in. God has put virtue into the scriptures and ordinances, for he would have healed us; but if we do not make use of them, so that we are not healed, it is our own fault, we were not healed.

Now this is the all the account we have of standing miracles; it is uncertain when it began, and when it ceased. Some conjecture it began when Eliasih the High-Priest began the building of the wall about Jerusalem, and sanctified it with prayer; and that God testified his acceptance, by putting this virtue into the adjoining pool. Some think it began now; or, at the time the walls were destruc- ted, which Dr. Lightfoot, finding in Josephus, Antiq. lib. 15. cap. 7. mention of a great earthquake in the seventh year of Herod, thirty years before Christ's birth, supposed, since there used to be earthquakes at the descent of angels, that then the angel first descended to stir this water. Some think it ceased with this miracle, others at Christ's death; however, it is certain that it had a gracious significance,
First, It was a token of God's good will to that people, and an indication, that, though they had been long without prophets and miracles, yet God had sent them off through they were now an oppressed despised people, and many were ready to say, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? God did hereby let them know that he had still a kindness for the city of their solemnities. We may from hence take occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness God's power and goodness in the midst of enemies, that contribute so much to the health of mankind, for God made the fountains of water, Rev. 14. 7.

Secondly, It was a type of the Messiah, who is the Fountain opened; and was intended to raise people's expectations of him, who is the Sun of righteousness, that arises with healing under his wings. These waters had formerly been used for purifying, now for healing, to signify both the cleansing and curuing virtue of the blood of Christ, that incomparable bath, which heals all our diseases. The waters of Siloam, which filled this pool, signified the kingdom of David, and of Christ the Son of David; (Isa. 3. 6.) fitly therefore have they now this sovereign virtue put into them. The layer of regeneration is our Christ. Baxter's pool, Bethesda's pool; Healing our spiritual diseases; not at certain seasons, but at all times. Whence will, let him come. III. The patient on whom this cure was wrought; (v. 5.) one that had been infirm thirty-eight years.

1. His disease was grievous; he had an infirmity, a weakness; he had lost the use of his limbs, at least, on one side, as is usual in palsies. It is sad to have the body so disabled, that, instead of being the soul's instrument, it is become, even in the affairs of this life, its burden. What reason have we to thank God for bodily strength, to use it for him, and to pity those who are his prisoners!

2. The duration of it was tedious; thirty-eight years: he was lame longer than most live. Many are so long disabled for the offices of life, that, as the psalmist complains, they seem to be made in vain; for suffering, not for service; born to be always dying. Shall we complain of one wearisome night, or one ill fit, who perhaps for many years have scarcely known what it has been to be a day sick, when many others, better than we, have scarcely known what it has been to be a day well? Mr. Baxter's note on this passage is very affecting: "How great mercy it was, that thirty-eight years under God's discipline. Oh mercy, God," saith he, "I thank thee for the like discipline of fifty-eight years; how safe a life is, in comparison of full prosperity and pleasure!"

IV. The cure and the circumstances of it briefly related, v. 6—9.

1. Jesus saw him lie. Observe, When Christ came up to Jerusalem, he visited not these palaces, but such infirm persons as are an instance of his humility, and condescension and tender compassion; and an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was to seek and save the sick and wounded. There was a great multitude of poor cripples here at Bethesda, but Christ fastened his eye upon this one, and singled him out from the rest, because he was senor of the house, and in a more favorable situation for relief; and, Christ delights to help the helpless; and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. Perhaps his companions in tribulation insulted over him, because he had been often disappointed of a cure, therefore Christ took him for his patient; it is his honour to side with the weakest, and bear up those whom he sees run down.

2. He knew, and considered how long he had lain in this condition. Those that have been long in affliction, may comfort themselves with this, that God keeps account how long, and knows our frame.

3. He asked him, What think you be made whole? A strange question to be asked one that had been so long ill. Some indeed would not be made whole, because their sores serve them to beg by, and serve them for an excuse for idleness; but this poor man was as unable to go a begging as to work, yet Christ put it to him, (1.) To express his own pity and concern for him, which makes his cure the more magnificent; the desires of those that are in affliction, and is willing to know what is their petition; "What shall I do for you?" (2.) To try him whether he would be beholden to him for a cure, whom the great people were so prejudiced against, and sought to prejudice others. (3.) To teach him to value the mercy, and to excite in him desires after it. In spiritual cases, people are not willing to be cured of their sins, are loath to part with them. If this point therefore were but gained, if people were willing to be made whole, the work were half done, for Christ is willing to heal, if we be but willing to be healed, Matth. 8. 3.

4. The poor impotent man takes this opportunity to renew his complaint, and to set forth the misery of his case, which makes his cure the more illustrious; (v. 7.) Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool. He seems to take Christ's question as an imputation of carelessness and neglect; "If thou hadst a mind to be healed, thou wouldst have looked better to thy hits, and have got into the healing waters long before now." "No, Master," saith the poor man, "it is not for want of a good will, but of a good friend, that I am unhealed; I have done what I could to help myself, but in vain, for no one else will help me."

(1.) He does not think of any other war of being cured than by these waters, and desires no other friendship than to be helped into them; therefore, when Christ cured him, his imagination or expectation could not contribute to it, for he thought of no such thing.

(2.) He complains for want of friends to help him in; "I have no man, no friend, to do me that kindness." One would think that some of those who had been themselves healed, should have lent him a hand; but it is common for the poor to be destitute of friends; no man careth for thy soul. To the sick and impotent, it is as true a piece of charity to work for them, as it is true a piece of charity to work for them, as it is true a piece of charity to the sick and impotent, who are the most impatient of being charitable to one another, and ought to be so, though we seldom find that they are so; I speak it to their shame.

(3.) He bewails his infelicity, that very often when he was coming, another stepped in before him. But a step between him and a cure, and yet he continues impotent. None had the charity to say, "Your case is so much more considerable, and I will stay till the next time;" for there is no getting over the old maxim, Every one for himself. Having been so often disappointed, he begins it despair, and now is Christ's time to come in to his relief; he delights to help in desperate cases. Observe, How mildly this man speaks of the unkindness of these about him, without any peevish reflections. As it is should be thankful for the least kindness, so we should be patient under the greatest contempt; and, let our resentments be ever so just, yet our expressions should ever be calm. And observe further, to his praise, that though he had waited so long in vain, yet still he continued lying by the pool-side, hoping that some time or other help would come, Hab. 2. 3.

5. Our Lord Jesus hereupon cures him with a word speaking, though he neither asked it, nor thought of it.
Here is, (1.) The word he said, (v. 8.) *Rise, take up thy bed.*

[1.] He is bidden to *rise and walk;* a strange command to be given to an *impotent man,* that had been long disabled; but this divine word was to be the vehicle of a divine power; it was a command to the disease to be gone, to nature to be strong, but it is expressed as a command to him to *beast himself.* He had not attempted to help himself, he had not been cured, and he must have borne the blame; yet it does not therefore follow, that, when he did rise and walk, it was by his own strength; no, it was by the power of Christ, and he must have all the glory. Observe, Christ did not bid him rise, and go into the waters, but *rise and walk.*

[2.] He is bidden to *take up his bed.* First, To make it to appear that it was a perfect cure, and purely miraculous; for he did not recover strength by degrees, but from the extremity of weakness and impotency he suddenly stepped into the highest degree of bodily strength; so that he was able to carry as great a load as any porter that had been as long used to it as he had been diseased. He, who made himself a man, in the very minute was able to carry his bed. The man sick of the palsy (Matth. 9. 6.) was bidden to go to his house, but probably this man had no house to go to, the hospital was his home; therefore he is bidden to *rise, and walk.* Secondly, It was to *proclaim* the cure, and make it public; for, being the sabbath-day, whoever carried a burden through the streets, made himself very remarkable, and every one would inquire what was the meaning of it; thereby the notice of the miracle would spread, to the honour of God.

Thirdly, Christ would thus witness against the tradition of the elders, which had stretched the law of the sabbath beyond its intention; and would likewise show that he was Lord of the sabbath, and had power to make what alterations he pleased about it, and to overrule the law. Joshua, and the other magistrates, would not have been pleased with it, nor would the whole sanhedrim, when God commanded them; so did this man carry his bed, in obedience to a command. The case may be such, that it may become a work of necessity, or mercy, to carry a bed on the sabbath-day; but here it was more, it was a work of piety, being designed purely for the glory of God. 

Fourthly, He would hereby try the faith and obedience of his people. By carrying his bed publicly, he exposed himself to the censure of the ecclesiastical court, and was liable, at least, to be *scourged in the synagogues.* Now, will he run the venture of that, in obedience to Christ? Yes, he will. Those that have been *healed by Christ's word,* should be ruled by his word, whatever it cost them.

(2.) The efficacy of this word; (v. 9.) a divine power went along with it, and immediately he was made whole. But it is here marked, that this man felt the power of Christ's word healing him; *Immediately he was made whole.* What a joyful surprise was this to the poor cripple, to find himself all of a sudden so easy, so strong, so able to help himself; what a new world was he in, in an instant! Nothing is too hard for Christ to do. [2.] He obeyed the power of Christ's word commanding him. He *took up his bed, and walked,* and did not care who blamed him, or threatened him, for it. The proof of our spiritual cure, is our rising and walking. 

Hath Christ healed our spiritual diseases? Let us go whithersoever he sends us, and take up whatever he is pleased to lay upon us; and walk before him.

V. *What came of the poor man after he was cured.* We are here told,

1. *What passed between him and the Jews,* who saw him carry his bed on the sabbath-day; (v. 10.) From that day his cure was wrought, and it was the sabbath that fell within the passover-week, and therefore *a high day,* ch. 19. 31. Christ's work was such, that he needed not make any difference between sabbath-days and other days, for he was always about his Father's business; but he wrought many remarkable cures on that day, perhaps to encourage his church to expect those spiritual favours from him, in their observance of the christian sabbath, which were typified by his miraculous cures. Now here,

(1.) The Jews quarrled with the man for carrying his bed on the sabbath-day, telling him that it *was not lawful,* v. 10. It does not appear whether they were magistrates, who had power to punish him, or common people, who could only *inform* against him; this we hear, that they *made him known* to the chief priests, and knew not by what authority he did it, they were jealous for the honour of the sabbath, and could not unconcernedly see it *prospered,* like Nehemiah, ch. 13. 17.

(2.) The man justifies himself in what he did, by a warrant that would bear him out, v. 11. *I do not do it in contempt of the law,* says he, *I do it in obedience to one,* which had power to overrule the powers of nature, no doubt might overrule a positive law, especially in an instance not of the essence of the law. He that was so kind as to make me whole, would not be so unkind as to bid me do what is sinful. *Christ, by curing another paralytic, proved his power to forgive sin, here to give law;* if his pardons are valid, his edicts are so, and his miracles prove both.

(3.) The Jews inquire further, who it was that gave him this warrant; (v. 12.) *What man is that?* Observe, How industriously they overlooked that which might be a ground of their faith in Christ. They inquire not, no, not for curiosity, *Who is that that made thee whole?* While they industriously catch at that which might be a ground of reflection upon Christ; *What man is that who said unto thee, Take up thy bed?* they would faint *that the patient to be witness against the Physician,* and to be his betrayer. In their question, observe, [1.] They resolve to look upon Christ as a mere man; *What man is that?* For though he gave ever that doing in the bed of the sick, they were resolved that they would put over him to be the *Son of God.* 

[3.] They resolve to look upon him as a bad man, and take it for granted that he who bid this man carry his bed, whatever divine commission he might produce, was certainly a delinquent, and as such to resolve he prosecute him. *What man is that* who durst give such orders. 

(4.) The poor man was unable to give them any account of it; (v. 13.) *He wist not who he was.* 

[1.] Christ was *unknown* to him, when he healed him. Probably, he had heard of the name of Jesus, but had never seen him, and therefore could not tell that this was he. Note, Christ doeth many a good turn for these that know him not, Isa. 45. 4, 5. He enlightens, strengthens, quickens, comforts us, and we *wist not who he is,* nor are aware how much we receive daily by his mediation. This man, being unacquainted with Christ, could not actually believe
in him for a cure; but Christ knew the dispositions of his soul, and suited his favours to them, as to the blind man, John v. ch. 9. 36. Our covenant and communion with God take rise, not so much from our knowledge of him, as from his knowledge of us. We know God, or, rather, are known of him, Gal. 4. 9.

[2.] For the present, he kept himself unknown; for as soon as he had wrought the cure, he conveyed himself away,—Christ is a Sabbath-breaker, and runs him down. Those that are active for God in their generation, must expect to find a Sabbath-breaker, a good thief, and it is wisdom, as much as may be, to keep out of the hearing of both; lest by the one we be exalted, and by the other depressed, above measure. Christ left the miracle to commend itself, and the man on whom it was wrought to justify it.

2. What passed between him and our Lord Jesus at their next interview, v. 14. Observe, [1.] Where Christ found him, in the temple, the place of worship, public worship; in our attendance on public worship we may expect to meet with Christ, and improve our acquaintance with him. Observe, [1.] Christ went to the temple, though he had many enemies, yet he appeared in public, because there he bore his testimony to divine institutions, and had opportunity of doing good. [2.] The man that was cured, went to the temple; there Christ found him the same day, as it should seem, that he was healed; thither he straightway went. First, Because he had, by his infirmity, been so long detained therein; perhaps he had not been there for thirty-eight years, and therefore as soon as ever the embargo is taken off, his first visit shall be to the temple, as Hezekiah intimates his shall be; (Isa. 38. 23.) What is in the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord? Secondly, Because he had, by his recovery, a good errand thither; he went up to the temple, to return thanks to God for his recovery. When God has at any time restored us our health, we ought to attend him with solemn praises; (Ps. 116. 18, 19.) and the sooner the better, while the sense of the mercy is fresh. Thirdly, Because he had, by carrying his bed, seemed to put a contempt upon the sabbath; he would thus show that he had an honour for it, and made conscience of sabbath-sanctification, in that on which the chief stress of it is laid, which is the public worship of God. Works of necessity and mercy are allowed; but, when they are over, we must go to the temple.

(2.) What he said to him. When Christ has cured us, he has not done with us, he now applies him to the heading of his cure, and this by the word too.

[1.] He gives him a memorandum of his cure; Behold, thou art made whole. He found himself made whole, yet Christ calls his attention to it. Behold, consider it seriously, how sudden, how strange, how cheap, how easy the cure was: admire it; behold, and wonder: remember it; let the impressions of able, and never be lost, Isa. 38. 9.

[2.] He gives him a caution against sin; in consideration hereof, Being made whole, sin no more. This implies that his disease was the punishment of sin; whether of some remarkably flagrant sin, or only of sin in general, we cannot tell; but we know that sin is the procuring cause of sickness, Ps. 107. 17, 18. Some observe that Christ did not make mention of sin to any of his patients, but only to this impotent man, and to one other who was in like manner diseased, Mark 2. 3. While those chronic diseases lasted, they prevented the outward acts of sin; but as they were removed, now that the disease was removed, they had the more need to be watchful. Christ intimates to him, that those who are made whole, who are eased of the present sensible punishment of sin, are in danger of returning to sin, when the terror and restraint are over, unless divine grace dry up the fountain. When the trouble which only dammed up the current is over, the waters will return to their old course; and therefore there is need of great watchfulness, lest after healing mercy we return again to folly. The misery we were made whole from, warns us to sin no more, having felt the smart of sin; the mercy we were made whole by, is an engagement upon us not to offend him who healed us. This is the voice of every providence, Go, and sin no more; and hereby, we are very carefully prohibited in the temple, yet Christ saw it necessary to give him this caution; for it is common for people, when they are sick, to promise much, when newly recovered, to perform something, but after a while to forget all.

[3.] He gives him warning of his danger, in case he should return to his former sinful course: Least a worse thing come to thee. Christ, who knows all actions, knew that he was one of those that must be frightened from sin. Thirty-eight years' lameness, one would think, was a thing bad enough; yet there is something worse that will come to him if he relapse into sin after God has given him such a deliverance as this, Ezra 9. 13, 14. The hospital where he lay, was a melancholy place, but hell much more so: the doom of apostates is a worse thing than thirty-eight years' lameness.

Now, after this interview between Christ and his patient, observe in the two following verses,

First, The notice which the poor simple man gave to the Jews concerning Christ, v. 15. He told them it was Jesus that had made him whole. We have reason to think he intended this for the honour of Christ, and the benefit of the Jews, little thinking that he who had made him a good man, now had no enemies; but those who wish well to Christ's kingdom, must have the wisdom of the serfent, lest they do more hurt than good with their zeal, and not cast pearls before swine.

Secondly, The rage and enmity of the Jews against him; Therefore did the rulers of the Jews persecute Jesus. Sect. 1. How absurd and unreasonable their enmity to Christ was. Therefore because he had made a poor sick man well, and so eased the public charge, upon which, it is likely, he had subsisted; therefore they persecuted him, because he did good in Israel. 2. How bloody and cruel it was; They sought to slay him; nothing less than his blood, his life, would satisfy them. 3. How it was vearished over with a colour of zeal for the honour of the sabbath, for his recovery of the public health; Because he had done these things on the sabbath-day; as if that circumstance were enough to vitiate the best and most divine actions, and to render him obnoxious whose deeds were otherwise most meritorious. Thus hypocrites often cover their real enmity against the power of godliness, with a pretended zeal for the form of it.

17. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.
Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill
him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his
Father, making himself equal with God. 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto
them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he
seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.
20. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth:
and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. 21. For as the
Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom
he will. 22. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto
the Son: 23. That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.
He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. 24.
Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that
sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from
death unto life. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is,
when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.
26. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in
himself; 27. And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the
Son of man. 28. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are
in the graves shall hear his voice, 29. And shall come forth; they that have done good,
unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of
damnation. 30. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge; and my judg-
ment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of my Father which hath
sent me.

We have here Christ's discourse upon occasion of his being accused as a Sabbath-Breaker; and it
seems to be his vindication of himself before the Sanhedrin, when he was arraigned before them;
whether on the same day, or two or three days after, does not appear; probably, the same day. Ob-
serve,

1. The doctrine laid down, by which he justified what he did on the sabbath-day; (v. 17.) He an-
swered them. This supposes that he had something laid to his charge; or what they suggested one
to another, when they sought to slay him; (v. 16.) he knew, and gave this reply too, My Father worketh
hitherto, and I work. At other times, in answer to the like charge, he had pleaded the example of Da-
vid's eating of the shrew-bread, of the priest's slay-
ing of the sacrifices, and of the people's watering
of their cattle, on the sabbath-day; but here he
goes higher, and alleges the example of his Father
and his divine authority; waving all other pleas, he
insists upon that which was instar omnium—equi-

1a/ent to the whole, and abides by it, which he had
mentioned, Matth. 12. 8. The Son of man is Lord
even of the Sabbath-day; but he here enlarges on it.

1. He pleads that he was the Son of God, plainly
insisted in his calling God his Father; and if so,
his holiness was unquestionable, and his sovereignty
incontestable, and he might make what alterations he
pleased of the divine law. Surely they will re-
verence the Son, the Heir of all things.

2. That he was a Worker together with God.

(1.) My Father worketh hitherto. The example
of God's resting on the seventh day from all his
works, is, in his own right, the ground of our observing it as a sabbath, or day of
rest. Now God rested only from such work as he had done the six days before; otherwise he worketh
hitherto, he is every day working, sabbath-days and
week-days; upholding and governing all the crea-
tures, and concurring by his common providence to
all the motions and operations of nature, to his own
glory; therefore, when we are appointed to rest on
the sabbath-day, yet we are not restrained from do-
ing that which has a direct tendency to the glory of
God; as the man's carrying of his bed had.

(2.) I work; not only therefore I may work, like
him, in doing good on sabbath-days as well as other
days, but I also work with him. As God created
all things by Christ, so he supports and governs all
by him, Heb. 1. 3. This sets what he does, above
all exception: he that is so great a Worker, must
needs be an uncontrollable Governor; he that does
all, is Lord of all, and therefore Lord of the sabbath;
which particular branch of his authority he would
now assert, because he was shortly to show it fur-
ther, in the change of the day from the seventh to the
first.

II. The offence that was taken at his doctrine;
(v. 18.) The Jews sought the more to kill him.
His defence was made his offence, as if by justifying
himself he had made him bad. Note, Those that
will not be enlightened by the word of Christ, will
be enlightened and exasperated by it; and nothing
more vexes the enemies of Christ than his asserting
of his authority: see Ps. 2. 3—5. They sought to
kill him,

1. Because he had broken the sabbath; for let
his say what he would, in his own justification, they
are resolved, right or wrong, to find him guilty of
sabbath-breaking. When malicious and envy sit upon
the bench, reason and justice may even be silent at
the bar, for whatever they can say, will undoubtedly
be overruled.

2. Not only so, but he had said also, That God
was his Father. Now they pretend a jealousy for
God's honour, as before for the sabbath, and
charge Christ with it as a heinous crime, that he
made himself equal with God; and a heinous crime
it had been, if he had not really been so. It was
the sin of Lucifer, I will be like the Most High.

Now,

(1.) This was justly inferred from what he said;
that he was the Son of God, and that God was his
Father, son, is—his own Father; his, so he
was no one's else. He had said that he worked
with his Father, by the same authority and power,
and hereby he made himself equal with God. See,
intelligiunt Judaei, quod non intelligent Ariani—
Behold, the Jews understand what the Arians do not.

(2.) Yet it was unjustly imputed to him as an
offence, that he equalized himself with God; for he
was, and is, God's equal, in all that he was. Yet,
Christ, in answer to this charge, does not except against the inuendo as strained or
forced, but makes out his claim, and proves that he
is equal with God in power and glory.
III. Christ's discourse upon this occasion, which continues without interruption to the end of the chapter; in these verses he explains, and afterward confirms, his commission, as Mediator, and Plenipotentiary in the treaty between God and man. And as the honours he is hereby entitled to, are such as it is not fit for any creature to receive, so the work he is hereby entrusted with, is such as it is not possible for any man to perform without the grace of God, and therefore he is God equal with the Father.

1. In general. He is one with the Father in all he does as Mediator, and there was a perfect good understanding between them in the whole matter. It is ushered in with a solemn preface, (v. 19.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you; I the Amen, the Amen, say it. This speaks what is said to be, (1.) Very awful and great, and such as must engage the utmost attention. (2.) Very sure, and such as commands an unfeigned ascent. (3.) It intimates that they are matters purely of divine revelation; things which Christ has told us, and which we could not otherwise have come to the knowledge of. Two things he saith in general, concerning the Son's oneness with the Father in working.

First, He performs the works of the Father; (v. 19.) "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do, for these things do the Son." The Lord Jesus, as Mediator, is, First, Obedient to his Father's will; so entirely obedient, that he can do nothing of himself, in the same sense as it is said, God cannot he, cannot deny himself, which speaks the perfection of his truth, not any imperfection in his will, since he is done with all that his Father's will, that it was impossible for him in any thing to act separately. Secondly, He is observer of his Father's counsel; he can, he will, do nothing but what he sees the Father do. No man can find out the work of God, but the only-begotten Son, who lays in his bosom, sees what he does, and is intimately acquainted with his purposes, and has the plan of them ever before him. What he did, the Mediator, throughout his whole undertaking, was the exact transcript or counterfeit of what the Father did; that is, what he designed, when he formed the plan of our redemption in his eternal counsels, and settled those measures in every thing which never could be broken, nor ever needed to be altered; it was the copy of that great original; it was Christ's faithfulness, as it was Moses's, that he did all according to that pattern which he saw in his mind. This is expressed in the present tense, what he sees the Father do, for the same reason, that, when he was here upon earth, it was said, He is in heaven, (ch. 3. 13.) and is in the bosom of the Father; (ch. 1. 18.) as he was even then by his divine nature present in heaven, so the things done in heaven were present to his knowledge. What the Father did in his counsels, the Son had ever in his view, and still he had his eye upon it, as David in spirit spoke of him, I have set the Lord always before me, Ps. 16. 8. Thirdly, Yet he is equal with the Father in working, for what things sooner the Father does, these also does the Son likewise; he did the same things, not such things, but naur, the same things; and he did them in the same manner, quae, likewise, with the same power, and in the same time, and with the same energy and efficacy. Does the Father exact, repeat, and alter, positive laws? Does he overrule the course of nature, know men's hearts? So does the Son. The power of the Mediator is a divine power.

[2.] That the Father communicates to the Son, v. 20. Observe, First, The indication to it: The Father forewarns he declared to him, and is it not the most beloved Son? He had not only a good will to the undertaking, but an infinite complacency in the Undertaker. Christ was now hated of men, one whom the nation abhorred; (Isa. 49. 7.) but he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him. Secondly, The instances of it. He shows it,

1. In what he does communicate to him; He showeth him all things that himself doth. The Father's measures in making and ruling the world are showed to the Son, that he may take the same measures in framing and governing the church, which were wrought in the beginning of the world, for the perfection and providence, and is therefore called the world to come. He shows him all things auriis perennis—what he does, that is, which the Son does, so it might be construed; all that the Son does, is by direction from the Father; he shown him.

2. In what he will communicate; he will show him, that is, will appoint and direct him to do, greater works than these. (1.) Works of greater power than the curing of the impotent man, for he should raise the dead, and should himself rise from the dead. By the power of nature, with the use of means, a disease may possibly in time be cured; but nature can never, by the use of any means, in any time raise the dead. (2.) Works of greater authority than warranting of the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath-day, for he creates a wonder; but what was that to his abrogating of the whole ceremonial law, and instituting of new ordinances, which he would shortly do; that ye may marvel. Now they looked upon his works with contempt and indignation, but he will shortly do that which they will look upon with amazement, Luke 7. 16. Many are brought to marvel at Christ's works, yet the honor of it has the honour of them, who are not brought to believe, by which they would have the benefit of them.

2. In particular. He proves his equality with the Father, by specifying some of those works which he does, that are the peculiar works of God. This is enlarged upon, v. 21—30. (1.) He does, and shall do, that which is the peculiar work of God's almighty power—he has the honour of them, who are not brought to believe, by which they would have the benefit of them.

First, His authority to do it; (v. 21.) As the Father raiseth up the dead, so the Son quickeneth whom he will.

1. It is God's prerogative to raise the dead, and give life, even his who first breathed into man the breath of life, and so made him a living soul; see Gen. 2. 7. It was done by the prophets Elijah and Elisha, and it was a confirmation of their mission. A resurrection from the dead never lay in the common road of nature, nor ever fell within the thought of those that studied only, the compass of nature's power, one of whose received axioms, was point-blank against the breath of life, and so made him a living soul; see Gen. 1. 27—29. Existence, when once extinguished, cannot be rekindled. It was therefore ridiculed at Athens as an absurd thing, Acts 17. 32. It is purely the work of a divine power, and the knowledge of it purely by divine revelation. This the Jews would own.

The Mediator is invested with this prerogative; He quickens whom he will; raises whom he will to life, and when he pleases. He does not enliven things by natural necessity, as the sun does whose beams revive of course; but he acts as a free
Agent, has the dispensing of his power in his own hand, and is neither estranged, or restrained, in the use of it. As he has the power, so he has the wisdom and sovereignty (1 Cor. 1. 24) not to all the vant, to open and shut as he is bidden, for he has it as the key of David, which he is Master of, Rev. 3. 7.

An absolute prince is described by this; (Dan. 5. 23.) Whom he would he slew, or kept alive; it is true of Christ, without a hyperbole.

Secondly, His ability to do it. Therefore he has power to quicken when he will as the rather doth, because he has life in himself, as the Father has, v. 26.

1. It is certain that the Father has life in himself. Not only he is a self-existent Being, who does not derive from, or depend upon, any other, (Exod. 3. 14.) but he is a sovereign Giver of life; he has the disposal of life in himself, and all good; (for so life sometimes signifies;) it is all derived from him, and (dependent on him;) he is the fountain of life in himself, and all good; Author of their being and well-being; the living God, and the God of all living.

2. It is as certain that he has given to the Son to have life in himself. As the Father is the Original of all natural life and good, being the great Creator, so the Son, as Redeemer, is the Original of all spiritual life and good; is that to the church, that the Father is to the world; see 1 Cor. 8. & Col. 1. 19. The kingdom of life is in the Son, as fully and absolutely in the hand of the Redeemer as the kingdom of providence is in the hand of the Creator; and as God, who gives being to all things, has his being of himself, so Christ, who gives life, raised himself to life by his own power, ch. 10. 18.

Thirdly, His acting according to his authority and ability. Having life in himself, and being authorized to quicken whom he will, by virtue hereof there are, among other things, raised up by him as the able and powerful word; both which are here spoken of.

1. A resurrection that now is, (v. 29.) a resurrection from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, by the power of Christ's grace. The hour is coming, and now is. It is a resurrection begun already, and further to be carried on; when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God. This is plainly distinguished from that; v. 28. which speaks of the resurrections that shall be at the last day, and the great and wonderful things of the resurrection which that doth, of the dead in their graves, and of all of them, and their coming forth. Now, (1.) Some think this was fulfilled in these whom he miraculously raised to life, Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus; and it is observable, that all whom Christ raised, were spoken to, as, Damas, arise; Young man, arise; Lazarus, come forth; whereas, those raised under the Old Testament, were raised not by a word, but other applications. 1 Kings 17. 20. 2 Kings 4. 34. — 13. 21. Some understand it of those of sainst that rose with Christ; but we do not read of the voice of the Son of God calling them. But, (2.) I rather understand of the power of the doctrine of Christ, for the recovering and quickening of those that were dead in trespasses and sin, Eph. 2. 1. The hour was coming, when dead souls out of their graves, and out of the body in that king is all that doeth, of the dead in their graves, and of all of them, and their coming forth. Now, (1.) Some think this was fulfilled in these whom he miraculously raised to life, Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus; and it is observable, that all whom Christ raised, were spoken to, as, Damas, arise; Young man, arise; Lazarus, come forth; whereas, those raised under the Old Testament, were raised not by a word, but other applications. 1 Kings 17. 20. 2 Kings 4. 34. — 13. 21. Some understand it of those of saint that rose with Christ; but we do not read of the voice of the Son of God calling them. But, (2.) I rather understand of the power of the doctrine of Christ, for the recovering and quickening of those that were dead in trespasses and sin, Eph. 2. 1. The hour was coming, when dead souls out of their graves, and out of the body in that kingdom, is all that doeth, of the dead in their graves, and of all of them, and their coming forth. Now, (1.) Some think this was fulfilled in these whom he miraculously raised to life, Jairus's daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus; and it is observable, that all whom Christ raised, were spoken to, as, Damas, arise; Young man, arise; Lazarus, come forth; whereas, those raised under the Old Testament, were raised not by a word, but other applications.

2. A resurrection that now is; this is spoken of, v. 28. 29. introduced with, "Marvel not at this, which I have said of the first resurrection, do not reject it as incredible and absurd, for at the end of time you shall all see there sensible and amazing proof of the power and authority of the Son of man." As his own resurrection was reserved to be the final and concluding proof of his personal commission, so the resurrection of all men is reserved to be a like proof of his commission to be executed by his Spirit. Now observe here,

(1.) When this resurrection shall be; The hour is coming; it is fixed to an hour, so very punctual (1.) The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and be raised from the dead, shall be a most wonderful sight to the world; and shall be for the execution of the judgment. (2.) Some think it is not yet come, it is not the death spoken of at v. 23. that is coming, and now is. These erred dangerously, who said that the resurrection was past already, 2 Tim. 2. 18. But, (2.) It will certainly come, it is coming on, nearer every day than ever; it is at the door. How far off it is we know not; but we know that it is infallibly designed and unalterably determined.

(2.) Who shall be raised; all that are in the graves, all that have died from the beginning of time, and all that shall die to the end of time. It was said, (Dan. 12. 2.) Many shall arise; Christ here tells us these many shall be all; all must appear before the Judge, and therefore all must be raised; every person, and the whole of every person; every soul must return to its body, and every bone to its bone. The grave is the prison of dead bodies, where they are detained; their furnace, where they are consumed; (Job 24. 19.) yet, in prospect of their resurrection, we may call it their bed, where they sleep to be waked again; their treasury, where they are laid up to be used again. Even those that are not put into graves, shall arise; but because most are put into graves, Christ uses this expression, all that are in the graves, will be raised again.

The Jews used the word sheol for the grave, which signifies the state of the dead; all that are in that state, shall hear.

(3.) How they shall be raised. Two things are here told us.

(1.) The efficient of this resurrection; They shall hear his voice; that is, he shall cause them to hear it, as Lazarus was made to hear that word, Come forth, young man. In the present instance, the power is put into them and enable them to obey it. When Christ rose, there was no voice heard, not a word spoken, because he rose by his own power; but at the resurrection of the children of men we find three voices spoken of, 1 Thess. 4. 16. The Lord shall descend with a shout, the shout of a king, with the voice of the archangel; either Christ himself, or the prince of the angels, or the commander in chief, under him, of the heavenly hosts; and with the trumpet of God; the soldier's trumpet sending the alarm of war, the Judge's trumpet publishing the summons to the court.
The effect of it; They shall come forth out of their graves, as prisoners out of their prison-house; they shall arise out of the dust, and shake themselves from it; see Isa. 52. 1, 2, 11. But that is not all; they shall appear before Christ's tribunal; shall come forth as those that are to be tried; come forth to the bar, publicly to receive their doom.

(4.) To what they shall be raised: to a different state of existence, like the ancients, as under the law; in this way, in that way, and by the power of God, to a state of retribution, according to what they did in the state of probation.

They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life; they shall live again, to live for ever. Note, First, Whatever name men are called by, or whatever plausible profession they make, it will be well in the great day with them only the line of life, and the good done in a good grace and pleasing to God and profitable to others. Secondly, The resurrection of the body will be a resurrection of life to all those, and those only, that have been sincere and constant in doing good. They shall not only be publicly acquitted, as a pardoned criminal, we say, has his life; but they shall be admitted into the presence of God, and that is life, it is better than life; for all the desired comforts of life are pertained to, and become theirs in the resurrection. To live is to be happy, and they shall be advanced above the fear of death; that is life indeed, in which mortality is for ever swallowed up.

They that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation; they shall live again, to be for ever dying. The Pharisees thought that the resurrection pertained only to the just, but Christ here rectifies their mistake. Note, First, Evil doers, whatever they pretend, will be declared in the day of judgment as evil men. Secondly, The resurrection will be to evil doers, who did not by repentance undo what they had done amiss, a resurrection of damnation. They shall come forth to be publicly convicted of rebellion against God, and publicly condemned to everlasting punishment; to be sentenced to it, and immediately sent to it without reprieve. Such will the resurrection be.

What is here said concerning the Mediator's authority to execute judgment, v. 22—24, 27. As he has an almighty power, so he has a sovereign jurisdiction; and who so fit to preside in the great affairs of the other life, as he who is the Father and fountain of life? Here is,

First, Christ's commission or delegation to the office. He which is twice spoken of twice spoken of (v. 22.) He hath committed all judgment to the Son: and again, (v. 27.) He hath given him authority.

1. The Father judges no man; not that the Father has resigned the government, but he is pleased to govern by Jesus Christ; so that man is not under the terror of dealing with God immediately, but has the comfort of access to him by a Mediator. The Father judging no man (1.) He does not rule us by the mere light of reason, but by covenant, and upon certain terms settled by a Mediator. Having made us, he may do what he pleases with us, as the potter with the clay; but he does not do so, he draws us with the cords of a man. (2.) He does not determine our everlasting condition by the covenant of innocence, nor take the advantage he has against us for the violation of that covenant; the Mediator must interpose, and by the grace of God, and willing to enter upon a new treaty: not under the law of the Creator, but the grace of the Redeemer.

2. He has committed all judgment to the Son, has constituted him Lord of all, (Acts 10. 36. Rom. 14. 9.) as Joseph in Egypt, Gen. 41. 40. This was prophesied of, Ps. 72. 1. Isa. 11. 5. 4. Jer. 23. 5. Mic. 5. 1. Ps. 67. 6—96. 13—98. 9. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; for, (1.) He is intrusted with the administration of the present kingdom; is Head over all things, (Eph. 1. 22.) Head of every man, 1 Cor. 11. 3. All things consist by him, Col. 1. 17. (2.) He is empowered to make laws immediately to bind conscience. I say unto you, is now the form in which the statutes of the kingdom of heaven run; Be it enacted by the Lord Jesus, and by his authority. All the acts now in course of their operation, and the doctrine now authorized to be preached, are enacted by him, to give judgment against the prince of this world, etc. 12. 51. He is commissioned not only to judge, but to make war, Rev. 19. 11. All that will fight for God against Satan, must enlist themselves under his banner. (3.) He is constituted sole Manager of the judgment of the great day. The ancients generally understood these words of that crowning act of judgment, when the whole world shall be judged; and judgment is committed to the Son of man; the tribunal is his, it is the judgment-seat of Christ; the sentence is his, his mighty angels; he will try the causes, and pass the sentence, Acts 17. 31.

3. He has given him authority to execute judgment also, v. 27. Observe, (1.) What the authority is, which our Redeemer is invested with; an authority to execute judgment; he has not only a legislative, but an executive power too. The phrase here is used particularly for the judgment of condemnation, Jude 15. to execute judgment upon all; the same with his taking vengeance, 2 Thess. 1. 8. The ruin of impenitent sinners comes from the hand of Christ; he that executes judgment upon them, is the same that would have wrought salvation for them, which makes the sentence unexceptionable; and there is no relief against the sentence of the Redeemer; salvation itself cannot save those whom the Saviour condemns, which makes the ruin remediless. (2.) Whence he has that authority; the Father gave it him. Christ's authority as Mediator is delegated and derived; he acts as the Father's Vicegerent, as the Lord's anointed, the Lord's Christ.

Now all this redounds very much to the honour of Christ, in his being lifted up, and the guilt of blasphemy, in making himself equal with God; and very much to the comfort of all believers, who may with the greatest assurance venture their all in such hands.

Secondly, Here are the reasons (reasons of state) for which this commission was given him. He has all judgment committed to him for two reasons, which speaks these three things. (1.) His humiliation and gracious condescension. Man is a worm, the son of man a worm; yet this was the nature, this the character, which the Redeemer assumed, in pursuance of the counsels of love; this low estate he stooped to, and submitted to all the mortifications attending it, because it was his Father's will; in recompense for the indignities of this world, to a worm, to dignify him. Because he condescended to be the Son of man, his Father made him Lord of all, Phil. 2. 8, 9. (2.) His affinity and alliance to us. The Father has committed the government of the children of men to him, because, being the Son of man, he is of the same nature with those whom he is set over, and therefore the more unexceptionable, as a Judge. Their government shall proceed from the hand of them, Jer. 30. 21. Of this law was typical; One of thy brethren shall thou set King over
her. Deut. 17. 15. (3.) His being the Messiah promised. In that famous vision of him, as he stood at the mount of Olives, and beheld the great city of Jerusalem, he beheld the Son of David; and Christ usually called himself the Son of man, which was that more humble title, and speaks him a Prince and Saviour, not to the Jewish nation only, but to the whole race of mankind. The Jews usually called the Christ the Son of David; but Christ usually called himself the Son of man, which was the more humble title, and speaks him a Prince and Saviour, not to the Jewish nation only, but to the whole race of mankind.

2. That all men should honour the Son, (2. Cor. 8. 5.) The reverence of Jesus Christ is here spoken of, (1.) As God's great design. The Son intended to glorify the Father, and therefore the Father intended to glorify the Son. (3. 13. 52.) (2.) As man's great duty, in compliance with that design. If God will have the Son honoured, it is the duty of all those to honour him, to whom he is made known.

3. The dignity that is to be done to our Lord Jesus. We must honour the Son, must look upon him as one that is to be honoured, both upon the account of his transcendent excellences and perfections in himself, and of the relations he stands in to us, and must study to give him honour accordingly. (3.) For, must confess that he is Lord, and worship him; must honour him who was dishonoured for us. (2.) The Son is to be loved. He is our Lord, and Redeemer. (1.) This supposes it our duty to honour the Father; for revealed religion is founded upon natural religion, and directs us to honour the Son, to honour him with devout honour; we must honour the Redeemer with the same honour that we honour the Creator with. So far was it from blasphemy that he made himself equal with God, that it is the highest injury that can be for us to make him otherwise. The laws and laws of the christian religion, so far as they are revealed, are as sacred and honourable as those of natural religion, and to be equally had in estimation; for we lie under the same obligations to Christ, the Author of our well-being, that we lie under to the Author of our being; and have as necessary a dependence upon the Redeemer's grace as upon the Creator's providence, which is a sufficient ground for the law—to honour the Son as we honour the Father.

To enforce this law, it is added, He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father who has sent him. Some pretend a reverence for the Creator, and speak honourably of him, who make light of their Redeemer, and speak contemptibly of him; but let such know that the honours and interests of the Father and Son are so inseparably twisted and interwoven, that the Father never reckons himself hono- 

4. The character of a Christian. He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me. To be a Christian indeed is. (1.) To hear the several words of Christ. It is not enough to be within hearing of it, but we must attend on it, as scholars on the instructions of their teachers; and attend to it, as servants to the commands of their masters; we must hear and obey it, must abide by the gospel of Christ as the fixed rule of our faith and practice. (2.) To believe on him that sent him. For Christ's design is to bring us to glory by him. He is the First Original of all grace, so is he the last Object of all faith. Christ is our Way, God is our Rest. We must believe on God as having sent Jesus Christ, and recommended himself to our faith and love, by manifesting his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, (2. Cor. 4. 6.) as his Father and our Father.

2. The charter of a christian, which all these are interested in that are christians indeed. See what we get by Christ: (1.) A charter of pardon; He shall not come into condemnation. The grace of the gospel is a full discharge from the curse of the law. A believer shall not only not lie under condemnation eternally, but not come into condemnation now; not come into the danger of it, (Rom. 8. 1.) not come into judgment, not be so much as arraigned of it; (Rom. 8. 31.) nor doth he fear death, out of death to life, is invested in a present happiness in spiritual life, and entitled to a future happiness in eternal life. The tenor of the first covenant was, Do this, and live: the man that doth them shall live in them. Now this proves Christ equal with the Father, that he has power to propose the same benefit to the hearers of his word, that had been proposed to the keepers of the old law, that is, He shall live eternally; Hear we said thus, and what we may venture our souls upon, when we are disabled to do and live; see ch. 17. 2.

Fourthly, Here is the righteousness of his proceedings pursuant to this commission, v. 30. All judgment being committed to him, we cannot but ask how he manages it. And here he answers, My judgment is just. All Christ's acts of government, both legislative and judicial, are exactly agreeable to the rules of equity; see Prov. 8. 8. There can lie no exceptions against any of the determinations of the Redeemer, and therefore as there shall be no repeal of any of his statutes, so there can be no appeal from any of his sentences.

His judgments are certainly just, for they are directed,

1. By the Father's wisdom; I can of myself do nothing, nothing without the Father, but as I hear, I judge, as he had said before, v. 19. The Son can do nothing but what he sees the Father do; so here, nothing but what he hears the Father say. As I hear, (1.) From the secret eternal counsels of the Father; So I judge. Would we know what we may depend upon in our dealing with God? Hear the Word of Christ. We may venture our souls upon secret things which belong not to us, but attend to the revealed dictates of Christ's government and judgment, and those will furnish us with an unerring guide; for what Christ has adjudged, is an exact copy or counterpart of what the Father has decreed. (2.) From the published records of the Old Testament. Christ, in all the execution of his undertaking had an eye to the scripture, and made it his business to conform to that, and fulfill that; as it was written in the volume of the book. Thus he taught us to do nothing of ourselves, but as we hear from the word of God, so to judge of things, and act accordingly.

2. By the Father's will; My judgment is just, and cannot be otherwise, because I seek not mine
own will, but his who sent me. Not as if the will of Christ were contrary to the will of the Father, as the flesh is contrary to the spirit in us, but, (1.) Christ had, as Man, the natural and inherent affections of the human nature, sense of pain and pleasure, an inclination to life, an aversion to death; yet he pleased not himself, did not conform with these, nor consult these, when he was to go on in his undertaking, but acquiesced entirely in the will of his Father. (2.) What he did as Mediator, was not the result of any peculiar, particular purpose and design of his own; what he did seek to do, was not for his own mind's sake, but he was therein guided by his Father's will, and the purpose which he had purposed to himself. Thus our Saviour employs all our concern to refer himself to, and govern himself by. Thus our Lord Jesus has opened his commission, (whether to the conviction of his enemies or no,) to his own honour, and the everlasting comfort of all his friends, who here see him able to save to the uttermost.

31. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. 32. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. 33. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. 34. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. 35. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. 36. But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. 37. And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. 38. And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. 39. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. 41. I receive not honour from men. 42. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. 43. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. 44. How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? 45. Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. 46. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. 47. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?

In these verses our Lord Jesus proves and confirms the commission he had produced, and makes it out that he was sent to God to be the Messiah.

I. He sets aside his own testimony of himself; (v. 31.) "If I bear witness of myself, though it is fallibly true, (ch. 8. 14.) yet, according to the common rule of judgment among men, you will not admit it as legal proof, nor allow it to be given in evidence." Now, 1. This reflects reproach upon the sons of men, and their veracity and integrity. Surely we may say deliberately, what David said in haste, 'All men are liars, else it would never have been such a received tradition, that every one is suspicious, and not to be relied on; if it is a sign that self-love is stronger than the love of truth. And yet, 2. It reflects honour on the Son of God, and speaks his wonderful condescension, that though he is the faithful Witness, the Truth itself who may challenge to be credited upon his honour, and his own single testimony, yet he is pleased to waive his own personal presence, and the confirmation of our faith, refers himself to his vouchers, that we might have full satisfaction.

II. He produces other witnesses that bear testimony to him, that he was sent of God.

1. The Father himself bore testimony to him; (v. 32.) There is another that beareth witness; which I take to be meant of God the Father, for Christ mentions his testimony with his own, (ch. 8. 18.) "I bear witness of myself, and the Father beareth witness of me." Observe,

(1.) The seal which the Father put to his commission; He beareth witness of me, not only hath done so by a voice from heaven, but still doth so by the tokens of his presence with me. See who they are to whom God will bear witness. [1.] To those whom he sends and employs; who he gives commission and authority to do his work, and in his name. [2.] To those who bear witness to him; so Christ did. God will own and honour those that own and honour him. [3.] To those who decline bearing witness of themselves; so Christ did. God will take care that those who humble and abase themselves, and seek not their own glory, shall not lose by it.

(2.) The satisfaction Christ had in this testimony; "I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me, is true." I am very well assured that I have a divine mission, and do not in the least hesitate concerning it;" thus he had the witness in himself. The devil tempted him to question his being the Son of God, but he never yielded.

2. John Baptist witnessed to Christ, v. 33. &c. John came to bear witness of the light; (ch. 1. 7.) He was sent to prepare the way, and direct people to him; Behold the Lamb of God. Now the testimony of John was, (1.) A solemn and public testimony; "Ye sent an embassy of priests and Levites to John, which gave him an opportunity of publishing what he had to say; it was not a popular but a judicial testimony. (2.) It was a true testimony, He bore witness to the truth, as a witness ought to do; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Christ doth not, He bore witness to me, (though every one knew he did,) but, like an honest man, He bore witness to the truth. Now John was confessedly such a holy, good man, so mortified to the world, and so conversant with divine things, that it could not be imagined he should be guilty of such a forgery and imposture as to say what he did concerning Christ, if it did not be so, and if he had not been sure of it.

Two things are added concerning John's testimony [1.] That it was a testimony, ex abundanti—more than he needed to vouch; (v. 34.) I receive not testimony from man. Though Christ saw fit to quote John's testimony, it is with a protestation that it shall not be deemed or construed so as to prejudice the prerogative of his self-sufficiency. Christ needs no letters of commendation, no testimonials or certificates that what he did and did was of the authority of the Father and the Spirit. He only gives what he spake with him, why then did Christ here urge the testimony of John? Why, these things I say, that ye might be saved. This he aimed at in all this discourse, to save not his own life, but the souls of
I have a testimony greater than that of John: for
if we believe the witness of men, we accept the
witness of God, who is greater; and the witness
of God is greater, &c. 1 John 5. 9. Observe,
Though the witness of John was a less cogent
and less considerable witness, yet our Lord was
pleased to make use of it. We must be glad of all
the supports that offer themselves for the confirma-
tion of our faith, though they may not amount to a
demonstration, and we must not invalidate any,
under any pretence; for when witnesses are more
creditable, we have occasion for them all.

Now this greater witness was the works which his
Father had given him to finish. That is,
(1.) In general; the whole course of his life and
ministry—his revealing of God and his will to us,
setting up his kingdom among men, reforming the
world, destroying of Satan's kingdom, restoring
of fallen man to his primitive purity and felicity,
and shedding abroad in men's hearts the love of God
and one another—all that work, of which he said
when he died, It is finished, it was all from first
to last, opus Deo dignum—a work worthy of God;
all he said and did, was holy and heavenly, and
a divine purity, power, and grace shone in it, and
proved abundantly that he was sent of God.
(2.) In particular. He was thought to be the
proof of his divine mission, witnessed of him.
Now it is here said, [1.] That these works were
given him by the Father, that is, he was both ap-
pointed and empowered to work them; for, as Me-
diator, he derived both commission and strength
from his Father. [2.] They were given him to
finish; he must do all those works of wonder which
the counsel and foreknowledge of God had before
been determined to be done; and his finishing of
them proves a divine power; for, as for God, his work
is perfect. [3.] These works did bear witness of him,
did prove that he was sent of God, and that what
he said concerning himself, was true; see Heb. 2. 4.
Acts 2. 22. That the Father had sent him as a
Father, not as a master sends his servant on an
errand, but as a father sends his son to take possess-
on for himself; if God had not sent him, he would
not have ascended him, would not have sealed him,
as he did by the works he gave him to do; for
the world's Creator will never be its Deceiver.

4. He produces, more fully than before, his Fa-
ther's testimony concerning him; (v. 57.) The Fa-
ther that sent me, hath borne witness of me. The
prince is not accustomed to follow his ambassador
himself, to confirm his commission which he bore—by
spreading; but God was pleased to bear witness of
his Son himself by a voice from heaven at his bap-
tism, (Matt. 3. 17.) This is my Ambassador, This
is my beloved Son. The Jews reckoned Bath-kish—
the daughter of a voice, a voice from heaven, one
of the ways by which God made known his mind;
in that way he had owned Christ publickly and so-
lemnly, and repeated it, Matt. 17. 5. Note, (1.)
where he gives a commission, he will not fail to seal
it; he that never left himself without witness, (Acts
14. 17.) will never leave any of his servants so, who
go upon his errand. (2.) Where God demands
belief, he will not fail to give sufficient evidence, as
he has done concerning Christ. That which was
to be witnessed concerning Christ, was chiefly this,
that the God we had offended, was willing to accept
him as a Mediator. Now concerning this, he bore
himself (and he was fittest to do it) given us full
satisfaction, declaring himself well pleased in him;
if we be so, the work is done.

Now it might be suggested, if God himself thus
here witness of Christ, how came it to pass that he
was not universally received by the Jewish nation
and their rulers? To this, Christ here answers, that

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others; he produced John's testimony, because, he-
ing one of themselves, it was to be hoped that they
would not confute it: Jesus is the Father, and he
designs the salvation even of his enemies and
persecutors. Secondly, The word of Christ is the
ordinary means of salvation. Thirdly, Christ in his
word considers our infirmities, and condescends to
our capacities; consulting not so much what it befits
so great a prince to say, as what we can bear, and
what will be most likely to do us good.

First, The character of John Baptist; He was a
burning and a shining light. Christ often spake honorably of John; he was now in prison under
a cloud, yet Christ gives him his due praise, which
we must be ready to do to all that faithfully serve
God.

1. He was a light, not só-—hus—light, (so
Christ was the Light,) but πνευματις—lumenary,
a derived subordinate light. His office was
to enlighten a dark world with notices of the Mes-
siah's approach, to whom he was as the morning
star. 2. He was a burning light, which denotes
suervecv; painted fire may be made to shine, but
that which burns, is true fire. It may also be
understood of his love to God and the souls of men; fire is always working on
itself or something else, so is a good minister. 3. He was a shining light, which denotes either either his ex-
emplary conversation, in which our light shines,
(Matt. 5. 16.) or an eminent diffusive influence.
He was illustrious in the sight of others; though he
affected obscurity and retirement, and was in the
deserts, yet such were his doctrine, his baptism, his
life, that he became very remarkable, and attracted
the eyes of the nation.

Secondly, The affections of the people to him; Ye
were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.
1. It was a transparency that they were in, upon
the appearing of John; Ye were willing—πνευματις
—delighted to rejoice in his light; ye were very
proud that ye had such a man among you, who was
the honour of your country; ye were willing, ἀγαθον
—will to dance, and make a noise about this
light, as boys about a bonfire. 2. It was but
transient, and soon over; "Ye were fond of him,
πλοιν—for an hour, for a season, as little chil-
dren are fond of a new thing; ye were pleased with
John a while, but soon grew weary of him and his
ministry, and said that he had a devil, and now you
have him in prison." Note, Many that seem to be
affected and pleased with the gospel at first, after-
ward despire and reject it; it is common for forward
and noisy professors to cool and fall off. These
here rejoice in John's light, but never walked in it,
and therefore did not keep to it: they were like the
stony ground. While Herod was a friend to John
Baptist, the people exaltered him; but when he fell
unfavourable, they were like meats which were
willing to countenance John, τοις ουρανοις, that is,
for temporal ends; (so some take it;) "Ye were
glad of him, in hopes to make a tool of him, by his
interest and under the umbrage of his name, to
have shaken off the Roman yoke, and recovered
the civil liberty and honour of your country." Now,
(1.) Christ mentions their respect to John, to con-
demn them for their present opposition to him—to
whom John bore witness. If they had continued
their veneration for John, as they ought to have
done, they would have embraced Christ. (2.) He
mentions the passing away of their respect, to jus-
tify God in depriving them, as he had now done,
of John's ministry, and putting that light under a
bushel.
3. Christ's own works witnessed to him; (v. 36.)
it was not to be thought strange, nor could their infidelity weaken his credibility, for two reasons.

[1.] Because they were not acquainted with such extraordinary revelations of God and his will; Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape, or appearance. They showed themselves to be as ignorant of God, though they professed relation to him, as we are of a man we neither saw or heard. "But why do I talk to you of God's being unknown to them? It is because of the shock of, nor have any acquaintance or communion with.

[Note, Ignorance of God is the true reason of men's rejecting of the record he has given concerning his Son. A right understanding of natural religion would discover to us such admirable congruities in the christian religion, as would greatly dispose our minds to the entertainment of it. Some give this sense, he hath sent him, ye believe not. There was a voice, and the descent of a dove, which is such an extraordinary thing, that you never saw or heard the like; and yet for my sake there was such a voice and appearance; yea, and you might have heard that voice, you might have seen that appearance, as others did, if you had closely attended the ministry of John, but by slighting it you missed of that testimony." Because they were not affected, nor with the ordinary ways by which God had revealed himself to them; (v. 38.) Ye have not his word abiding in you. They had the scriptures of the Old Testament; might they not by them be disposed to receive Christ? Yes, if they had had their due influence upon them. But, First, The word of God was not in them; it was among them, in their country, in their hands, but not in them, in their hearts; not ruling in their souls, but only looking with their eyes, and sounding in their ears. What did it avail them that they had the oracles of God committed to them, (Rom. 3. 2.) when they had not these oracles commanding in them? If they had, they would readily have embraced Christ. Secondly, It did not abide. Many have the word of God coming into them, and making some impressions for a while, but it does not abide with them, it is not constantly in them, as a man at home, but only now and then, as a wayfaring man. If the word abide in us, if we converse with it by frequent meditation, consult with it upon every occasion, and conform to it in our conversation, we shall then readily receive the witness of the Father concerning Christ; see ch. 7. 17.

But how did it appear that they had not the word of God abiding in them? It appeared by this, When he had sent him, ye believe not. There was so much said in the Old Testament concerning Christ, to direct people when and where to look for him, and so to facilitate the discovery of him, that, if they had duly considered those things, they could not have avoided the conviction of Christ's being sent of God; so that their not believing in Christ, was a certain sign that the word of God did not abide with them; was not so abiding, as that without it they could not have been led by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the influence of the world and Spirit, and grace of God in search of it, as they tried by the effects of it, particularly by our receiving of what he sends; the commands he sends, the messengers, the providences he sends, especially Christ, whom he hath sent.

5. The last witness he calls, is the Old Testament, which witnessed of him, and to it he appeals; (v. 39, Sc.) Search the scriptures, may be: it may be a malapropism, ye do well to do so; ye do read them daily in your synagogues, ye have rabbis, and doctors, and scribes, that make it their business to study them, and criticise upon them." The Jews boasted of the rubbish of scripture-reading in the days of Hillel, who died about twelve years after Christ's birth, and reckoned some of those who were then mem-

bers of the Sanhedrim, the beauties of their wisdom, and the glories of their law; and Christ owns that they did indeed search the scriptures, but it was in search of their own glory; "Ye do search the scriptures; and therefore, if ye were not wilfully blind, ye would believe in me." Note, It is possible for men to be very studious in the letter of the scripture, and yet to be strangers to the power and influence of it. Or, (2.) As we read it, Search the scriptures: and so, The Jews had search upon the scriptures, as they understood them, I will prove to receive and believe the scripture; there will I join issue with you, let that be the judge, provided you will not rest in the letter, (hacere in coriis,) but will search into it. Note, when appeals are made to the scriptures, they must be searched. Search the whole book of scripture throughout, compare one passage with another, and make many observations. We must like to search particular passages to the bottom, and see not what they seem to say prima facie—at the first appearance, but what they say indeed. (2.) It is spoken to us in the nature of an advice, or command to all Christians to search the scriptures. Note, All those who would find Christ, must search the scriptures; not only read them and hear them, but search them. Which denotes, First, Diligence in seeking, labour, and study; every one of these open passages. Desire and design of finding. We must aim at some spiritual benefit and advantage in reading and studying the scripture, and often ask, "What am I now searching for?" We must search as for hid treasures, (Prov. 2. 4.) as those that sink for gold or silver, or that dive for pearl, Job 28. 1—11. This encluded the Bereans, Acts 17. 11.

Now there are two things which we are here directed to look for, in our eyes, in our searching of the scripture; heaven our end, and Christ our Way. 1. We must search the scriptures for heaven as our great end; For in them ye think ye have eternal life. The scripture assures us of an eternal state set before us, and offers to us an eternal life in that state; it contains the chart that describes it, the charter that conveys it, the direction in the way that leads to it, and the foundation upon which the hope of it is built; and this is worth searching for, there where we are sure to find it. But to the Jews Christ saith only, Ye think ye have eternal life in the scriptures; because, though they did retain the belief and hope of eternal life, and grounded their expectations of it upon the scriptures, yet herein they missed it, that they looked for it by the bare reading and studying of the scripture. It was common historiographically, (2.) That he that has eternal life has eternal life; they thought they were sure of heaven, if they could say by heart, or rather by rote, such and such passages of scripture as they were directed to by the tradition of the elders; as they thought all the vulgar cursed, because they did not thus know the law, (eh. 7. 49.) so they concluded all the learned undoubtedly blessed.

3. We must search for Christ, as the new and living Way, that leads to this end. Those are they, the great and principal witnesses that testify of me. Note, (1.) The scriptures, even those of the Old Testament, testify of Christ, and by them God bears witness to him. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets testified beforehand of him, (I Pet. 1. 11.) the purposes and promises of God concerning him, and the previous notions of him, the Old Testament testified of the Messiah, and were critical in their remarks upon the passages that looked that way; and yet were careless, and wretchedly overseen, in the application of them. (2.) Therefore we must search the scriptures, and may hope to find eternal life in that search, because they testify of Christ; for this is life eternal, to know him; see 1John 5. 11. Christ
is the Treasure hid in the field of the scriptures, the Water in those wells, the Milk in those breasts.

To this testimony he annexes a reproof of their infidelity and wickedness in four instances; particularly,

[1.] Their neglect of him and his doctrine; (v. 40.) "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. You have neither the principle nor the desire, which, ye cannot but see, testify of me; and yet ye will not come to me, to whom they direct you." Their estrangement from Christ was the Fault, not so much of their understandings as of their wills. This is expressed as a complaint; Christ offered life, and it would not be accepted. Note, First, There is life to be had with Jesus Christ for those who believe in him, and have a due regard to grace and grace, and comfort and glory; life is the perfection of our being, and inclusive of all happiness; and Christ is our Life. Secondly, Those that would have this life, must come to Jesus Christ for it; we may have it for the coming for it. It supposes an assent of the understanding to the doctrine of Christ, and the record given concerning him; it lies in the consent of the will to his government and grace, and it must be accompanied with an assiduous compliance in the affections and actions.

Thirdly, The only reason why sinners die is, because they will not come to Christ for life and happiness; it is not because they cannot, but because they will not. They will neither accept of the life offered, because spiritual and divine; nor will they agree to the terms on which it is offered; nor apply themselves to the use of the appointed means, because they will not observe the method of cure.

Fourthly, The wilfulness and obstinacy of sinners in rejecting the tenders of grace, are a great grief to the Lord Jesus, and what he complains of.

These words, (v. 41.) I receive not honour from men, come in a parenthesis, to obviate an objection against him, as if he sought his own glory, and made himself the Head of a party, in obliging all to come to him, and applaud him. Note. He did not covet or court the applause of men; did not in the least affect that worldly pomp and splendour which the carnal Jews expected their Messiah to appear in. He charged those he cured, not to make him known, and withdrew from those that would have made him King. 2. He had not the applause of men. Instead of receiving honour from men, he received reproaches and contumely, and was excluded from men, for he made himself of no reputation. 3. He needed not the applause of men; it was no addition to his glory, whom all the angels of God worship, nor was he any other pleased with it, than as it was according to his Father's will, and for the happiness of those who, in giving honour to him, received much greater honour from him.

[2.] Their want of the love of God; (v. 42.) I love you for this, that I knew you the love of God in you. Why should I wonder that you do not come to me, when you want even the first principle of natural religion, which is the love of God? Note, The reason why people slight Christ is, because they do not love God; for if we did indeed love God, we should love him who is his express Image, and hasten to him by whom only we may be reconciled to God, and exalted above the world, and not shun him; (v. 37.) with ignorance of God; and hence with want of love to him; therefore men have not the love of God, because they desire not the knowledge of him.

Observe, First, The crime charged upon them; You have not the love of God in you. They pretended a great love to God, and thought they proved it by their zeal for the law, the temple, and the sabbath; and yet they were really without the love of God. Note. There are many who make a great profession of religion, who yet show they want the love of God by their neglect of Christ and their contempt of his commandments; they hate his holy line, and undervalue his goodness. Observe, It is the love of God in us, the love that is seated in the heart, and is a living, acting principle there, that God will accept; the love shed abroad there, Rom. 5. 5.

Secondly, The proof of this charge, by the per se knowledge of Christ, who set up his own name. These Jews had a very good opinion of themselves, but Christ knew how corrupt their inside was, notwithstanding the plausible shews of their outside; we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive him.

3. Christ knows men who do not, and will not know him; he looks on those who industriously look off him, and calls by their own name, their true name, those who have not known him.

[3.] Another way of their want of God's love is, their readiness to entertain false chrests and false prophets, while they obstinately opposed him who was the true Messiah; (v. 43.) I come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him will ye receive. Be astonished, O heavens, at this; (Jer. 2. 13.) for my people have committed two evils, great evils indeed. First, They have forsaken the right way, which they were bid, not; for they would not receive Christ, who came in his Father's name, had his commission from his Father, and did all for his glory. Secondly, They have hewn out broken cisterns, they hearken to every one that will set up in his own name. They forsake their own mercies, that is bad enough, and it is for living vanities, that is worse. Observe here, 1. These are false prophets who come in their own name, who run without being sent, and set up for themselves only. 2. It is just with God to suffer those to be deceived with false prophets, who receive not the truth in the love of it. 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11.

The errors of Antichrist are the just punishment of those who obey not the doctrine of Christ. They that shut their eyes against the true light, are by the judgment of God given up to wander endessly in the darkness of false light and error, in the time of Antichrist, Rev. 13. 18. The love of the world, (i.e. the seductive love of sin,) is the root of all sin. 3. It is the gross folly of many, that, while they nauseate ancient truths, they are fond of upstart errors; they hate the manna, and at the same time feed upon ashes. After the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they were continually haunted with spectres, with false christs and false prophets, (Matt. 24. 24.) and their proneness to follow such occasioned these distractions and seductions that hastened their ruin.

[4.] They are here charged with pride and vain glory, and unbelief, the effect of it, v. 44. Having sharply reproved their unbelief, like a wise physician, he here searches into the cause, lays the axe to the root. They therefore slighted and undervalued Christ, because they admired and over-valued themselves. Here is mentioned their ruin:

First, The ambition of worldly honour. Christ despised it, v. 41. They set their hearts upon it; Ye receive honour one of another; that is, Ye look for a Messiah in outward pomp, and promise yourselves worldly honour by him. Ye receive honour; 1. Ye desire to receive it, and aim at that in all you do. 2. Ye give honour to others, and applaud them, only that they may return it, and may applaud you. Petitus dabisimusque reiprzn—He ask and we bestow. It is the proud man's art to throw honour upon others only that it may rebound on
himself. "Ye are very careful to keep all the honours to yourselves, and confine them to your own party, as if ye had the monopoly of that which is honourable." 4. "What respect is shown you, ye receive yourselves, and do not transmit it to God, as Herod." Idolizing men and their sentiments, and affecting to be idolized by them and their applause, are pieces of idolatry, as directly contrary to christian prudence.

Secondly. Their neglect of spiritual honour, called here the honour that comes from God only; this they sought not, nor minded. Note, 1. True honour is that which comes from God only, that is real and lasting honour; those are honourable indeed, whom he takes into covenant and communion with himself. 2. This honour have all the saints. Those that believe in Christ, through him receive the honour that comes from God. He is not partial, but will give glory wherever he gives grace. 3. This honour that comes from God, we must seek, must aim at, and act for, and take up with nothing short of it; (Rom. 2. 29.) we must account it our reward, as the Pharisees accounted the praise of men. 4. Those that will not come to Christ, and the more ambitious of worldly honour, make it appear that they seek that honour which comes from God, and it is their folly and ruin.

Thirdly. The influence this had upon their infidelity. How can ye believe, who are thus affected? Observe here, 1. The difficulty of believing arises from ourselves and our own corruption; we make our work hard to ourselves, and then complain it is impracticable. 2. The ambition and affectation of worldly honour are a great hindrance to faith in Christ. How can they believe, who make the praise and applause of men their idol? When the profession and practice of serious godliness are un-fashionable, are every where spoken against, when Christ and his followers are men wondered at, and to be a christian, is to be like a speckled bird, (and this is the common case,) how can they believe, the top of whose ambition is to make a fair show in the flesh.

6. The last witness here called is, Moses, v. 45, &c. The Jews had a great veneration for Moses, and valued themselves upon their being the disciples of Moses, and pretended to adhere to Moses, in their opposition to Christ; but Christ here shows them, [1.] That Moses was a witness against the unbelief of Jews, and accused them to the Father. There is one that accuses you, even Moses. This may be understood either, [1.] As showing the difference between the law and the gospel. Moses, that is, the law, accuses you, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; it condemns you, it is to those that trust to it a ministration of death and condemnation; but it is not the design of Christ's gospel to acculess: Think not that I will accuse you. Christ did not come into the world to find fault and pick quarrels with every body, or as a spy upon the actions of men, or a promoter, to fish for crimes; no, he came to be an Advocate, not an Accuser; to reconcile God and man, and not to set them more at variance; what fools were they then that adhered to Moses against Christ, and desired to have him executed? (Gal. 4. 21.) Or, [2.] As showing the manifest unbelief of the Jews. Think not that I will appeal from your bar to God's, and challenge you to answer there for what you do against me, as injured innocence usually does; no, I do not need, you are already accused, and cast, in the court of heaven; Moses himself says enough to convict you of, and condemn you for, your unbelief. Let them not mistake concerning Christ; though he was a Prophet, he did not improve his interest in heaven against those that persecuted him, did not, as Elias, make intercession against Israel, (Rom. 11. 2.) or, as Jeremiah, desire to see God's vengeance on them, Jer. 20. 12. Instead of accusing his crucifiers to his Father, he prayed, father, forgive them. Nor let them mistake concerning Moses, as if he would stand by them, in rejecting Christ; no, There is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. Note, First, Moses' privileges and advantages are no argument in favour of the false characters of Christ and his grace. The Jews trusted in Moses, and thought their having his laws and ordinances would save them. Secondly, Those that confide in their privileges, and do not improve them, will find not only that their confidence is disappointed, but that those very privileges will be witnesses against them. (2.) That Moses was a witness for Christ, and to his doctrine; (v. 46, 47.) He wrote of me. Moses did particularly prophesy of Christ, as the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, the Shiloh, the great Prophet; the ceremonies of the law of Moses were figures of him that was to come. The Jews made Moses the patron of their opposition to Christ, but Christ here shows them their error, that Moses was so far from being against Christ, that he wrote for him, and of him, the predictions of his

[1.] Christ here charges it on the Jews, that they did not believe Moses. He had said (v. 43.) that they trusted in Moses, and yet here undertakes to make out that they did not believe Moses; they trusted to his name, but they did not receive his doctrine in its true sense and meaning; they did not rightly understand, nor give credit to, what there truly was in the writings of Moses concerning the Messiah.

[2.] He proves this charge from their disbelief of him; Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me. Note, First, The surest trial of faith is by the effects it produces; many say that they believe, whose actions give their words the lie, for had they believed the scriptures they would have done otherwise than they did. Secondly, Those who rightly believe one part of scripture, will receive every part. The prophecies of the Old Testament were so fully accomplished in Christ, that they who rejected Christ, did in effect deny those prophecies, and set them aside.

[3.] From their disbelief of Moses, he infers that it was not strange that they rejected him; If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? How can it be thought that ye should? First, If we can believe in sacred writings, those oracles which are in black and white, which is the most certain way of conveyance, how shall ye believe my words, words being usually less regarded. Secondly, "If ye do not believe Moses, for whom ye have such a profound veneration, how is it likely that ye should believe me, whom ye look upon with so much contempt?" See Exod. 6. 12. Thirdly, "If ye do not believe Moses; speak and write of me, which is a strong and cogent testimony for me, how shall ye believe me and my mission?" If we admit not the premises, how shall we admit the conclusion? The truth of the christian religion, it being a matter purely of divine revelation, depends upon the divine authority of the scripture; if therefore we believe not the divine inspiration of those writings, how shall we believe the words of him whom they speak and write of? Thus ends Christ's plea for himself, in answer to the charge exhibited against him; what effect it had, we know not; it should seem to have had this, their mouths were stopped for the present, and they could not for shame but drop the prosecution, and yet their hearts were hardened.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, we have. I. The miracle of the loaves, v. 1 . . . 14. II. Christ's walking upon the water, v. 15. . . . 21.
The people's flocking after him to Capernaum, v. 22, 23.

IV. His conference with them, occasioned by the miracle of the loaves, in which he reproves them for seeking carnal food, and directs them to spiritual food, v. 28, 29.) showing them how they must labour for spiritual food, (v. 28, 29.) and what that spiritual food is, v. 30, 39. Their complaint at what he said, and the reproof he gave them for it, v. 60, 61. VI. The apostacy of many from him, and his discourse with his disciples that adhered to him upon that occasion, v. 66, 71.

1. AFTER these things Jesus went over
the sea of Galilee, which is the sea
of Tiberias. 2. And a great multitude fol-
lowed him, because they saw his miracles
which he did on them that were diseased.
3. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and
there he sat with his disciples. 4. And the
passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.
5. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and
saw a great company come unto him, he
saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy
bread, that these may eat? 6. And this he
called to prove him: for he himself knew
what he would do. 7. Philip answered
him, Two hundred penny-worth of bread
is not sufficient for them, that every one
of them may take a little. 8. One of his dis-
ciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother,
saith unto him, 9. There is a lad here,
which hath five barley-loaves, and two
small fishes: but what are they among so
many? 10. And Jesus said, Make the men
sit down. Now there was much grass
in the place. So the men sat down, in num-
ber about five thousand. 11. And Jesus
took the loaves: and when he had given
thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and
the disciples to them that were set down;
and likewise of the fishes, as much as
they would. 12. When they were filled,
he said unto his disciples, Gather up the
fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.
13. Therefore they gathered them together,
and filled twelve baskets with the fragments
of the five barley-loaves, which remained
over and above unto them that had eaten.
14. Then those men, when they had seen
the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of
a truth that Prophet that should come into
the world.

We have here an account of Christ's feeding five
thousand men with five loaves and two fishes; which
miracle is in this respect remarkable, that it is the
only passage of the actions of Christ's life, that is re-
corded by all the four evangelists. John, who does
not usually relate what had been recorded by those
who wrote before him, yet relates this; because the
reference the following discourse has to it. Ob-
serve, 1. The place and time where and when this mi-

1. The country that Christ was in; (v. 1.) He
went over the sea of Galilee, called elsewhere the
lake of Gennesareth, near the sea of Tiberias, from
a city adjoining, which Herod had lately enlarged
and beautified, and called so in honour of Tiberius
the emperor, and, probably, had made his metrop-
olis. Christ did not go directly over, cross this in-
land sea, but made a coasting voyage to another
place on the same side. It is not tempting God, to
choose to go by water when there is convenience for
it, even to those places where the land passage go-

2. The company that he was attended with; A
great multitude followed him, because they saw his
miracles, v. 2. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus, while
he went about doing good, lived continually in a
place, which gave him more trouble than honour.
Good and useful men must not complain of a
little of business, when they are serving God and their
generation; it will be time enough to enjoy our
selves, when we come to that world where we shall
enjoy God. 2. Christ's miracles drew many after
him, that were not effectually drawn to him. They
had their curiosity gratified by the strangeness of
them, who had not their consciences convinced by the
power of them.

3. Christ post himself advantageously to enter-
tain them; (v. 3.) He went up into a mountain,
and there he sat with his disciples, that he might the
more conveniently be seen and heard by the multi-
tude that crowded after him; this was a natural
place, and not, like Ezra's, made for the purpose.
Christ was now driven to be a Field-preacher; but
his success was never the worse, nor the less accept-
"able, for that, to those who knew how to value
him, who followed him still, not only when he went
out to a desert place, but when he went up to a
mountain, though up-hill be against heart. He sat there,
as teachers do in cathedra—in the chair of instruc-
tion; he did not sit at ease, nor sit in state, yet he
sat as one having authority; sat ready to receive
addresses that were made to him, who would, might
come, and find him there. He sat with his
disciples; he condescended to take them to sit with
him, to put a reputation upon them before the people,
and give them an earnest of the glory in which they
should shortly sit with him. We are said to sit with
him, Eph. 2. 6.

4. The time when it was. The first words, After
these things, do not signify that this immediately
followed what is related in the foregoing chapter, for
it was a considerable time after, and their benefit
no more than, in process of time; but we are told,
(v. 4.) that it was when the passover was nigh;
which is here noted, (1.) Because, perhaps, that
had brought in all the apostles from their respective
expeditions, whither they were sent as itinerant
preachers, that they might attend their Master to
Jerusalem, to keep the feast. (2.) Because it was a
ceremonial with the Jews, religiously to observe
the approach of the passover thirty days before, with
some sort of solemnity; so long before, they had it
in their eye, repaired the roads, mended bridges, if
there was occasion, and discoursed of the passover
and the institution of it. (3.) Because, perhaps, the
approach of the passover, when every one knew
Christ would go up to Jerusalem, and be absent for
some time, made the multitude flock the more after
him, and attend the more diligently on him. Note.
The prospect of losing our opportunities should quic-
kly us to improve them with double diligence:
and when solemn ordinances are approaching, it is
good to prepare for them by conversing with the
words of Christ.

III. The miracle itself. And there observe,
1. The notice Christ took of the crowd that at
2. He lift up his eyes, and saw a
great company come to him, poor, mean, ordinary people, no doubt, for such make up the multitudes, especially in such remote corners of the country; yet Christ showed himself pleased with their attendance, and concerned for their welfare. He teach us to set our Loaves to them of low estate, and not to those with the dogs of our flock, whom Christ hath set with the hands of his. The souls of the poor are as precious to Christ, and should be so to us, as those of the rich.

2. The enquiry he made concerning the way of providing for them. He directed himself to Philip, who had been his disciple from the first, and had seen him turn the water into wine, and therefore it might be expected that he should have said, “Lord, if thou wilt, it is easy to thee to feed them all;” those that, like Israel, have been witnesses of Christ’s works, and have shared in the benefit of them, are inexculcable if they say, Can he furnish a table in the wilderness? Philip was of Bethsaida, in the neighborhood of which town Christ now was, and therefore he was most likely to help them; provision at the best hand; and, probably, much of the company was known to him, and he was concerned for them. Now Christ asked, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? (1.) He takes it for granted that they must all eat with him. One would think that when he had taught and healed them, he had done his part; and that now they should rather have had a sermon, shewing how to treat him and his disciples; (for some of the people, it is likely, were rich;) and we are sure that Christ and his disciples were poor; yet he is solicitous to entertain them. Those that will accept Christ’s spiritual gifts, instead of paying for them, shall be paid for their acceptance of them. Christ, having fed their souls with the bread of life, feeds their bodies also with the best convenient, to show that the Lord is for the body, and to encourage us to pray for our daily bread; and to set us an example of compassion to the poor, James 2. 15. (2.) His inquiry is, Whence shall we buy bread? One would think, considering his poverty, that he should rather have asked, Whence shall we buy money to buy for them? But he will rather lay out all he has than they shall want. He will buy to give, and we must labour, that we live.

3. The design of this inquiry; it was only to try the faith of Philip, for he himself knew what he would do. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus is never at a loss in his counsels; but, how difficult soever the case is, he knows what he has to do, and what course he will take, Acts 15. 13. He knows the thoughts he has toward his people, (Jer. 26. 11,) and is never at uncertainty; when we know not, he himself knew what he will do. (2.) When Christ is pleased to puzzle his people, it is only with a design to prove them. The question put Philip to a nonplus; yet Christ proposed it, to try whether he would say, “Lord, if thou wilt exert thy power for them, we need not buy bread.”

4. Philip’s answer to this question; “Two hundred pence worth of bread is not sufficient;” (1.) Much less will it be for the poor talk of buying bread for them, for neither will the country afford so much bread, nor can we afford to lay out so much money; ask Judas, who carries the bag.” Two hundred pence of their money amount to about six pounds of ours, and if they lay out all that at once, it will exhaust their fund, and break them, and they must starve themselves. Grotius computes, that two hundred pence was about two thousand, but Philip would go as near as he could, will have every one to take a little; and nay, we say, is content with a little. See the weakness of Philip’s faith, that in this strait, as if the Master of the family had been an ordinary person, he looked for supply only in an ordinary way. Christ might now have said to him, as he did afterward, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? Or is God to Meditate in a like case, Is the Lord’s hand shortened at all? We are apt thus to distrust God’s power when visible and ordinary means fail, that is, to trust him no further than we can see him.

5. The information which Christ received from another of his disciples concerning the provision they had. It was Andrew, here said to be Simon Peter’s brother; though he was senior to Peter in discipleship, and indeed had been for a while before him, yet Peter afterward so far outshone him, that he is described by his relation to Peter: he acquainted Christ with what they had at hand; and in that we may see,

(1.) The strength of his love to those whom he saw his Master concerned for, in that he was willing to bring out all they had, though he knew not but they might want themselves, and any one would have said, Charity begins at home. He did not go about to conceal it, under pretence of being a better husband of their provision than the Master was, but honestly gives in an account of all they had. There is a lad here, a little lad, probably, one that used to follow this company, as sutlers do the camp, with provisions to sell, and the disciples had bespoken what he had for themselves; and it was free barley-loaves. It does not follow hence, that we should tie ourselves to such coarse fare; and place religion in it; (when God brings that which is finer to our hands, let us receive it, and be thankful;) but it does follow, that therefore we must not be desirous of dainties, (Prov. 23. 5;) nor murmuring if we be reduced to coarse fare, but he content and thankful, and well reconciled to it; barley-bread is what Christ had, and better than we deserve; nor let us despise the mean provision of the poor, nor despise them upon that account, remembering how Christ was provided for. (2.) Andrew added, There is but a few scanty; there were but five loaves, and those so small, that one little lad carried them all; and we find, (2 Kings 4. 42, 43,) that twenty barley-loaves, with some other provision to help out, would not dine a hundred men without a miracle. There were but two fishes, and those small ones, (6b 6b 6b,) so small, that one of them was but a morsel, pisciulli avarii; I take the fish to have been pickled, or cured, for they had not fire to dress them with. The provision of bread was little, but that of fish was less in proportion to it, so that many a bit of dry bread they must eat before they could make a meal of this provision; but they were content with it. Bread is meat for our hunger; but of them that murmured for flesh, it is said, They asked meat for their lusts, Ps. 78. 19, 20. Well, Andrew was willing that the people should have this, as far as it would go. Note, A distrustful fear of wanting ourselves, should not hinder us from needful charity to others. (2.) See here the weakness of his faith, in that word, “But what are they among so many? To offer that to such a multitude, is but to mock them.” Philip and he had not the actual consideration of the power of Christ, (which they had had,) or else they would have been more ready to bring above what they had. Where was the camp of Israel in the wilderness? He that could make one man chuse a thousand, could make one loaf feed a thousand.

6. The directions Christ gave the disciples, to seat
the guests; (v. 10) "Make the men sit down, though we have nothing to set before them, and trust me for that." This was like sending provisions to the mess, and going to buy with their money; Christ would thus try their obedience. Observe, (1.) The furniture of the dining room; there was much grass in that place, though a desert place; see how beautiful nature is, it makes grass grow upon the mountains, Ps. 147. 8. The grass was unceneted; God gives not only enough, but more than enough. Here was this plenty of grass where Christ was preaching, though the bread was very scarce there, and the expected gathering of the children was not had. "Then shall the earth yield her increase," Ps. 67. 6. This plenty of grass made the place the more commodious for that which must sit on the ground, and served them for cushions, or beds; (as they called what they sat on at meat, Exod. 1. 6.) and considering what Christ says of the grass of the field, (Matt. 6. 29, 30;) these beds excelled those of Absalum's; nature's' pump is the most glorious. 2. The number of the guests; about five thousand; a great entertainment, representing that of the gospel, which is a feast for all nations, (Isa. 23. 6.) a feast for all comers.

7. The distribution of the provision, v. 11.

Observe, (1.) It was done with thanksgiving; He gave thanks. Note, [1.] We ought to give thanks to God for all good gifts and blessings, because we have them from the hand of God, and must receive them with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. And this is the sweetness of our creature-comforts, that they will furnish us with matter, and give us occasion, for that excellent duty of thanksgiving. [2.] Though our provision be coarse and scanty; though we have neither plenty nor dainty, yet we must give thanks to God for what we have.

(2.) It was distributed from the hand of Christ by the hands of his disciples, v. 11. Note, [1.] All our comforts come to us originally from the hand of Christ; whoever brings them, it is he that sends them, he distributes to them who distribute to us. [2.] In distributing the bread of life to those that follow him, he is pleased to make use of the ministration of his disciples; they are the servants at Christ's table, or rather rulers in his household, to give to every one their portion of meat in due season.

(2.) It was done to universal satisfaction. They did not every one take a little, but all had as much as they would; not a short allowance, but a full meal; and, considering how long they had fasted, with what an appetite they sat down, how agreeable this miraculous food may be supposed to be, above common food, it was not a little that served them, when they ate as much as they would, and on free cost. Those whom Christ feeds with the bread of life, he does not stint, Ps. 81. 10. There were but two small fishes, and yet they had of them too, as much as they would. He did not reserve them for the better sort of the guests, and put off the poor with dry bread, but treated them all alike, for they were his people. They were thereafter calling upon fish fasting, reproach the entertainment Christ here made, which was a full feast.

8. The care that was taken of the broken meat. (1.) The orders Christ gave concerning it; (v. 12.) "When they were filled, and every man had within him a sensible witness to the truth of the miracle, Christ said to the disciples, the servants he employed, Gather up the fragments." Note, We must always take care that we make no waste of any of God's good creatures; for the grant we have of them, though large and full, is with this proviso, wasteful waste only excused. It is just with God to bring us to the want of that which we make waste of. The Jews were very careful not to lose any bread, or let fall to the ground; to be trodden upon. Qui pranem contemnit, in granum medio pauperatem—He who despises bread, falls into the depth of poverty, was a saying among them. Though Christ could command supplies whenever he pleased, yet he would have the fragments gathered up. When we are filled, we must remember that others want, and we may want. Those that would have wherewithal to be charitable, must be provident. Had this broken meat been left upon the grass, the beasts and fowls would have gathered it up; but that which is fit to be meat for men, is wasted and lost, if it be thrown away. It was plain from the breaking of the broken meat to be gathered up, till all were filled; we must not begin to hoard and lay up, till all is laid out that ought to be for, that is withholding more than is meet. Mr. Baxter notes here, "How much less should we lose God's word, or helps, or our time, or such greater mercies!"

(2.) The observation of these orders; (v. 13.) They gathered twelve baskets with the fragments; which was an evidence not only of the truth of the miracle, that they were fed, not with famine, but with real food, (witness those remains,) but of the greatness of it; they were not only filled, but there was all this over and above. See how large the divine bounty is; it not only fills the cup, but makes it run over; bread enough, and to spare, in our Father's house. The fragments filled twelve baskets, one for each disciple; they were not only supplied with that which was convenient for their willingness to part with what they had for public service; see 2 Chron. 31. 10. The Jews lay it as a law upon themselves, when they have eaten a meal, to be sure to leave a piece of bread upon the table, upon which the blessing after meat must rest, for it is a curse upon the wicked man, (Job 20. 21.) that they shall none of his meat be left.

I. Here is the influence which this miracle had upon the people who tasted of the benefit of it; (v. 14.) They said, This is of a truth that Prophet. Note, 1. Even the vulgar Jews with great assurance expected the Messiah to come into the world, and to be a great Prophet. They speak here with assurance of his coming. The Pharisees despised them as not knowing the law; but, it should seem, they knew more of him that is the End of the law, than they did of him who is the author of the law. 2. Some which Christ wrought, did clearly demonstrate that he was the Messiah promised, a Teacher come from God, the great Prophet, and could not but convince the amazed spectators that this was he that should come. 3. There were many who were convinced he was that Prophet which should come into the world, who yet did not cordially receive his doctrine, for they did not continue in it. Such a wrought incoherence and inconsistency there is between the faculties of the corrupt, unsanctified soul, that it is possible for men to acknowledge that Christ is that Prophet, and yet to turn a deaf ear to him.

15. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone. 16. And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, 17. And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them. 18. And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. 19. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship, and they were afraid. 20. But he saith
unto them. It is I; be not afraid. 21. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Here is,
I. Christ's retirement from the multitude.
1. Observe what induced him to retire; because he perceived that they who acknowledged him to be that Prophet that should come into the world, would come, and take him by force, to make him a King; v. 13. Now here was an instance, (1.) Of the irregular zeal of some of Christ's followers; nothing would serve but they would make him a King.

Now, [1.] This was an act of zeal for the honour of Christ, and against the contempt which the ruling part of the Jewish church put upon him. They were concerned to see so great a Benefactor to the world so little esteemed in it; and therefore, since royal titles are counted the most illustrious, they would make him a King, knowing that the Messiah was to be a King, and if a prophet, like Moses, then a sovereign Prince and Lawgiver, like him; and if they could not set him up upon the holy hill of Zion, a mountain in Galilee shall serve for the present.

Thus when Christ has feasted with the royal dainties of heaven, should, in return for his favours, make him their King, and set him upon the throne in their souls; let him that has fed us, rule us. But, [2.] It was an irregular zeal; for, First, It was grounded upon a mistake concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were to be of this world, and he must appear with outward pomp, a crown on his head, and an army at his foot; such a king as this they would make him, which was as great a disparagement to his glory as it would be to lacker gold, or paint a ruby. Right notions of Christ's kingdom would keep us to right methods for the advancing of it. Secondly, It was excited by the love of the flesh; they would make him their King, who could feed them so plentifully without their toil, and save them from the curse of eating their bread in the sweat of their faces. Thirdly, It was intended to carry on a secular design; they hoped this might be a fair opportunity of shaking off the Roman yoke, which they were weary of. If they had one to head them, who could victual an army cheaper than another could provide for a family, they were sure of the sinews of the war, and could not fail of success, and the recovery of their ancient liberties. Thus is religion often prostituted to a secular interest, and Christ is served, only to serve a turn, Rom. 16. 18. Vix queruerus Jesus proferit Jesum; sed proferit aliud—Jesus is usually sought after for something else, not for his own sake. August. Nay, Fourthly, It was a tumultuous, seditions attempt, and a disturbance of the public peace; it would make the country a seat of war, and expose it to the resentment of the rest of Europe. Fifthly, It was contrary to the mind of our Lord Jesus himself; for they would take him by force, whether he would or no. Note, Those who force honours upon Christ, which he has not required at their hands, displease him, and do him the greatest dishonour. They that say, I am of Christ, in opposition to those that are of Apollo's and Cephas, (so making Christ the Head of a party,) take him by force, to make him a King, contrary to his own mind. [2.] Here is an instance of the humility and self-denial of the Lord Jesus, that, when they would have made him a King, he departed; so far was he from countenancing the design, that he effectually quashed it. Herein he has left a testimony. [1.] Against ambition and affectation of worldly honour, to which he was perfectly mortified, and has taught us to be so. Had they come to take him by force, and make him a prisoner, he could not have been more industrious to abscond than he was when they would make him a King. Let us then covet to be the idola of the crowd, nor be desirous of vain-glory. [2.] Against faction and sedition, treason and rebellion, and whatever tends to disturb the peace of kings and provinces. By this it appears that he was no enemy to Caesar, nor would have his followers be so, but the quiet in the land; that he would have his ministers decline every thing that looks like sedition, and turns towards it, and improve their interest only for their Lord's sake.

2. Observe whither he retired; he departed again into a mountain, in v. 14—into the mountain, the mountain where he had preached, (v. 3.) whence he came down into the plain, to feed the people, and then returned to it alone, to be private. Christ, though so useful in the places of concourse, yet chose sometimes to be alone, to teach us to sequester ourselves from the world now and then, for the more free converse with God and our own souls; and never less alone, says the serious chri-tian, when alone. Public services must not justly oit private devotions.

II. Here is the disciples' distress at sea. They that go down to the sea in ships, these see the works of the Lord, for he raiseth the stormy wind, Ps. 107.

1. Apply that to these disciples.

Here is a going down to the sea in a ship; (v. 16, 17.) When even was come, and they had done their day's work, it was time to look homeward, and therefore they went aboard, and set sail for Capernaum. This they did by particular direction from their Master, with design (as it should seem) to get them out of the way of the temptation of countenancing those that would have made him a King.

2. Here is the stormy wind arising, and fulfilling the word of God. They were Christ's disciples, and were now in the way of their duty, and Christ was now in the mount praying for them; and yet they were in this distress. The perils and afflictions of this present time may very well consist with our interest in Christ and his intercession. They had lately been feasted at Christ's table; but after the sun-shine of comfort expect a storm. (1.) It was now dark; this made the storm more dangerous and uncomfortable. Sometimes the people of God are in trouble, and cannot see their way out; in the dark concerning the cause of their trouble, concerning the design and tendency of it, and what the issue will be. (2.) Jesus was not come to them. When they were in that storm, (Matt. 8. 21.) Jesus was not with them; but now their Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone. The absence of Christ is the great aggravation of the troubles of christians.

(3.) The sea arose by reason of a great wind. It was calm and fair when they put to sea, (they were not so presumptuous as to launch out in a storm,) but it arose when they were at sea. In times of prosperity and quietness, it is often stormy; for it may arise when we little think of it. Labour and pain, when people, when they happen to be in storms at sea, that the disciples of Christ were so; and let the promises of a gracious God balance the threats of an angry sea; though in a storm, and in the dark, they are no worse off than Christ's disciples were. Clouds and darkness sometimes surround the children of the light, and cast a gloom over the day.

3. Here is Christ's seasonable approach to them when they were in this peril. v. 19. They had rowed, (being forced by the contrary winds to betake themselves to their ears,) about twenty-five or thirty furlongs. The Holy Spirit that indited this, could have ascertained the number of furlongs precisely, but that, being only circumstantial, is left to be expressed according to the conjecture of the penman.
And when they were got off a good way at sea, they see Jesus walking on the sea. See here, (1.) The power of Christ to walk on the water, and to dispense with all danger. (2.) The concern Christ has for his disciples in distress; He drew nigh to the ship; for therefore he walked upon the water, as he rules the sea, Deut. 33. 26. He will not leave them comfortless when they seem to be tossed with tempests, and not comforted. When they are banished, as John, into remote places, or shut up, as Paul and Silas, in close places, he will find access to them, and will be nigh them. (3.) The relief Christ gives to his disciples in their fears. They were afraid, more afraid of an apparition (for so they supposed him to be) than of the winds and waves. It is more terrible to wrestle with the rulers of the darkness of this world than with a tempestuous sea. When they thought a demon haunted them, and perhaps was instrumental to raise the storm, they were more terrified than they had been while they saw nothing in it but what was natural. Note, [1.] Our real distresses are often much increased by our imaginary ones, the creatures of our own fancy. [2.] Even the approaches of comfort and deliverance may be distressing as well as consoling the occasions of fear and perplexity. We are often not only worse frightened than hurt, but then most frightened when we are ready to be helped. But when they were in this fright, how affectionately did Christ silence their fears with that compassionate word, (v. 20.) It is I, be not afraid. Nothing is more powerful to convince sinners than that word, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; nothing more powerful to comfort saints than the word, whom thou lovest; it is I that love thee, and seek thy good; be not afraid of me, nor of the storm. When trouble is nigh, Christ is nigh. 4. Here is their speedy arrival at the port they were bound for, (v. 17.) (1.) They welcomed Christ into the ship; they willingly received him. Note, Christ's absences himself for a time, is but so much the more to endear himself; at his return, to his disciples, he was valued more than ever; See Cant. 3. 4. (2.) Christ landed them safe at the shore; immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. Note, [1.] The ship of the church, in which the disciples of Christ have embarked themselves and their all, may be much shattered and distressed, yet it shall come safe to the harbour at last, tossed at sea, but not lost; cast down, but not destroyed; the bush burning, but not consumed. [2.] The power and presence of the church's King shall expedite and facilitate her deliverance, and conquer the difficulties which have baffled the skill and industry of all her other friends. The disciples had rowed hard, but could not make their point till they had got Christ in the ship, and then the work was done suddenly. If we have received Christ Jesus the Lord, have received him willingly, though the night be dark, and the wind high, yet we may comfort ourselves with this, we shall be at shore shorter, and nearer to it than we think we are. Many a doubtful soul is fetched to heaven by a pleasing surprise, or ever it is aware.

22. The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one wherein his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone: 23. (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias,) nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) 24. When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came unto Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. 25. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? 26. Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.

In these verses, we have,

1. The careful inquiry which the people made after Christ, v. 23, 24. They saw the disciples go to sea, they saw Christ return to the mountain, on the morning that he desired to be private for some time; but, their hearts being set upon it to make him a king, they way-laid his return: and, the day following, the hot fit of their zeal still continuing,

1. They are here much at a loss for him; he was gone, and they not what was become of him; they saw there was no other boat there, but that in which the disciples were. 2. They were distressed, and to the searching of the miracle of his walking on the sea, for there was no boat for him to go in. They observed also, that Jesus did not go with his disciples, but that they went off alone, and had left him among them on their side of the water. Note, Those that would find Christ, must diligently observe all his motions, and learn to understand the tokens of his presence and absence, that they may steer accordingly.

2. They are very industrious in seeking him. They searched the places thereabouts, and when they saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, (neither he, nor any one that could give tidings of him,) they resolved to search elsewhere. Note, Those that would find Christ, must accomplish a diligent search; must seek till they find; must go from sea to sea, to seek the word of God, rather than live without it. And those whom Christ has feasted with the bread of life, should have their souls carried out in earnest desires toward him. Much would have more in communion with Christ. Now,

1. (1.) They resolved to go to Capernaum, in quest of him; there were his head-quarters, where he usually resided. Thither his disciples were gone, and they knew he would not be long absent from them; they that would find Christ, must go forth by the footsteps of the flock. (2.) Providence favoured them with an opportunity of seeing him by sea, which was the speediest way; for there came other boats from Tiberias, that lay further off upon the same shore, nigh, though not so near to the place where they did eat bread, in which they might soon make a trip to Capernaum, and, probably, the boats were bound for that part. Note, Those that in sincerity seek Christ, and seek opportunity to converse with him, are commonly led and assisted by Providence in these pursuits. The evangelist, having occasion to mention their eating the multi filled bread, adds, after that the Lord had given
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thanks, v. 11. So much were the disciples affected with their Master's giving thanks, that they can neither hear nor express the pleasure it made upon them by it; but took a pleasure in remembering the gracious words that then proceeded out of his mouth. That was the grace and beauty of that meal, and made it remarkable; their hearts burned within them.

3. They laid hold on the opportunity that offered itself, and they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum seeking for Jesus. They did not defer, in the least degree, to this his absence; but, their convictions being strong, and their desires warm, they followed him presently. Good motions are often crushed, and come to nothing, for want of being prosecuted in time. They came to Capernaum, and, for aught that appears, these unsound hypocritical followers of Christ had a calm and pleasant passage, while his sincere disciples had a rough and stormy one. It is not strange if it fare worse with the best men in this evil world. They were seeking Jesus. Note, Those that would find Christ, and find comfort in him, must be willing to take pains, and, as those here, compass sea and land, to seek and serve him who came from heaven to earth, to seek and save us.

II. The success of this inquiry; (v. 25.) They found him on the other side of the sea. Note, Christ will be found, and is not hid, if men have no more to show for their love to Christ, than his last; and it is worth while to cross a sea, may, to go from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, to seek Christ, if we may but find him at last. Those people appeared afterwards to be unsound, and not actuated by any good principle, and yet were thus zealous. Note, Hypocrites may be very forward in their attendance on God's ordinances. If men have no more to show for their love to Christ, than his running after sermons and prayers, and their parts of affection to good preaching, they have reason to suspect themselves no better than this eager crowd. But though these people were no better principled, and Christ knew it, yet he was willing to be found of them, and admitted them into fellowship with him; if he could know the hearts of hypocrites, yet while their profession is plausible, we must not exclude them our communion, much less when we do not know their hearts.

III. The question they put to him when they found him; Rabbi, when camest thou hither? It should seem by v. 59. that they found him in the synagogue. They knew that was the likeliest place to see Christ in, for it was his custom to attend public assemblies for religious worship, Luke 4. 16. Note, Christ must be sought, and will be found, in the course of his appointments; and in the administration of his ordinances; public worship is what Christ chooses to own, and grace with his presence and the manifestations of himself. There they found him, and all they had to say to him, was, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? They saw he would not be made a King, and therefore say no more of that, but call him Rabbi, their Teacher. Their inquiry relates to Christ's presence: they desire to know, conveying himself thither; not only When, but, How, camest thou hither? for there was no boat for him to come in. They were curious in observing concerning Christ's motions, but not solicitous to ask their own.

IV. The answer Christ gave them, not direct to their question. What was it to them, when and how, he came thither? But such an answer as their case required.

1. He discovers the corrupt principle that they acted from, in their following of him; (v. 26.) 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, I that search the heart, and know what is in man, the I amen, the faithful Witness, Rev. 3. 14. 15. To seek me, that is well, but it is not from a good principle.' Christ knows not only what we do, but why we do it. These followed Christ, (1.) Not for his doctrine's sake; not for his beneficence and love; not for his miracles; but the great confirmation of his doctrine; Nicodemus sought for him, for the sake of them, (ch. 3. 2.) and argued from the power of his works to the truth of his word; but these here were so stupid and mindless, that they never considered that. But, (2.) It was for their own bellies' sake; because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled; not because he taught them, but because they supposed he had given them, [1.] A full meal's meat; They did eat, and were filled, and some of them perhaps were so poor, that they had not known for a long time before now, what it was to have enough, to eat and leave. [2.] A dainty meal's meat; it is probable that, as the miraculous wine was the best wine, so was the miraculous food more than usually pleasant. [3.] A cheap meal's meat, that cost them nothing; but reckoning was brought in. Note, Many follow Christ for butter, and not for love. Thus they do, who aim at secular advantage in their profession of religion, and follow it, because by this craft they got their preferments. Quantui prouit nobis hoc fabula de Christo—This Table respecting Christ, what a gainful concern we have made of it! said one of the popes: these people complimented Christ with Rabbi, and showed themselves in a great respect; he told them the folly of their hypocrisy; his ministers must hence learn not to flatter those that flatter them, nor to be bribed by fair words, but to give faithful reproves where there is cause for them; nor cry jeerer to all that cry rabbi to them.

2. He directs them to better principles; (v. 27.) Labour for that meat which endures to everlasting life. He had discourse with the woman of Samaria, under the similitude of water, here he speaks of the same things under the similitude of meat, taking occasion from the leaves they had eaten. His design is,

(1.) To moderate our worldly pursuits; Labour not for the meat that perisheth. This does not forbid honest labour for food convenient, 2 Thess. 3. 12. But we must not make the things of this world our chief care and concern. Note, Labour not for that meat which is corrupt, sec. 21. But there is meat that doth never perish, labour for that, 2 Cor. 9. 8. The meat of this world is corruptible; the meat of the word is incorruptible, 1 Pet. 1. 9. The things of this world are an unsavoury meat, which God has not given us to feed upon, for our life; but meat that endures to everlasting life, is the meat which has Christ for its head, which is spiritual meat; the things of this world are meat that perisheth, the things of the word are meat eternal. [1.] The things of the world are meat that perisheth. Worldly wealth, honour, and pleasure, these are meat; they feed the fancy, and many times that is all, and fill the belly, which men hunger after as meat, and glut themselves with, and which a carnal heart, as long as they last, may make a shift to live upon; but they perish, are of a perishing nature, wither of themselves, and are exposed to the attacks of many enemies, those that have the largest share of them, are not sure to have them while they live, but are sure to leave them and lose them when they die. [2.] It is therefore folly for us inordinately to labour after them. First, We must not labour in religion, nor work the works thereof, for this perishing meat, with an eye to this; must not make our religion subservient to a worldly interest, nor aim at secular advantages by religious exercises; we must not at all labour for this meat; that is, we must not make these perishing things our chief good, nor make our care and pains about them our chief business; not seek those things first and most, Prov. 23. 45. (2.) To quicken and excite our gracious pursuits; Bestow your pains to better purpose, and labour for that meat which beareth fruit to the soul. Of which he showed

[1.] That it is unspeakably desirable; it is meat which endures to everlasting life; it is happiness which will last as long as we must, which not only itself endures eternally, but will nourish us up to everlasting life. The blessings of the new covenant, are our preparative for eternal life, our preservative to it, and the pledge and earnest of it.
22. It is undoubtedly attainable. Shall all the treasures of the world be ransacked, and all the fruits of the earth gathered together, to furnish us with provisions that will last to eternity? No, The sea with it, It is not in me; among all the treasures hid in the sand, it cannot be gotten for gold; but it is that which the Son of man shall give; is 42-47, either which meat, or which life, the Son of man shall give. Observe here, First, Who gives this meat? the Son of man, the great Au- thorizer and Mover of the stores, who is intrusted with the administration of the kingdom of God among men, and the dispensation of the gifts, graces, and comforts of that kingdom, and has power to give eternal life, with all the means of it, and preparations for it. We are bid to labour for it, as if it were to be got by our own industry, and sold upon that valuable consideration, as the heathen said, Dil laboribus omnia venturum. The gods sell all advantages to the industrious. But when we have laboured so much for it, we have not merited it as our hire, but the Son of man gives it. And what more free than gift? It is an encouragement, that he who has the giving of it, is the Son of man, for then we may hope the sons of men that seek it, and labour for it, shall not fail to have it. Secondly, What authority he has to give it; for him has God the Father sealed (proved and evidenced) to be God; so some read it; he has declared him to be the Son of God with power. He has sealed him, that is, has given him full authority to deal between God and man, as God's Ambassador to man, and man's Intercessor with God; and has proved his commission by miracles; having given him authority, he has given us assurance of it; having intrusted him with unlimited power, he has satisfied us with unproved proofs of them; so that as he might go on with confidence in his undertaking for us, so may we in our resignations to him. God the Father sealed him with the Spirit that rested on him, by the voice from heaven, by the testimony he bore to him in signs and wonders. Divine revelation is perfected in him; in him the vision and prophecy is sealed up, (Deut. 9. 24.) to him all believers seal that he is true, (ch. 3. 32.) and in him they are all sealed; 2 Cor. 1. 22.

28. Then said they unto him, What shalt we do, that we might work the works of God? 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, That ye believe on him whom he hath sent. 30. They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? What dost thou work? 31. Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. 38. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, That of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 41. The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. 42. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? 43. Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. 44. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. 45. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. 46. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God: he hath seen the Father. 47. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. 48. I am that bread of life. 49. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. 51. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. 52. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? 53. Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. 54. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. 55. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. 56. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. 57. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. 58. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. 59. These things said he in the synagoge, as he taught in Capernaum.
Whether this conference was with the Caper-
nautes, in whose synagogue Christ now was, or with
those who came from the other side of the sea, is
not certain, or material; however it is an instance of
Christ's ascension, that he gave them leave to
ask him questions, and did not resent the interrup-
tion as an affront, no not from his common hearers,
though not his immediate followers. Those that
would be apt to teach, must be swift to hear, and
ready to answer. It is the wisdom of teachers, when
they are asked even inexpert, unprofitable ques-
tions, from thence to take occasion to answer that
which would be of more profit than the question may be reject-
ed, but not the request. Now,

I. Christ having told them that they must work
for the meat he spoke of, must labour for it, they
inquire what work they must do, and he answers
them, v. 28, 29.

1. Their inquiry was pertinent enough; (v. 28.)
What shall we do, that we may work the works
of God? Some understand it as a pert question;
"What works of God can we do more and better
than those we do in obedience to the law of Moses?"
But I rather take it as a humble, serious question,
speaking them to be, at least for the present, in a
good mind, and willing to know and do their duty;
and I take it that they who asked this question How
and What, (v. 30.) and made that request, (v. 34.)
were such persons as those that mur-
mered, (v. 41, 42.) and strove, (v. 52.) for those are
expressly called the Jews, which came out of Judea
(for those were strictly called Jews) to cavil, whereas
these were of Galilee, and came to be taught. This
question here intimates that they were convinced
that they who would obtain this everlasting meat,
(1.) They must aim to do something great. They
who look high in their expectations, and hope to
excel God, must aim at great ends; show an end;
and study to do the works of God, works
which he requires, and will accept of, works of God
distinguished from the works of worldly men in their
worldly pursuits. It is not enough to speak the
words of God, but we must do the works of God.
(2.) That they must be willing to do any thing;
What shall we do? Lord, I am ready to do what-
ever thou appointest, though ever so displeasing
to flesh and blood, Acts 9. 6.

2. Christ's answer was plain enough; (v. 29.)
This is the work of God, that ye believe. Note, (1.)
The work of faith is the work of God. They in-
quire after the works of God, (in the plural number,) being careful about many things; but Christ directs
them to one work, which includes all, the one thing
needful, that ye believe, which supersedes all the
works of the ceremonial law; the work which is
necessary to the acceptance of all the other works,
and which produces them, for without faith you
cannot please God. It is God's work, for it is of his
working in us, it subjects the soul to his working
on us, and quickens the soul in working for him. (2.)
That faith is the work of God, which closes with
Christ, and rests upon him. (v. 30.) Even as God hath sent,
that he should believe, and give his witness against his
faith, for faith is the sword of the Spirit, Hebrews 4. 12.

II. Christ having told them that the Son of man
would give them this meat, they inquired concerning
him, and he answers their inquiry.

1. Their inquiry is after a sign; (v. 30.) What
sign shall we see from thee? Thus far they were right, that,
since he required them to give him credit, he should
produce his credentials, and make it out by miracle,
that he was the sent of God. Moses having confirmed
his mission by signs, it was requisite that Christ,
who came to set aside the ceremonial law, should in
like manner confirm his: "What dost thou work?
What dost thou design to do?" But herein they missed it, (1.) That
they overlooked the many miracles which they had
seen done by him; for by this he was inspired by the
abundant proof of his divine mission Is it not a
right to think of this? Thus a time of day to ask, "What sign showest thou?"
especially at Capernaum, the stately of miracles,
where he had done so many mighty works, signs so
significant of his office and undertaking? Were
not these very persons but the other day miracu-
ously fed by him? Now, if they were blind as they shall
see; could they be so blind as they may be sup-
cing whether it be day or night, when the sun shines in their
faces. (2.) That they preferred the miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness before all the
miracles Christ wrought; (v. 31.) Our fathers did eat
manna in the desert; and to strengthen the objection,
they quote a scripture for it; He gave them bread
from heaven; (taken from Ps. 73. 24.) he gave them of the corn of heaven.
What a good use might be made of this story which they here refer to? It was a memorable instance of God's power
and goodness, often mentioned to the glory of God;
(Neh. 9. 20, 21.) yet see how these people perverted
it, and made an ill use of it.

[1.] Christ reproved them for their fondness of the
miraculous bread, and bid them not set their
hearts upon meat which perisheth; "Why?" say
they, "meat for the belly was the good great thing
that God gave to our fathers in the desert; and why
should not we then labour for that meat? If God
made much of them, why should not we be for those
that will make much of us?"

[2.] Christ had fed five thousand men with five
loaves, and had given them that as the sign, to
prove he was God; but, under colour of magni-
ifying the miracles of Moses, they tacitly underv
value that miracle of Christ, and evince the evidence of
it. Christ fed his thousands; but Moses his
hundred thousands; Christ fed them but once, and then
reproved those who followed him in hope to be fed
and put them off with a discourse of spiritual
food; but Moses fed his followers forty years, and
miracles were not their rarities, but their daily
bread. Christ fed them weekly; but Moses fed
them barley-bread, and fishes out of the sea; but Moses
fed Israel with bread from heaven, angels' food.
Thus big did these Jews talk of the manna which
their fathers did eat; but their fathers had slighted
it, as much as they did now the barley-leaves, and
called it light bread, Numb. 21. 5. Thus are we
left to slight and overlook the appearances of God's
power and grace in our own times, while we do
tend to admire the wonders which our fathers told
us of. Suppose this miracle of Christ was out-done
by that of Moses, yet there were other instances in
which Christ's miracles out-shone his; and besides,
all true miracles prove a divine doctrine, though not
equally illustrious in the circumstances, which were
ever diversified according as the occasion did
require. Moses said, The manna came out of the
barley-leaves, so much, and much more, did the doctrine
of Christ excelp the law of Moses, and his heavenly
institutions the carnal ordinances of that dispensa-
tion.

2. Here is Christ's reply to this inquiry; wherein,
(1.) He rectifies their mistake concerning the
typical manna. It was true, their fathers did eat
manna in the desert. But (2.) They who receiv
enjoy, it were not obliged to him for it; he was but the instrument, and therefore
they must look beyond him to God. We do not find
that Moses did so much as pray to God for the manna;
and he spake unadvisedly, when he said, Must we
fetch water out of the rock? Moses gave them not
either bread, or that water. [2.] It was not
given them, as they imagined, from heaven, from the highest heavens, but only from the clouds, and therefore not so much excelling that which had its rise from the earth, as they thought. Because the scripture saith, He gave them bread from heaven, He doth not follow that it was heavenly bread, or was intended to be the nourishment of souls. Mistranifesting scripture-language occasions many mistakes in the things of God.

(2.) He informs them concerning the true Manna, of which that was a type; But my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven; that ye may eat and live. This truly and properly is bread from heaven, of which that was but a shadow and figure, is now given, not to your fathers, who are dead and gone, but to you of this present age, for whom the better things were reserved; he is now giving you that Bread from heaven, which is truly so called. As much as the throne of God's glory is above the clouds of the air, so much doth the spiritual Bread of the everlasting gospel excel the manna. In calling God his Father, he speaks higher than Moses; for Moses was faithful but as a servant, Christ as a Son, Heb. 3. 5.

Now this objection of theirs concerning the manna, gave further occasion to Christ to discourse of himself under the similitude of bread, and of believing under the similitude of eating and drinking; to which, together with his own, it is here answer'd, by these things, that he truly drank of his blood, and with the remarks made upon it by the hearers, the rest of this conference may be reduced.

[1.] Christ, having spoken of himself as the great Gift of God, and the true Bread, (v. 32.) largely explains and confirms this, that we may rightly know him. First, He here shows that he is the true Bread; as he repeats again and again, v. 33, 35, 42—51. Observe,

1. That Christ is Bread; that is to the soul, which bread is to the body, nourishes and supports the spiritual life, (is the Staff of it,) as bread does the bodily life; it is the staff of life. The doctrine of the gospel concerning Christ, that he is the Mediator between God and man, that he is our Peace, our Righteousness, our Sanctuary, and our Intercessor, by these things.

Our bodies could better live without food than our souls without Christ. Bread-corn is bruised; (Isa. 28. 28.) so was Christ; he was born at Bethlehem, the house of bread, and typified by the sheaf-bread.

2. That he is the Bread of God, (v. 33.) divine Bread; it is he that is of God; (v. 46.) Bread which my Father gives, (v. 32.) which he has made to be the Food of our souls; the Bread of life was, for his family, his children's Bread. The Levitical sacrifices are called the bread of God, (Lev. 21. 21, 22.) and Christ is the great Sacrifice; Christ, in his words and ordinances, the Feast upon the sacrifice.

3. That he is the Bread of life; (v. 33. and again, v. 48.) that Bread of life, alluding to the tree of life in the midst of the garden of Eden, which was to Adam and his posterity, and to the whole family of men, Deut. 8. 3. and life, of which he might eat, and live. Christ is the Bread of life, for he is the Fruit of the tree of life. (1.) He is the living Bread; (so he explains himself, v. 51.) I am the living Bread. Bread is itself a dead thing, and nourishes not but by the help of the faculties of a living body; but Christ is himself living Bread, and nourishes by his own power. Manna was a dead thing; if kept not one night, it was描写ed, andewed worms; but Christ is everliving, everlasting Bread, that never moulds, or waxes old. The doctrine of Christ crucified, is now as strengthening and comforting to abeliever as ever it was, and his meditation still of as much value and eachness as ever. (2.) He gives life unto the world, (v. 33.) spiritual and eternal life; the life of the soul in union and communion with God here, and in the vision and fruition of him hereafter; a life that includes in it all happiness. The manna did not preserve and support life, did not preserve and perpetuate life, much less restore it; but Christ gives life to those that were dead in sin. The manna was ordained only for the life of the Israelites, but Christ is given for the life of the world; none are excluded from the benefit of this Bread, but such as exclude themselves. Christ came to put life into the minds of men; principles productive of acceptable performances.

4. That he is the Bread which came down from heaven; this is often repeated here, v. 33, 50, 51, 58. This denotes, (1.) The divinity of Christ's person. As God, he had a being in heaven, whence he came to take our nature upon him; I came down from heaven; whence we may infer his antiquity, he was in the beginning with God; his abode for heaven is the firmament of power; and his authority, he came with a divine commission. (2.) The divine original of all that good which flows to us through him. He comes not only κατά κόσμον — that came down, (v. 51.) but κατ' ὑπόκοσμον— that comes down; he is descending, denoting a constant communication of light, life, and love, from God to believers through Christ, as the manna descended long ages from above.

5. That he is that Bread of which the manna was a type and figure, (v. 38.) that Bread, the true Bread, v. 32. As the Rock that they drank of, was Christ, so was the Manna they ate of, spiritual Bread, 1 Cor. 10. 3. 4. Manna was given to Israel; so Christ to the spiritual Israel. There was manna for them, and for them alone; but in Christ a fulness of grace for all believers, he that gathers much of this manna, will have none to spare, when he comes to use it; and he that gathers little, when his grace comes to be perfected in glory, shall find, that he has no lack. Manna was to be gathered in the morning; and those that would find Christ, must seek him early. Manna was sweet, and, as the author of the Wisdom of Solomon tells us, (ch. 16. 20.) was given, not for endearment in theark; so of Christ in the Lord's supper, as the Fード of souls.

Secondly, He here shows what his undertaking was, and what his errand into the world. Laying aside the metaphor, he speaks plainly, and speaks no more than he is giving us an account of his business among men, v. 38—40.

1. He assures us, in general, that he came from heaven upon his Father's business; (v. 38.) not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. He came from heaven, which speaks him an intelligent active Being, who voluntarily descended to this lower world, a long journey, and a great business undertaken, consisting of his work, and the eternal, and the calamities of the world he came to; we may well ask with wonder, "What moved him to such an expedition?" He tells us here, that he came to do, not his own will, but the will of his Father, not that he had any will that stood in competition with the will of his Father, but they to whom he spake, suspected him might; No, saith he, my own will is not the spirit of it, sent from, nor the rule I go by, but I am come to do the will of him that sent me. That is, (1.) Christ did not come into the world as a private person, that acts for himself only, but under a public character, to act for others as an Ambassador, or Plenipotentiary, authorized by a public commission; he came into the
world as God’s great Agent, and the world’s great Physician. It was not any private business that brought him hither, but he came to settle affairs between parties no less considerable than the great Creator, and the whole creation. (3.) Christ, when he was in the world, did not carry on any private design, nor had any separate interest at all, distinct from theirs for whom he acted. The scope of his whole life was to glorify God, and do good to men; he therefore never consulted his own ease, safety, or quiet; but, when he was to lay down his life, though he had a human nature which started at it, he set aside the consideration of that, and resolved his will as Man into the will of God; Not as I will, but as thou wilt.

3. He acquaints us, in particular, with the will of his Father, which he came to do; he here declares the decree, the instructions he was to pursue.

(1.) The private instructions given to Christ, that he should be sure to save all the chosen remnant; and this is the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son; (v. 38.) ‘This is the Father’s will, whom hath sent me; this is the charge I am intrusted with, that all which he had given me I should bring hither.’

Note. [1.] There is a certain number of the children of men, given by the Father to Jesus Christ, to be his care, and so to be to him for a name and a praise; given him for an inheritance, for a possession. Let him do all that for them, which their case requires; teach them, and heal them, pay their debt, and plead their cause, prepare them for, and present them to the Saviour, and then let him make his best of them. The Father might dispose of them as he pleased: as creatures, their lives and beings were delivered from him; as sinners, their lives and beings were forfeited to him; he might have sold them for the satisfaction of his justice, and delivered them to the tormentors; but he pitched upon them to be the monuments of his mercy, and delivered them to the Saviour. Those whom God chose to be the objects of his special love, he lodged as a trust in the hands of Christ.

(2.) Jesus Christ has undertaken that he will lose none of those that were thus given him of the Father. The many sons whom he was to bring to glory, shall be all forthcoming, and none of them missing, Matt. 18. 14. None of them shall be lost for want of a sufficient cause, or being too mean or insufficient grace to sanctify them. If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, let me bear the blame for ever, Gen. 43. 9.

(3.) Christ’s undertaking for those that are given him, extends to the resurrection of their bodies; I will raise it up again at the last day; which supposes all that goes before, but this is to crown and complete the undertaking; the body is a part of the man, and therefore a part of Christ’s purchase and charge; it pertains to the promises, and therefore it shall not be lost. The undertaking is not only that he shall lose none, no person, but that he shall lose nothing, no part of the person, and therefore not the body. Christ’s undertaking will never be accomplished till the resurrection, when the souls and bodies of the undertaking; the body is a part of the man, and therefore a part of Christ’s purchase and charge; it pertains to the promises, and therefore it shall not be lost. The undertaking is not only that he shall lose none, no person, but that he shall lose nothing, no part of the person, and therefore not the body.

Behold, I and the children that thou hast given me, Heb. 2. 13. 2 Tim. 1. 12.

[4.] The spring and original of all this, is the sovereign will of God; the counsels of his will, according to which he works all this. This was the commandment he gave to his Son, when he sent him into the world, and to which the Son always had an eye.

(2.) The public instructions which were to be given to the children of men, in what way, and upon what terms, they might obtain salvation by Christ; and this is the covenant of grace between God and man. Who the particular persons were, that were given to Christ, is a secret; The Lord knew them that are his, we do not, nor is it fit we should; but, though their names are concealed, their characters are published. An offer is made of life and happiness upon gospel-terms, that by it those that were given to Christ might be brought to him, and others left inexcusable. It is a covenant of grace, Rom. 4. 11, and good to men; he therefore never consulted his own ease, safety, or quiet; but, when he was to lay down his life, though he had a human nature which started at it, he set aside the consideration of that, and resolved his will as Man into the will of God; Not as I will, but as thou wilt.

We must not reviving to hear this? [1.] That eternal life may be had, if it be not our own fault; that, whereas upon the sin of the first Adam, the way of the tree of life was blocked up, by the grace of the second Adam it is laid open again. The crown of glory is set before us as the prize of our high calling, which we may run for and obtain. [2.] Every one may have it. This gospel is to be preached, this offer made to all. (and none can say, It belongs not to me.) Rev. 22. 17. [3.] This offer is sure to all those who believe in Christ, and to them only. He that sees the Son, and believes on him, shall be saved. Some understand this saying as a limitation of this condition of salvation to those only that have the revelation of Christ and his grace made to them. Every one that has the opportunity of being acquainted with Christ, and improves that so well as to believe in him, and long life, so that none shall be condemned for unbelief, (however they may be for other sins,) but those who have had the gospel preached to them, who, like these Jews here, (v. 36.) have seen, and yet have not believed; have known Christ, and yet not trusted in him. But I rather understand seeing here to mean the same thing with believing, for it is εἰδον, which signifies not so much the sight of the eye, (as τυπήσας, we have seen me, as the contemplation of the mind. Every one that sees the Son, that is, believes on him, sees him with an eye of faith, by which we come to be duly acquainted and affected with the doctrine of the gospel concerning him. It is to look upon him, as the stung Israelites upon the brazen serpent. It is not a blind faith that shall be received; but faith that takes hold of the lived; faith that can look at our eyes put out, and then follow him, but that we should see him, and see what ground we go upon in our faith. It is then right, when it is not taken up upon hear-say, (believing as the church believes,) but is the result of a due consideration of, and insight into, the motives of credibility; Now mine eye sees thee; We have heard him ourselves. [4.] Those who believe in Jesus Christ, in order to their having everlasting life, shall be raised up by his power at the last day. He had it in charge as his Father’s will, (v. 39,) and here he solemnly makes it his own undertaking, I will raise him up, which signifies not only the return of the body to life, but the putting of the whole man into a full possession of the eternal life promised.

Now Christ is discoursing thus concerning himself, as the Bread of life that came down from heaven, let us see what remarks his hearers made upon it. First, When they heard of such a thing as the Bread of God, which gives life, they heartily prayed for it; (v. 34.) Lord, evermore give us this Bread. I cannot think that this is spoken scoffingly, and in a way of derision, as most interpreters understand it. The devil was the first bread, and said, If thou feed me with it; not for one meal, as with the five loaves, but evermore; as if this were no better a prayer than that of the impenitent thief, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But I take this re
quest to be made, though ignorantly, yet honestly, and to be well meant; for they call him Lord, and desire a share in what he gives, whatever he means by it. General and confused notions of divine things produce in carnal hearts some kind of desires toward them, and wishes of them; like Balaam's wish, to die the death of the righteous. Those who have an indistinct knowledge of the things of God, who see not, as trees walking, nor understand their harvestless prayer for spiritual blessings. They think the favour of God a good thing, and heaven a fine place, and cannot but wish them their own, while they have no value or desire at all for that holiness which is necessary both to the one and to the other. Let this be the desire of our souls; have we tasted that the Lord is gracious, been feasted with the word of God, and Christ in the word; let us say, "Lord, evermore give us this bread; let the Bread of life be our daily Bread, the heavenly Manna our continual Feast, and let us never know the want of it.

Secondly, But when they understood, that by this Bread of life Jesus meant himself, then they desisted from it. Whether they were the same persons that had prayed for it, (v. 34.) or some others of the company, does not appear; it seems to be some others, for the same need of the former is shown, (v. 33.) They murmured at him. This comes in immediately after that solemn declaration which Christ had made of God's will, and his own undertaking concerning man's salvation, (v. 39, 40.) which certainly were some of the most weighty and gracious words that ever proceeded out of the mouth of our Lord Jesus, the most faithful, and best worthy of all acceptance; one would think that, like Israel in Egypt, having heard what God had thus visited them, they should have bowed their heads, and worshipped; but, on the contrary, instead of closing with the offer made them, they murmured, quarrelled with what Christ said; and though they did not openly oppose and contradict it, yet they privately whispered among themselves in contempt of it, and instilled into one another's minds prejudices against it. Many that will not professedly contradict the doctrine of Christ, (their cavils may be so groundless, that they are either ashamed to own them, or afraid to have them silenced;) yet say in their heart, that they do not like it.

Now, 1. That which offended them, was, Christ's asserting his original to be from heaven, v. 41, 42. How is it that he saith, I came down from heaven? They had heard of angels coming down from heaven, but never of a man; over-looking the proofs he had given of his being more than a man.

2. That which they thought justified them herein, was, that they knew his extraction on earth; Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? They took it amiss, that he should say that he came down from heaven, when he was one of them. They speak slightly of his blessed name, Jesus; Is not this Jesus? They take it for granted that they are called Jesus, now it is, and that he was only reputed to be so. Note, Mistrust concerning the person of Christ, as if he were a mere man, conceived and born by ordinary generation, occasion the offence that is taken at his doctrine and offices. Those who set him on a level with the other sons of men, whose father and mother we know, no wonder if they derogate from the honour of his satisfaction, and the mysteries of his undertaking, and, like the Jews, murmured at his promise to raise us up at the last day.

[2.] Christ, having spoken of faith as the great work of God, (v. 29.) discourses largely concerning this work, instructing and encouraging us in it.

First, He shows what it is to believe in Christ.

1. To believe in Christ, is to come to Christ; He that comes to me, is the same with him that believes in me; (v. 35.) and again, (v. 37. He that comes unto me; so v. 44, 45. Repentance toward God is coming to him, (Jer. 3. 22. ) as our chief Good and highest End; and so faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ is coming to him as our Prince and Saviour, and our Way to the Father. It denotes the outgoings of our affection toward him, for these are the works of righteousness, agreeable; it is to come off from all those things that stand in opposition to him, or competition with him, and to come off to those terms upon which life and salvation are offered to us through him. When he was here on earth, it was more than barely coming where he was; so it is now, more than coming to his word and ordinances.

2. It is to feed upon Christ; (v. 51.) If any man eat this Bread, he denotes applying ourselves to Christ, this denotes applying Christ to ourselves, with appetite and delight, that we may receive life and strength and comfort from him. To feed on him as the Israelites on the manna, having quitted the flesh-fots of Egypt, and not depending on the labour of their hands, (to eat of that,) but living purely on the bread given them from heaven.

Secondly, He shows what it shall be if he come to him?

What shall be the better, if we feed upon him? Want and death are the chief things we dread; may we be but assured of the comfort of our being, and the continuance of it in the midst of those comforts, we have enough; now those two are here secured to true believers. They shall never want, never hunger, never thirst; v. 35. Desires the have, earnest desires, but these desires, are so reasonably, so abundantly satisfied, that they cannot be called hunger and thirst, which is uneasy and painful. Those that did eat manna, and drank of the rock, hungered and thirsted afterwards. Manna sufficed them, water out of the rock failed them, but there is such an over-flowing fulness in Christ as can never be exhausted, and there are such over-flowing communications from him as can never be interrupted.

They shall never die, not die eternally; for,

(1.) He that believes on Christ, has everlasting life, (v. 47.) he has the assurance of it, the grant of it, the earnest of it; he has it in the promise and first-fruits. Union with Christ and communion with God in Christ, are everlasting life begun. (2.) Whereas they that did eat manna, died, Christ is such Bread as a man may eat of, and never die, v. 49, 50. Ob.
sat of here.

[1.] The insufficiency of the typical manna; Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. There may be much good use made of the death of our fathers; their graves speak to us, and their monuments are our memorials, particularly of this, that the greatest plenty of the most dainty food will neither prolong the thread of life, nor put by the stroke of death. There shall die of the Lord, died like other men. There could be nothing amiss in their diet, to shorten their days, nor could their deaths be hastened by the toils and fatigues of life; (for they neither sowed nor reap'd) and yet they died. First, Many of them died by the immediate strokes of God's vengeance for their unbelief and murmurings; for, though they did eat that spiritual meat, yet with many of them God was not well pleased, but they were overthrown in the wilderness. Jer. 4. 2. Second, Their eating manna was no security to them from the wrath of God, as believing in Christ is to us. Secondly, The rest of them died in a course of nature, and their carcasses fell, under a divine sentence, in that wilderness where they did eat manna. In that very age when miracles were daily bread, was the life of man re-
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duced to the stint it now stands at, as appears, Ps. 90. 10. Let them not boast so much of manna then.

[2.] The all-sufficiency of the true Manna, of which the other was a type; This is the Bread that cometh down from heaven, that truly divine and heavenly Food, that a man may eat thereof, and not die; not fall under the wrath of God; not discontinue his living and not suffer the second death; no, nor the first death finally and irrecoverably; not die, not perish, nor come short of the heavenly Canaan, as the Israelites did of the earthly, for want of faith, though they had manna.

This is further explained by that promise in the next words, If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, v. 53. That is the meaning of the metaphor; he shall pass through to that world where there shall be no more death. To live for ever, is not to be for ever, (the damned in hell shall be for ever, the soul of man was made for an endless state,) but to be happy for ever. And because the body must needs die, and be as water split upon the ground, Christ here undertakes for the gathering of that up too: (as some will make him to do, at the last day;) and even that shall live for ever.

Thirdly, He shows what encouragements we have to believe in Christ. Christ here speaks of some who had seen him, and yet believed not, v. 36. They saw his person and miracles, and heard him preach, and yet were not wrought upon to believe in him. Faith is not always the effect of sight; the soldiers were eye-witnesses of his resurrection, and yet the word was to be our souls, which bids us believe to Christ! Him that cometh; it is in the singular number, speaking favour, not only to the body of believers in general, but to every particular soul that applies itself to Christ. Here, (1.) The duty required is a pure gospel-duty; to come to Christ, that we may come to God by him. His beauty and love, those great attractions, must draw us to him; sense of our wretchedness, that shall drive us to him. And the means are given us to bring us to Christ. (2.) The promise is a pure gospel-promise; I will in no wise cast out—νέκρους δὲ ἐὰν ἐλθοὺν; there are two negatives, I will not, no, I will not. [1.] Much favour is expressed here. We have reason to fear that he should cast us out; considering our meanness, our viliness, our unworthiness to come, our weakness in coming; we may justly expect that he should turn us away, and shut his doors against us; but he obviates these fears with this assurance, he will not do it; will not disdain us though we are mean, will not reject us though we are sinful. Do poor scholars come to him, to be taught? Though they be dull and slow, he will not cast them out. Do poor patients come to him, to be cured? Poor, wan, empty-handed, he will in no wise cast them out. But, [2.] More favour is implied than is expressed; when it is said that he will not cast them out, the meaning is, He will receive them, and entertain them, and give them all that which they come to him for. As he will not refuse them at their first coming, so he will not afterward, upon every displeasure, cast them out. His gifts and callings are without partiality.

2. That the Father will, without fail, bring all those to him in due time, that were given him. In the federal transactions between the Father and the Son, relating to man's redemption, as the Son undertook for the justification, sanctification, and salvation, of all that should come to him; ("Let me have them put into my hands, and then leave the management of them to me"); so the Father, the Fountain and Original of being, life, and grace, undertook to bring to his hand all that were given him, and bring them to him.

Now, (1.) He here assures us that this shall be done; (v. 57.) All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me. Christ had complained, (v. 56.) of those, who, though they had seen him, yet would not believe on him; and then he adds this, [1.] For their conviction and awakening, plainly intimating that he could not work a miracle on his part, and, yet they persisted in it, would be a certain sign that they did not belong to the election of grace; for how can we think that God gave us to Christ, if we give ourselves to the world and the flesh? 2 Pet. 1. 10. [2.] For his own comfort and encouragement; Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious. The election has obtained, and shall, though multitudes be blinded, Rom. 11. 7. Though he lose many of his creatures, yet none of his charge; All that the Father giveth him, shall come to him, notwithstanding. Here we have,

First, The election described; All that the Father giveth me, every thing which the Father giveth me; the persons of the elect, and all that belongs to them; all their services, all their interests; as all that he has, is theirs, so far as they are the inheritance of Christ, is all his all; these were given him in full recompense of his undertaking. Not only all persons, but all things, are gathered together in Christ, Eph. 1. 10.) and reconciled, Col. 1. 20. The giving of the chosen remnant to Christ is spoken of, (v. 39.) as a thing done; he hath given them; here it is spoken of as a thing in the doing, he giveth them; because, when the First-born was brought into the world, it should seem, there was a renewal of the grant; see Heb. 10. 5; &c. God was now about to give him the heathen for his inheritance, (Ps. 2. 8.) to put him in possession of the desolate heritages, (Isa. 49. 8.) to divide him a portion with the great, Isa. 53. 12. And though the Jews, who saw him, believe not on him, yet these (said he) shall come to me; the other sheep, which are not of this fold, shall be brought, ch. 10. 15. See Aug. 13. 48.

Secondly, The effect of it secured; They shall come to me. This is a prediction, that as many as were in the counsel of God ordained to life, shall be brought to life by being brought to Christ. They are scattered, are mingled among the nations; yet none of them shall be forgotten; not a grain of God's corn shall be lost, as is promised, Amos 9. 9. They are not given him from Christ, and avers to him, and yet they shall come. As God's omniscience is engaged for the finding of them all out, so is his omnipotence for the bringing of them all in. Not, They shall be driven to me, but, They shall come freely, shall be made willing.

(2.) He here acquaints us how it shall be done. How shall those who are given to Christ, be brought to him? Two ancillaries to be done in order to it.

[1.] Their understandings shall be enlightened; that is promised, v. 45, 46. It is written in the prophets, who spake of these things before, And they shall be all taught of God; this we find, Isa. 54. 13. and Jer. 41. 5. They shall all know me. Note, In order to our believing in Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we be taught of God; that is, First, That there be a state where we are not in possession of things concerning Christ; then, Secondly, That there be a state where there is a discovery of things concerning Christ, things which even nature teaches, but to bring us to Christ there is need of a higher light.
That there be a divine work wrought in us, enabling us to understand and receive these revealed truths, and the evidence of them. God, in giving us reason, teaches us more than the beasts of the earth; but in giving us faith, he teaches us more than the natural man. Thus all the church's children, all that are genuine, are taught of God; he hath undertaken their education; but then by way of inference from this, that every man that has heard and learned of the Father, comes to Christ, v. 45. 1. It is here implied that none will come to Christ but those that have heard and learned of the Father. We shall never be brought to Christ, but under a divine conduct; except God by his grace enlighten our minds, inform our judgments, and rectify our mistakes; and not only tell us, that we may hear, but teach us, that we may learn, the truth as it is in Jesus, we shall never be brought to believe in Christ. 2. That this divine teaching does so necessarily produce the faith of God's elect, that we may conclude that those who do not come to Christ, have never heard or learned of the Father, for, if they had, doubtless they would have come to Christ. In vain do men pretend to be taught of God, if they believe not in Christ, for he teaches no other lesson, Gal. 1. 8, 9. See how God deals with them, and in what manner he deals with them, with the cords of a man, opens the understanding first, and then by that in a regular way, influences the inferior faculties; thus he comes in by the door, but Satan, as a robber, climbs up another way. 

But lest any should dream of a visible appearance of God the Father to the children of men, (to teach them these things,) and entertain any gross conceptions about hearing and learning of the Father, he adds, and not that any man can see the Father; it is implied, nor can see him, with bodily eyes, or may expect to learn of him, as Moses did, to whom he spake face to face; but God, in enlightening men's eyes and teaching them, works in a spiritual way. The Father of spirits hath access to, and influence upon, men's spirits, undiscerned. These that have not seen his face, have felt his power. And yet there is one intimately acquainted with the Father, and yet he hath seen the Father. Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is of God in a peculiar manner, God of God, Light of Light; not only sent of God, but begotten of God before all worlds. (2.) It is the prerogative of Christ to have seen the Father, perfectly to know him and his counsels. (3.) Even that illumination which is preparative to faith, is conveyed to us through Christ. Those that learn of the Father, forasmuch as they cannot see him themselves, learn of Christ, who alone hath seen him. As all divine discoveries are made through Christ, so through him all divine powers are exerted. [2.] Their wills shall be bowed. If the soul of man had now its original rectitude, there needed no more to influence the will, than the illumination of the understanding; but in the depraved soul of fallen man there is a rebellion of the will against the right dictates of the understanding; a carnality of the soul is carnality to the divine light and law; it is therefore requisite that there be a work of grace wrought upon the will, which is here called drawing; (v. 44.) No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. The Jews murmured at the doctrine of Christ; not only would not receive it themselves, but were angry that others did; Christ overheard their secret whisperings, and said, (v. 45.) No man can come to me, for you lay the fault of your dislike of my doctrine one upon another, as if it is because you find it generally distasteful; no, it is owing to yourselves, and your own corrupt dispositions, which are such as amount to a moral impotency; your antipathies to the truths of God and prejudices against them are so strong, that nothing less than a divine power can conquer them. And this is the case of all mankind; "No man can come to me, can persuade himself to come up to the terms of the gospel, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him," v. 44. 

Observe, First, The nature of the work; it is drawing, which speaks not a force put upon the soul, whereby it is moved, but an inclination, whereby we are made willing, and a new bias given to the soul, by which it inclines to God. This seems to be more than a moral suasion, for by that it is in the power of man to draw; yet it is not to be called a physical impulse, for it lies out of the road of nature; but he that formed the spirit of man within him by his creating power, and fashioneth the hearts of men by his providential influence, knows how to new-mould the soul, and to alter its bent and temper, and make it conformable to himself and his own will, without doing any wrong to its natural liberty. It is such a drawing as works not only a compliance, but a cheerful compliance, a complacency; Draw us, and we will run after thee. Secondly, The necessity of it; no man, in this weak and helpless state, can come to Christ without it. As we cannot do any natural act without the concurrence of God, so we cannot do any act, morally good, without the influence of special grace, in which the new man lives, and moves, and has its being, as much as the mere man has in the divine providence. 

Thirdly, The Author of it; the Father, who hath sent me. The Father, having sent Christ, will succed him, for he would not send him on a fruitless errand. Christ having undertaken to bring souls to glory, the Father promises him, in order thereunto, to bring them to him, and so to give him possession of those whom he had given him a right to. God, having by promise given the kingdom of Israel to David; did at length draw the hearts of the people to him; so having sent Christ to save souls, he sends souls to him to be saved by him. 

Fourthly, The crown and perfection of this work; and I will raise him up at the last day. This is for two reasons: first, because Christ is worthy; and, secondly, because he includes all the intermediate and preparatory workings of divine grace. When he raise them up at the last day, he will put the last hand to his undertaking, will bring forth the toajstone. If he undertake this, surely he can do any thing, and will do everything, that is necessary in order to it. Let our expectations be carried out towards a happiness reserved for the last day, when all the years of time shall be fully and completely ended. 

[3.] Christ, having thus spoken of himself as the Bread of life, and of faith as the work of God, comes more particularly to show what of himself is this Bread, namely, his flesh, and that to believe, is to eat of that, v. 51—58. where he still prosecutes the metaphor of food. Observe, First, The preparation of this food; The bread that I will give is my flesh; (v. 51.) The flesh of the Son of man, and his blood, v. 55. His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed, v. 55. Secondly, The participation of this food; we must eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, v. 53 and again, v. 54. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood; and the same words, (v. 56, 57.) he that eateth me. This is certainly a parable, or figurative discourse, wherein the actions of the soul upon the things spiritual and divine, are represented by bodily actions on flesh and blood; which made the truths of Christ more intelligible to some, and less so to others, Mark 4. 12. Now let us see, 

1. How this discourse of Christ was liable to mistake and misconstruction, that men might see, and not embrace.
(1.) It was misconstrued by the carnal Jews, to whom it was first delivered; v. 52. They strive among themselves; they whispered in each other's ears their dissatisfaction; How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Christ spake (v. 51.) of giving his flesh for us, to suffer and die; but they, without due consideration, understood it of his giving it to us, to be eaten; which gave occasion to Christ to tell them, that, however what he said was otherwise intended, yet that is the truth; for in no such absurd thing (as rightly understood) as, prins facie—in the first instance, they took it to be.

(2.) It has been wretchedly misconstrued by the church of Rome for the support of their monstrous doctrine of Transubstantiation, which gives the lie to our senses, contradicts the nature of a sacrament, and overthrowes all convincing evidence. They, like these Jews here, understand it of a corporal and carnal eating of Christ's body, like Nicodemus, ch. 3. 4. The Lord's supper was not yet instituted, and therefore it could have no reference to that; it is a spiritual eating and drinking that is here spoken of, not a sacramental.

(3.) It is misunderstood by many ignorant, carnal people, who from hence infer that, if they take the sacrament in their flesh, they die, the true life of heaven; which as it makes many that are weak causeth them to wince the more, so it makes many that are wicked causeth them to have it. Let us see therefore,

2. How this discourse of Christ is to be understood.

(1.) What is meant by the flesh and blood of Christ. It is called, (v. 53.) The flesh of the Son of man, and his blood, his as Messiah and Mediator; the flesh and blood which he assumed in his incarnation, (Heb. 2. 14.) and which he gave up in his death and sufferings; my flesh which I will give to be crucified and slain. It is said to be given for the life of the world, that is, [1.] Instead of the life of the world, which was forfeited by sin, Christ gives his own flesh as a ransom or counter-price. Christ was our Saviour, bound body for body, (as we say,) and therefore his life must go for ours, that ours may be spared. Here am I, let these go their way. [2.] In order to the life of the world, to purchase a general offer of eternal life to all the world, and the special assurances of it to all believers. So that the flesh and blood of Christ are a token and denot of the Redeemer's incarnation and dying; Christ's redemption, the purchase and ransom of souls, is made by the blood of his body, and the redemption wrought out by him, with all the precious benefits of redemption; pardon of sin, acceptance with God, the adoption of sons, access to the throne of grace, the promises of the covenant, and eternal life; these are called the flesh and blood of Christ. First, because they are purchased by his flesh and blood, by the breaking of his body, and the shedding of his blood. He before compared the purchased privileges be denominated from the price that was paid for them, for it puts a value upon them; write upon them fretrim sanguinis—the price of blood. Secondly, Because they are meat and drink to our souls. Flesh with the blood was prohibited; (Gen. 9. 4.) but the privileges of the gospel are as flesh and blood to us, prepared for the nourishment of our souls. He even compares himself to bread, which is necessary food; here to flesh, which is delicious. It is a feast of fat things, Isa. 25. 6. The soul is satisfied with Christ as with marrow and fatness, Ps. 63. 5. It is meat indeed, and drink indeed; truly so, that is spiritually; so Dr. Whitby; as Christ is called the true Vine, or truly Meat, in opposition to the shows and shadows with which the Jews would satisfy us, John 8. 12. He which has no flesh or blood, its (as any) will; and if he has, it is, in Christ and his gospel are real supply and solid satisfaction; that is meat indeed, and drink indeed, which satiates and replenishes, Jer. 31. 25, 26.

(2.) What is meant by eating this flesh, and drinking this blood, which is so necessary and beneficial; it is certain that it means neither more nor less than believing in Christ. As we partake of meat and drink by eating and drinking, so we partake of Christ and his benefits by faith; and believing in Christ includes these four things, which eating and drinking do. [1.] It implies an appietite to Christ. This spiritual eating and drinking begins with hungering and thirsting after divine things. The soul, when it was no such absurd thing as [if rightly understood] as, prins facie—in the first instance, they took it to be.

This property of Christ to ourselves. Meat looked upon will not nourish us, but meat fed upon, and so made our own, and as it were one with us. We must so accept of Christ as to appropriate him to ourselves; see Lord and my God, ch. 28. [3.] A delight in Christ and his salvation. The doctrine of Christ crucified must be meat and drink to us, most pleasant and delightful. We must feast upon the dainties of the New Testament in the blood of Christ, taking as great a complacency in the methods which infinite wisdom has taken to redeem and save us, as ever we did in the most needful supplies or grateful delights of nature. [4.] Then a dependance from him, and a dependence upon him for the support and comfort of our spiritual life, and the strength, growth, and vigour of the new man. To feed upon Christ is to do all in his name, in union with him, and by virtue drawn from him; it is to live upon him as we do upon our meat. Our bodies are nourished by our food we cannot describe, nor tell that they are so we know and find; so is it with this spiritual nourishment. Our Saviour was so well pleased with this metaphor, (as very significant and expressive,) that, when afterward he would institute some outward sensible signs, by which to represent our communicatig the benefits of his death, he chose those of eating and drinking, and made them sacramental actions.

Thus has explained the general meaning of this part of Christ's discourse, the particulars are reducible to two heads.

First, The necessity of our feeding upon Christ; (v. 53.) Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. That is, 1. It is a certain sign that you have no spiritual life in you if you have no desire toward Christ, nor desire in Christ. If the soul does not hunger and thirst, certainly it does not live; it is a sign that we are dead indeed, if we are dead to such meat and drink as this. When artificial bees, that by curious springs were made to move and frce, wore to be distinguished from natural ones, (they say,) it was done by putting honey among them, which the natural bees only flocked to, but the artificial ones minded it not, for they had no life in them. 2. It is certain that you can have no spiritual life, unless you derive it from Christ by faith; separated from him you can do nothing. Faith in Christ is the primum vivens—the first living principle of grace; without it we have not the truth of spiritual life, nor any title to eternal life; our bodies may as well live without meat, as our souls without Christ.

Secondly, The benefit and advantage of it, in two things.

1. We shall be one with Christ, as our bodies are with our food when it is digested; (v. 56.) He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, that lives by faith in Christ crucified, (it is spoken of as a continued act,) he dwelleth in me, and I him. By faith we have a close and intimate union with Christ; he dwelleth in us, and we in him, John 17. 23, 24. I John 4. 17. 18.

24. Believers dwell in Christ as their strong hold or city of refuge; Christ dwells in them as the Master of the house, to rule it, and provide for it. Such
is the union between Christ and believers, that he 

sources in their griefs, and they share in his graces 

and joys; he sups with them upon their bitter herbs, 

and they with him upon his rich dainties. It is an 

inseparable union, like that between the body and 

the digested food, Rom. 8. 35. 1 John 4. 13. 

52. We shall rest, shall live by himself, as 

our bodies live by our food. (1. We shall live by 

him; (v. 57.) As the living Father hath sent me, 

and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even 

he shall live by me. We have here the series and 

order of the divine life. [1.] God as the living 

Father hath life in and of himself. I am that I am, 

is his name for ever. [2.] Jesus Christ, as Mediator, 

bears the Father's life in him, Acts 3. 15. (v. 5. 26.) but he has it of the Father; he that sent him, 

not only qualified him with that life which was 

necessary to so great an undertaking, but constituted 

him the Treasury of divine life to us; he breathed 

the second Adam the breath of spiritual lives, 

as into the first Adam the breath of natural lives. 

[3.] True believers receive this divine life by virtue 

of their union with Christ, which is inferred from 

the union between the Father and the Son, and, as it is 

compared to it, ch. 17. 21. For therefore he that 

eateth me, or feeds on me, even he shall live by me; 
those that live upon Christ, shall live by him. The 

life of believers is had from Christ; (ch. 1. 16.) it 

is had with Christ; (Col. 3. 4.) we live by him as 

the members by the head, the branches by the root; 

because he lives, we shall live also. (2. We shall 

live by him, (v. 54.) If thou eatest my flesh and drinkest my blood, as it is prepared in the 

gospel to be the food of souls, he hath eternal life, 

he hath it now, as v. 40. He hath that in him, 

which is eternal life begun; he hath the earnest and 

foretaste of it, and the hope of it; he shall live for 

ever, v. 54. His happiness shall run parallel with 

the longest line of eternity itself. 

The history by chance; (v. 54.) If thou eateth my 

flesh and drinketh my blood, as it is prepared in the 

gospel to be the food of souls, he hath eternal life, 

as it is prepared in the gospel to be the food of souls, he hath eternal life, 

he hath it now, as v. 40. He hath that in him, 

which is eternal life begun; he hath the earnest and 

foretaste of it, and the hope of it; he shall live for 

ever, v. 54. His happiness shall run parallel with 

the longest line of eternity itself. 

To assure you that the discourse was fairly represented, 

he appeals to the synagogue at Capernaum, where it 

might be examined. 

60. Many therefore of his disciples, when 

they had heard this, said, This is an hard 
saying: who can hear it? 61. When 

Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth 

this offend you? 62. What and if ye shall 

see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? 63. It is the Spirit that 

quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: 

the words that I speak unto you, they are 
spirit, and they are life. 64. But there are 

some of you that believe not. For Jesus 

knew from the beginning who they were that 

believed not, and who should betray him. 65. And he said, Therefore said I 

unto you. That no man can come unto me, 

except it were given unto him of my Fa-

ther. 66. From that time many of his dis-
ciples went back, and walked no more with 

him. 67. Then said Jesus unto the 
twelve, Will ye also go away? 68. Then 

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom 

shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal 

life. 69. And we believe and are 

sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of 

the living God. 70. Jesus answered them, 

Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of 

you is a devil? 71. He spake of Judas 

Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was 

that should betray him, being one of the 
twelve.

We have here an account of the effects of Christ's 
discourse, some were offended, and others edified by 

it; some driven from him, and others brought nearer 
to him.

1. To some it was a savour of death unto death; 

not only to the Jews, who were professed enemies 
to him and his doctrine, but even to many of his 
disciples, such as were disciples at large, who were his 

frequent hearers, and followed him in public; a 
mixed multitude, like those among Israel, that began 

all the discontent. Now here we have, 

1. Their murmuring at the doctrine they heard; 

(v. 60.) not a few, but many of them were offended 
at it. Of the several sorts of ground that received 

the seed, only one in four brought forth fruit. See 

what they say to it; (v. 60.) This is a hard saying, 

who can hear it? (1.) They do not like it them-

selves. "What stuff is this? Eat the flesh and 

drink the blood of the Son of man! If it be under-

stood figuratively, it is not intelligible; if literally, 

not practicable. What! must we turn Cambiards? 

Can we not be religious, but we must be barbarous?" 

Si christiani adorant quod commendat, (said 

Averroes,) sit anima mea cum philosophis—if 

christians adore what they eat, my mind shall continue with 

the philosophers. Now, when they found it a hard 
saying, if they had humbly begged of Christ to have 

declared unto them that parable, he would have 

opened it, and their understandings too, for the 

book will he teach his way but they were not willing 

that any would hear; they would not lose this 

pretence for rejecting them—that they were hard sayings. (2.) They think it 

impossible that any one else should like it; "Who 

can hear it? Surely none can." Thus the scoffers at 

religion are ready to undertake that all the intel-

ligent part of mankind concur with them; they 

conclude with great assurance that no man of sense 

will admit the doctrine of Christ, nor any man of 

spirit submit to his laws; because they cannot hear to be 

so tutored, so tied up, themselves, they think none 

else can; Who can hear it? Thanks be to God, 

thousands have heard these sayings of Christ, and 
have found them not only easy, but pleasant, as their 

necessary food.

2. Christ's animadversions upon their murmurs. 

(1.) He well enough knew their murmuring, v. 61. Their cavils were secret in their own breasts, 
or whispered among themselves in a corner. But, 

[1.] Christ knew them; he saw them, he heard 

them. Note, Christ takes notice not only of the 
bold and open defiance that are done to his name 

and glory by daring sinners, but of the secret slights 

that are put upon his doctrine by carnal professors; 

he knows that which the fool saith in his heart, and 

cannot for shame speak out; he observes how his 
doctrine is revenged by these to whom it is preached; 

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who rejoice in it, and who murmur at it; who are reconciled to it, and bow before it, and who quarrel with it, and rebel against it, though ever so secretly. [2.] He knew it in himself, not by any information given him, or any external indication of the thing, but by his own divine discerner. He knew it not as to things by a divine revelation made to him, (that which the prophets desired to know, was sometimes hid from them, as 2 Kings 4. 27.) but by a divine knowledge in him. He is that essential Word that discerens the thoughts of the heart, Heb. 4. 12, 13. Thoughts are words to Christ; we should therefore take heed not only what we say and do, but that the thoughts are good.

2. He well knew how to answer them; “Dost this offend you? Is this a stumbling-block to you?” See how people by their own willful mistakes create offences to themselves; they take offence where there is none given, and make it even there where there is nothing to make it of. Note, We may justly wonder that so much offence should be taken at the doctrine of Christ; for so little cause. Christ speaks of it here with wonder? “Dost this offend you? How unreasonable are your quarrels.”

Now, in answer to those who condemned his doctrine as intricate and obscure, (Sir non vix intelligi, debeo neglegi—If you are unwilling to be understood, you ought to be neglected.) (1.) He gives them a hint of his ascension into heaven, and he would give them inwrought evidence of the truth of his doctrine; (v. 62.) What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before, and what then? [1.] “If I should tell you of that, surely it would much more offend you, and you would think my pretensions too high indeed. If this be so hard a saying, that you cannot hear it, how will you digest it when I tell you of my returning from heaven, when I am come down to you?” So ch. 1. 51. Those who make up to themselves difficulties, should consider how they will get over greater. [2.] “When you see the Son of man ascend, this will much more offend you, for then my body will be less capable of being eaten by you in that gross sense wherein you now understand it;” so Dr. Whitby. Or, [3.] “When you see that, or hear it from those that shall see it, surely then you will be satisfied. You shall have a sense much upon your hand, which come down from heaven, for that was it that you quarrell’d with;” (v. 42.) but will you think so when you see me return to heaven? If he ascended, certainly he descended, Eph. 4. 9, 10. Christ did often refer himself thus to subsequent proofs, as ch. 1. 50, 51.—2. 14. Matt. 12. 40.—26. 64. Let us wait a while, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and then we shall see that there was no reason to be offended at any of Christ’s sayings.

(2.) He gives them a general key to this, and all such parabolical discourses, teaching them that they are to be understood spiritually, and not after a corporal and carnal manner; (v. 63.) It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. As it is in the natural body, the animal spirits quicken and animate the soul, but the food thereof will not quicken, much less profit; food would profit nothing; (what would the body be the better for bread, if it were not quickened and animated by the spirit?) so it is with the soul. [1.] The bare participation of ordinances, unless the spirit of God work with them, and quicken the soul by them, profiteth nothing; the word and ordinances, if the Spirit work with them, are as food to a living man; they are not, and cannot be food to a man. Even the flesh of Christ, the Sacrifice for sin, will avail us nothing unless the blessed Spirit quicken our souls thereby, and in force the influences of his death upon us, till we by his grace are planted together in the likeness of it. [2.] The doctrine of eating Christ’s flesh, and drinking his blood, if it be understood literally, profiteth nothing, but rather leads us into mistakes and prejudices; but the spiritual sense and meaning of it quicken the soul, make it alive and lively; for so it follows, The words thus, I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. The literal sense of them is not what we say, but to believe that Christ died for me, and to derive from that doctrine strength and comfort in my approaches to God, my opposition of sin, and preparations for a future state; this is the spirit and life, of that saying, and construing it thus, it is an excellent saying. The reason why men mistake Christ’s sayings, is, because they mistake them. The literal sense of them is not what we say, but the spiritual wiser for it, but the spiritual meaning is instructive. [3.] The flesh, that is, those that are in the flesh, (so some understand it,) that are under the power of a carnal mind, they profit nothing by Christ’s discourses; but the Spirit, that is, those that have the Spirit, that are spiritual, they are quickened and enlivened by them; for they are received ad modum resultantis—so as to correspond with the state of the receiver’s mind. They found fault with Christ’s sayings, whereas the fault was in themselves; it is only to sensual minds that spiritual things are senseless and senseless, spiritual minds receive them; see 1 Cor. 2. 14, 15.

(3.) He gives them an intimation of his knowledge of them, and that he had expected no better from them than this; “I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it,” Matt. 5. 17. He knew why the word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith, Heb. 4. 2. They did not believe him to be the Messiah, else they would have acquiesced in the doctrine he preached, and not have quarrelled with it, though there were some things in it dark and hard to be understood. Open, open, open your ears. Young beginners in learning must take things upon their first entrance, and not decline from the beginning of their acquaintance with him, and attendance on him, when they were in the hottest pang of their zeal, who were sincere, as Nathanael, (ch. 1. 47.) and who were not. Before they distinguished themselves by an overt act, he could infallibly distinguish who believed, and who did not; whose love was counterfeit, and whose cordial. We may gather hence, 1. That the apostacy of these who have long made a plausible profession of religion, is a proof of the corruption of their hearts, and that from the beginning they believed not; but is not a proof of the possibility of the total and final apostasy of any true believers; such revolts are not to be called the fall of real saints, but the discovery of pretended ones; see 1 John 2. 19. Stella cadens non stella fuit—The star that fell never was a star. 2. That it is Christ’s prerogative to know the heart; he knows a certain way of that. Abraham not only discerned in their profession, and yet continues them room in his church, the use of his ordinances, and the credit of his name, and does not discover them in this world, unless they by their own wickedness discover themselves: because such is the constitution of his visible church, and the discovering day is
yet to come; but if we pretend to judge men's hearts, we step into Christ's throne, and anticipate his judgment. We are often deceived in men, and see cause to change our sentiments of them; but this we are sure of, that Christ knows all men, and his judgment is according to truth.

[3.] The reason why they did not believe his prophecy, because the arm of the Lord was not revealed unto them; (v. 22.) As he saith unto them, that no man can come to me, except it were given unto him of my Father; referring to v. 44. Christ therefore could not but know who believed, and who did not, because faith is the gift and work of God, and all his Father's gifts and works could not but be known to him, for they all passed through his hands. There he had said that none could come to him unless the Father had given him to them, and here he saith, except it were given him of my Father: which shows that God draws souls by giving them grace and strength, and a heart to come; without which, such is the moral impotency of man in his fallen state that he cannot come.

3. We have seen their final apostasy from Christ hereupon; (v. 66.) From that time many of his disciples went back; and hence we see why they had so often before been put back. When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the word and works of Christ, and conceive a secret dislike, and are willing to hear insinuations tending to their reproach, we are then entering into temptation; it is as the letting forth of water, it is looking back, which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back; therefore Obata principalis—Take heed therefore unto yourselves. (1.) See here the backsliding of these disciples. Many of them went back to their houses, and families, and callings, which they had left for a time to follow him; went back, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize; went back, as Orpah did, to their people, and to their gods, Ruth 1:13. They had entered themselves in Christ's school, but they went back, did not only play truant for once, but took leave of him and his doctrine for ever. Note, The apostacy of Christ's disciples from him, though really a strange thing, yet has been such a common thing, that we need not think strange at it. Here were many that went back. It is often so; when some backside, many backside with them; the disease is infectious.

(2.) The occasion of this backsliding: From that time many of his disciples went back; and hence we see why they had so often before been put back. When we admit into our minds hard thoughts of the word and works of Christ, and conceive a secret dislike, and are willing to hear insinuations tending to their reproach, we are then entering into temptation; it is as the letting forth of water, it is looking back, which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will end in drawing back; therefore we should use great caution in attending to what we hear and to what we see. This which is the undoubted word and truth of Christ, must be faithfully delivered, whoever are offended at it. Men's humours must be captivated to God's word, and not that accommodated to men's humours.

(3.) The degree of their apostacy; They walked no more with him, returned no more to him, and attended no more upon his ministry. It is hard for the outward change to be so sudden as this; it seems as if they had tasted the good word of God, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, Heb. 6:4—6.

II. This discourse was to others a savour of life unto life. Many went back, but, thanks be to God, all did not; even then the twelve stuck to him. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet the foundation of God stands sure. Observe here,

1. The affectionate question which Christ put to the twelve; (v. 67.) Will ye also go away? He saith nothing to them who went back. If the unbelieving depart, let them depart; it was no great loss of those whom he never had; light come, light go; but he takes this occasion to speak to the twelve, to confirm them, and by trying their steadfastness the more to fix them. Will ye also go away? (1.) "It is at your choice whether ye will or no; if ye will forsake me, now is the time when so many do: it is an hour of temptation; if you will go back, go yet, you live, you are not yet cut off from the church; no, your discipline is but against their wills; his soldiers are volunteers, not pressed men. The twelve had now had time enough to try how they liked Christ and his doctrine, and, that none of them might afterward say that they were trepanned into discipleship, and, if it were to do again, they would not do it, he here allows them a power of revocation, and leaves them at their discretion; as he saith, if you will go, go at your peril, if you do go away." If there were any secret inclination in the heart of any of them to depart from him now, he stops it with this awakening question, Will ye also go away? Think not that ye hang at as loose an end as they did, and may go away as easily as they can. They have not been so intimate with me as ye have been, nor received so many favours from me. Thou askest not, am I your father? Remember your character, and say, Whatever others do, we will never go away. Should such a man as I die?" Neh. 6. 11. Note, The nearer we have been to Christ, and the longer we have been with him, the more mercies we have received from him, and the more engagements we have laid ourselves under to him, the greater will be our sin if we depart from him. (2.) I have reason to think you are not. Will ye also go away? No, I have faster hold of you than so: I hope better things of you; ( Heb. 6. 9.) for we are they that have continued with me," Luke 22. 28. When the apostacy of some is a grief to the Lord Jesus, the constancy of others is so much the more his honour, and he is pleased with it accordingly. Christ and believers know one another too well to part upon every displeasure.

2. The believing reply which Peter, in the name of the rest, made to this question, v. 68, 69. Christ put the question to them, as Joshua put Israel to their choice whom they should serve, with design to draw out from them a promise to adhere to him, and it had the like effect. Nay, but we will serve the Lord. Peter was upon all occasions the mouth of the rest, not so much because he had more of his Master's heart than they, but because he had the tongue of his own; and what he said was sometimes approved, and sometimes reprimanded; (Matth. 16. 17, 23.) the common lot of those who are swift to speak. This here was well said, admirably well and, probably, he said it by the direction, and with the express assent, of his fellow-disciples; at least, he knew their mind, and spoke the sense of them all, and did not except Judas, for we must hope the best. (1.) Here is a good resolution to adhere to Christ, and so expressed, as to intimate that they would not entertain the least thought of leaving him; "Lord, to whom shall we go? It was folly to go from thee, unless we knew where to mend ourselves; so, Lord, we like our choice too well to change." Note, Those who leave Christ, would do well to consider whom they will go to, and whether they can expect better; and whether, when they are cast out, they will be welcomed; Ps. 73. 57, 28. Hos. 2. 9. "Whither shall we go? Shall we make our court to the world? It will certainly deceive us. Shall we return to sin? It will certainly destroy us. Shall we leave Christ as their Guide, for they can never have any better. Shall we go to the heathen philosophers, and become their disciples? They are become vair
in their imagination, and, professing themselves to be wise in other things, are become fools in religion. Shall we go to the Scribes and Pharisees, and sit at their feet? What good can they do us, who have made void the commandments of God by their traditions? Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back again to thee. Therefore, if ever we find the way to happiness, it must be in following thee. [Note,Christ's holy religion is the true, the only, the advantage, with which he is credited in the gospel; and therefore it is certain, as with others, for those who follow it, it will be seen how far it excels them all. Let them who find fault with this religion, before they quit it, find a better. A divine Teacher we must have; can we find a better than Christ? A divine revelation we cannot be without; if the scripture be not such a one, where else may we look for it? [20] Here is a good reason for this resolution. It will not the mending resolve of a blind affection, but the result of mature deliberation. The disciples were resolved never to go away from Christ.

[1.] Because of the advantage they promised themselves by him; Thou hast the words of eternal life. They themselves did not fully understand Christ's discourse, for as yet the doctrine of the cross was not revealed unto them. [Note, Many were satisfied that he had the words of eternal life, that is, First, That the word of his doctrine showed the way to eternal life, set it before us, and directed us what to do, that we might inherit it. Secondly, That the word of his doom and determination must confer eternal life. His having the words of eternal life, is the same with his having power to give eternal life to them that believe; (John 17:2.) He had in the foregoing discourse assured eternal life to his followers; these disciples fastened upon that plain saying, and therefore resolved to stick to him, when the others overlooked that, and fastened upon the hard sayings, and therefore forsakethim. Though we cannot account for every mystery, every obscurity, in Christ's doctrine, yet we know, in the general, that it is the word of eternal life, and therefore must live and die by it; for if we forsake Christ, we forsake our own mercies.

[2.] Because of the assurance they had concerning him; (v. 69.) We know, and are sure, that thou art that Christ. If he be the promised Messiah, he must bring in an everlasting righteousness, (Dan. 9. 24.) and therefore has the words of eternal life, for righteousness is the glory of his kingdom, (Revel. 11. 15.) to preserve, First, The doctrine they believed; that this Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers, and expected by them, and that he was not a mere man, but the Son of the living God, the same to whom God had said, Thou art my Son, Ps. 2. 7. In times of temptation to apostasy, it is good to have recourse to our first principles, and stick to them; and if we faithfully abide by that which is just disputé, we shall be the better able both to find and to keep the truth in matters of doubtful disputation. Secondly, The degree of their faith; it rose up to a full assurance; We are sure. We have known it by experience; that is the best knowledge. We should take occasion from others' wavering to be so much the more established, especially in that which is the most disputé, and are to have the gospel of Christ, as boldly to venture our souls upon it, knowing whom we have believed, then, and not till then, we shall be willing to venture everything else for it.

3. The melancholy remark which our Lord Jesus made upon this reply of Peter's; (v. 70, 71.) Happy art thou, Peter, for thou hast the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and what thou shalt bind upon earth shall be done in heaven, and what thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven. Here, Peter is to be Jesus' executor in the church. We have his discourse with the Jews. (1.) Concerning his doctrine, v. 16., 18. (2.) Concerning the crime of blasphemy, brought to his charge, v. 19., 24. (3.) Concerning the apostleship which he was to inherit, v. 22., 23. (4.) Concerning the coming of the Son of man, v. 25., 26. (5.) Concerning the coming of the Son of man, v. 25., 26. On the last day of the feast. (1.) His gracious invitation to poor souls to come to him, v. 37, 39. (2.) The reception that it met with. The chief priests would have brought him into trouble for it, but were first,
disappointed by their officers, (v. 43., 49) and then silenced by one of their own court, v. 50., 53.

1 A FTER these things, Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. 2. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judah, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou dost. 4. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. 5. For neither did his brethren believe in him. 6. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet full come. 9. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. 10. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. 11. Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12. And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. 13. Howbeit no man spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews.

We have here,
I. The reason given why Christ spent more of his time in Galilee than in Judea; (v. 1.) because the Jews, the people in Judea and Jerusalem, sought to kill him, for curing the impotent man on the sabbath-day, ch. 5. 16. They thought they were the death of him, either by a popular tumult, or by a legal prosecution: in consideration of this, he kept at a distance in another part of the country, very much out of the lines of Jerusalem's communication. It is not said, He durst not, but, He would not, walk in Jewry: it was not through fear and cowardice that he declined it, but in prudence, because his hour was not yet come.

Note, 1. Gospel-light is justly taken away from those that endeavour to extinguish it, and blow it out. Christ will withdraw from those that drive him from them, and hide his face from those that spit in it, and justly shut up his bowels from those that spurn at them. 2. In times of imminent peril, it is not only allowable, but advisable, to withdraw, and abstain for our own safety and preservation, and to choose the service of those places which are least perilous, Matth. 16. 23. They, and not till then, we are called to expose and lay down our lives, when we cannot save them without sin. 3. If the providence of God casts persons of merit into places of obscurity and little note, it must not be thought strange, it was the lot of our Master himself; he who was fit to have sat in the highest of Messes' seats, willingly walked in Galilee among the ordinary sort of people. Observe, He did not sit still in Galilee, nor bury himself alive there, but walked; he went about doing good. When we cannot do what and where we would, we must do what and where we can.

II. The approach of the feast of tabernacles, (v. 2.) one of the three solemnities which called for the personal attendance of all the males at Jerusalem; see the institution of it, Lev. 23., 34, &c. and the revival of it after a long disuse, Neh. 8., 14. It was intended to be both a memorial of the tabernacle-state of Israel in the wilderness, and a figure of the tabernacle-state of God's spiritual Israel in this world. This feast, which was instituted so many hundreds years before, was still religiously observed. Note, Divine institutions are never antiquated, nor go out of date, by length of time: nor must wilderness-mercies ever be forgotten. But it is called the Jews' feast, because it was now shortly to be abolished, as a mere Jewish thing, and left to them that served the tabernacle.

1. Christ's discourse with his brethren; some of his kindred, whether by his mother or his supposed father, is not certain; but they were such as pretended to have an interest in him, and therefore interposed to advise him in his conduct. And observe,
1. Their ambition and vain-glory in urging him to make a more public appearance than he did, "Depart hence," (said they,) "and go into Judea." (v. 5.) where they will make a better figure than you can here." Two reasons they give for this advice.

(1.) That it would be an encouragement to those in and about Jerusalem, who had a respect for him; for, expecting his temporal kingdom, the royal seat of which they concluded must be at Jerusalem, they would have discipies there to be particularly consecrated, and thought the time spent among the Galileans, especially what was spent in their throwing away, and his miracles turning to no account unless they at Jerusalem saw them. Or, "That thy disciples, all of them in general, who will be gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast, may see thy works, and not, as here, a few at one time, and a few at another."

(2.) That it would be for the advancing of his own name and honour; There is no man that does any thing in secret, if he himself seeks to be known. They take it for granted, that Christ sought to make known himself, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles; "If thou do these things, if thou be so well able to gain the applause of the people, and the approbation of the rulers, by thy miracles, venture abroad, and show thyself to the world. Supported by these credentials, thou canst not fail of acceptance, and therefore it is high time to set up for an interest, and think of being great."

Now one would not think there were any harm in this, and yet the evangelist notes it as an evidence of their infidelity, for neither did his brethren believe in him; (v. 5.) if they had, they would not have said this. Observe, [1.] It was an honour to be of the kindred of Christ, but no saving honour; they that hear his word and keep it are the kindred of values. Surely grace runs in blood in the world, when not in that of Christ's family. [2.] It was a sign that Christ did not aim at any secular interest, for then his kindred would have struck in with him, and he would have secured them first. [3.] There were those who were akin to Christ according to the flesh, who did believe in him, (three of the twelve were his brethren,) and yet others, as nearly allied to him as they, did not believe. Or, Many that have the same external privileges and advantages, do not make the same use of them.

But what was there amiss in this advice which they gave him? I answer, First, It was a piece of presumption for them to prescribe to Christ, and to teach him what measures to take: it was a sign
that they did not believe him able to guide them, when they did not think him sufficient to guide himself. Secondly. They discovered a great carelessness of his safety, when they would have him go to Judea, where they knew the Jews sought to kill him. They that believed in him, and loved him, dissuaded him from Judea, ch. 11. 8. Thirdly, Some think they hoped that if his miracles were wrought at Jerusalem, the Pharisees and rulers would try them, and discover some cheat in them, which would justify their unbelief. So Dr. Whitby. Fourthly, Perhaps they were weary of his company in Galilee, (for are not these that speak, Galileans?) and this was, in effect, a desire that he would depart out of their coasts. Fifthly, They causelessly impute that he neglected his disciples, and denied them such a share of his works as they ardently made in the way of support of their faith. Sixthly, They tacitly reproach him as mean-spirited, that he durst not enter the lists with the great men, nor trust himself upon the stage of public action, which, if he had any thing of courage and a great soul, he would do, and not sneak thus and skulk in a corner; thus Christ's humility, and his humiliation, and the small figure which he there made, is usually made in the way of reproach have it often been turned to the reproach of both him and his humility. Seventhly, They seem to question the truth of the miracles he wrought, in saying, "If thou do these things; if they will bear the test of a public scrutiny, in the courts above, produce them there." Eightly, They think Christ altogether such a one as themselves, as subject as they to the politics of the world, and as desirous as they to make a fair show in the flesh; whereas he sought not honour from men. Ninthly, Self was at the bottom of all; they hoped, if he would make himself as great as he might, they, being his kinsmen, should share in his honour, and have respect paid them for his sake. Note, 1. Many carnal people go to public ordinances, to worship at the feast, only to show themselves, and all their care is to make a good appearance, to present themselves handsonely to the world. 2. Many that seem to seek Christ's honour, do really therein seek their own, and make it serve a turn for themselves. 2. The prudence and humility of our Lord Jesus, which appeared in his answer to the advice his brethren gave him, v. 6—8. Though there were so many base insinuations in it, he answered them meekly and mildly, in such a manner that which is said, that reason, should be answered without passion; we should learn of our Master to reply with meekness even to that which is most imperious and importunate; and where it is easy to find much amiss, to seem not to see it, and wink at the affront. They expected Christ's company with them to the feast, perhaps hoping he would bear their charges. But, 1. He shows the difference between himself and them, in two things. [1.] His time was set, so was not theirs; My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready. Understand it of the time of his going up to this feast. It was an indifferent thing to them when they went, for they had nothing of moment to do, either where they were, to detain them there, or where they were going, to hasten them there. [2.] He knew very well that most of Christ's time was precious, and its own particular business allotted to it. He had some work yet to be done in Galilee before he left the country: in the harmony of the gospels betwixt this motion made by his kindred and his going up to this feast, comes in the story of his sending forth his seventy disciples, which was an affair of very great consequence; his time is not yet; for that must be done first. Those who live useless lives have their time always ready, they can come and go when they please; but those whose time is filled up with duty, will often find themselves straitened, and they have not yet time for that which others can do at any time. Those who are made the servants of God, as all men are, and who have made themselves the servants of all, as all useful men have, must not expect nor covet to be masters of their own time. The confinement of business is a thousand times better than the liberty of idleness. Or, it may be meant of the time of his appearing publicly in Jerusalem; Christ, who knows all men, and all things, knew that the best and most proper time for it would be about the middle of the feast. We, who are ignorant and short-sighted, are apt to prescribe to him, and to think he should deliver his people, and so show himself now, just now; the present time is just now, if we are the proper judges, and, it may be, his time is not yet come; his people were not yet ready for deliverance, nor his enemies ripe for ruin; let us therefore wait with patience for his time, for all he doth, will be most glorious in its season. 2. His life was sought, so was not theirs, v. 7. They, in showing themselves to the world, did not expose themselves. The Pharisees and rulers hate you, for ye are of the world, its children, it speaks, and in with its interests; and, no doubt, the world will love its own, see ch. 15. 19. Unholy souls, whom the holy God cannot love, the world that lies in wickedness cannot hate; but he, in showing himself to the world, laid himself open to the greatest danger; for me it hateth, Christ was not only not afraid of the inconsiderable in the world. (The world knew him not,) but hated, as if he had been a useful to the world; thus ill was he required for his love to the world; reigning sin is a rooted antipathy and enmity to Christ. But why did the world hate Christ? What evil had he done it? Had he, like Alexander, under colour of conquering it, laid it waste? "No, but because" (saith he) I testify of it, that the works of it are evil." Note, First, The works of an evil world are evil works; as the tree is, so are the fruits; it is a dark world, and an apostate world, and its works works of darkness and rebellion. Secondly, Our Lord Jesus, both by himself and by his ministers, did and will both discover and testify against the evil works of this wicked world. Thirdly, It is a great unseasiness and provocation to the Christ to be convicted of the world. He is ready for the honour of virtue and piety, that those who are impious and vicious, do not care for hearing of it, for their own consciences make them ashamed for the turpitude there is in sin, and afraid of the punishment that follows after sin. Fourthly, Whatever is pretended, the real cause of the world's enmity to the gospel, is, the testimony it bears against sin and sinners. Christ's witnesses by their declamations and conversation torment them that dwell on the earth, and therefore are treated so barbarously, Rev. 11. 10. But it is better to incur the world's hatred by our testifying against its wickedness, than gain its good will by going down the stream with it. 2. He dismisses them, with a design to stay behind for some time in Galilee; (v. 8.) Go ye up to this feast, not yet. [1.] He allows their going to the feast, though he did not allow them to stay there. This is not hypocritical in it. Note, Even those who go not to ordinances with right affections and sincere intentions, must not be hindered or discouraged from going; who knows but they may be wroght upon there? [2.] He denies them his company when they went to the feast, because they were carnal and hypocritical. Those who go to ordinances for ostentation, or to serve some secular purposes, without Christ, and will speed accordingly. How sad is the condition of that man, though he reckon
himself akin to Christ, to whom he saith, "Go up, to such an ordinance, Go pray, Go hear the word, Go receive the sacrament, but I go not up with thee? Go thou and appear before God, but I will not appear for thee," as Exod. 33. 1, 3. But if the presence of Christ go not with us, to what purpose should we go up? Go ye up, I go not up. When we are going to do anything coming from God, let us be careful what company we have and choose, and to avoid that which is vain and carnal, lest the coal of good affections be quenched by corrupted communication. I will not go up yet to this feast; he does not say, I will not go up at all, but not yet. There may be reason for deferring a particular duty, which yet must not be wholly omitted or laid aside. 9. If there be any, My time is not yet full come. Note, Our Lord Jesus is very exact and punctual in knowing and keeping his time, and as it was the time fixed, so it was the best time.

3. Christ's continuance in Galilee till his full time was come, v. 9. He, saying these things to them, (πας ἡμῖν ἐν αὐτῷ) abide still in Galilee; because of this discourse he continued there; for, (1.) He had no mind to seek honour from men, nor go along with those who put him upon making a figure; he would not seem to countenance the temptation. (2.) He would not depart from his own purpose. He had said upon a clear foresight, and a mature deliberation, that he would not go up yet to this feast, and therefore he abode still in Galilee. It becomes the followers of Christ to endeavour, and not to use lightness with those whom yet we should decline an intimate acquaintance and converse with; for the blessing of ordinances depends upon the grace of God, and not upon the grace of our fellow-worshippers. His carpenter went up first, and then he went. Note, In the external performances of religion it is possible that formal hypocrites may get the start of those that are sincere. Many come forward, and celebrate divine service with show and story, and go thence unjustified, as he, Luke 10. 10. It is not who comes first, that will be the question, but, Who comes fittest? If we bring our hearts with us, it is no matter who gets before us.

(2.) How he went, 2. in secret— as if he were hiding himself; not openly, but as it were in secret, rather for fear of giving offence, than of receiving reproaches. He went up to the feast, because it was an opportunity of honouring God and doing good; but he went up as it were in secret, because he would not provoke the government. Note, Provided the work of God be done effectually, it is best done when it is done with least noise. The kingdom of God needs not come with observation, Luke 17. 20. We may do the work of God privately, and yet not do it deviably.

4. The great expectation that there was of him among the Jews at Jerusalem, v. 11—13. Having formerly come up to the feasts, and signified himself by the miracles he wrought, he had made himself the Subject of much discourse and observation. (1.) They could not but think of him; (v. 11.) The Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? [1.] The common people longed to see him there, that they might have his curiosity gratified with the sight of his person and miracles. They did not think it worth while to go to him into Galilee, though, if they had, they would not have lost their labour, but they hope the feast will bring him to Jerusalem, and then they shall see him. If an opportunity of acquaintance with Christ come to their door, they can like it well enough. They sought him at the feast. When we attend upon God in his holy ordinances, we should seek Christ in them, seek him at the gospel-feasts. Those who would see Christ at a feast, must seek him there. Or, (2.) Perhaps it was his enemies that were thus waiting an opportunity to seize him, and, if possible, to give an effectual stop to his progress. They said, Where is he? [2. ]—Where is that fellow? Thus scornfully and contemptibly do they speak of him. Or it intimates how full their hearts were with thoughts of him, and their town with talk of him, of whom they needed not name him. When they should have welcomed the feast as an opportunity of serving God, they were glad of it as an opportunity of persecuting Christ. Thus Saul hoped to slay David at the new moon, 1 Sam. 20. 27. Those who seek opportunity to sin in solemn assemblies for religious worship, profane God's ordinances to the last degree, and publicly mock him under (though in) the vail; it is like striking within the very heart of the court.

(2.) The people differed much in their sentiments concerning him; (v. 12.) There was much murmuring, or muttering rather, among the people concerning him. The anxiety of the rulers against Christ, and their inquiries after him, made him to be so much the more talked of and observed among the people. This ground the gospel of Christ has grown on by the opposition made to it, that it has been the more inquired into, and by being every where spoken against, it has come to be every where spoken of; and by that means has been spread the further, and the merits of his cause have been the more searched into. This murmuring was not against Christ, but concerning him; some murmured at the rulers, because they did not countenance and encourage him; others murmured at him, because they did not believe and restrain him. Some murmured that he had sought an interest in Galilee; others, that he had so little interest in Jerusalem. Note, Christ and his religion have been, and will be, the subject of much controversy and debate, Luke 12. 51, 52. If all would agree to entertain Christ as they ought, there would be perfect peace; but when some receive the light, and others resolve against it, there will be murmuring.

The Roman Empire, which was then the government, and dry, lay quiet; but when it was said unto them, Live, there was a noise and a shaking, Ezek. 57. 7. But the noise and encounter of liberty and business are preferable, surely, to the silence and agreement of a prison.

Now what were the sentiments of the people concerning him? [3.] Some said, He is a good Man. This was a truth, but it was far short of being the whole truth. He was not only a good Man, but more than a man, he was the Son of God. Many who have no ill thoughts of Christ, have yet low thoughts of him, and scarcely honour him, even when they speak well of him, because they do not say enough; yet indeed it was his honour, and the reproach of these who persecuted him, that even they who would not believe low to be the Messiah, could not but own he was a good Man.

[2.] Others said, Now, but he deceiveth the people; if that had been true, he had been a very bad man. The doctrine he preached, was sound, and could not be contested; his miracles real, and could not be disproved; his conversation manifestly holy and good; and yet it must be taken for granted, notwithstanding, that there is some undiscovered cheat at the bottom, because it is the interest of the chief
priests to oppose him and ran him down. Such murmuring as there was among the Jews concerning Christ, there is still among us: the Socinians say, He is a good Man, and further they say not; the deists will not allow this, but say, He deceived the people. Thus some diminish him, others abuse him, but great is the truth.  

[3.] They were frightened by their superiors from speaking much of him; (v. 13.) No man spake openly of him, for fear of the Jews. Either, First, They durst not openly speak well of him. While any one was at liberty to censure and reproach him, none durst vindicate him. Or, Secondly, They durst not speak at all of him openly. Because nothing could justly be said against him, they would not suffer any thing to be said of him. It was a crime to make him. Thus many have aimed to suppress truth, under colour of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.  

14. Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16. Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. 18. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that speaketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. 19. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? 20. The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? 21. Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. 22. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath-day circumcise a man. 23. If a man on the sabbath-day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day? 24. Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. 25. Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? 26. But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? 27. Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. 28. Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. 29. But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me. 30. Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. 31. And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done? 32. The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. 33. Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. 34. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come. 35. Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36. What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?  

Here is,  
I. Christ's public preaching in the temple; (v. 14.) He went up into the temple, and taught, according to his custom when he was at Jerusalem. His business was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and he did it in every place of conourse. His sermon was the gospel. Probably, it was to the same purport with the sermons he had preached in Galilee, which were recorded by the other evangelists. For the gospel is the same to the plain and to the poltie. But that which is observable here, is, that it was about the midst of the feast; the fourth or fifth day of the eighth. Whether he did not come up to Jerusalem till the middle of the feast, or whether he came up at the beginning, but kept private till now, is not certain. But, Query, Why did he not go to the temple sooner, to preach? Answer, 1. Because the people would have more leisure to hear him, and it might be hoped, would he better disposed to hear him, when they had spent some days in their booths, as they did at the feast of tabernacles. 2. Because he would choose to appear then, when both his friends and his enemies had done looking for him; and so give a specimen of the method he would observe in his appearances, which is to come at midnight, Matt. 25. 6. But why did he appear thus publicly now? Surely it was to shame his persecutors, the chief priests and elders, (1.) By shewing that, though they were very bitter against him, yet he did not fear them, nor their power. See Isa. 50. 7, 8. (2.) By taking their work out of their hands. Their office was to teach the people in the temple, and particularly at the feast of tabernacles, Neh. 8. 17, 18. But they either did not teach them at all, or taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and therefore he goes up to the temple, and teaches the people. When the shepherds of Israel made a prey of the flock, it was time for the chief shepherd to appear, as was promised, Ezek. 34. 22, 23. Mal. 3. 1.  
II. His discourse with the Jews hereupon; and the conference is reducible to four heads.  
1. Concerning his doctrine. See here,  
(1.) How the Jews admired it; (v. 15.) They marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Observe here, [1.] That our Lord Jesus was not educated in the schools of the prophets, or at the feet of the rabbins; not only did not travel for learning, as the philosophers did, but did not make any use of the schools and academies in his own country. Moses was taught the learning.
...resolved by the grace of God, when they find out what the will of God is, to conform to it. They are such as have an honest principle of regard to God, and are truly desirous to glorify and please him. Wherefore it is that such a one shall have the truth of Christ's doctrine. (1.) Christ has promised to give knowledge to such; he hath said, 

He shall know, and he can give an understanding. Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes. (2.) They are disposed and prepared to receive that knowledge. He that is inclined to submit to the rules of the divine law, and to be moved by divine love, shall have such a knowledge as shall be given; these have a good understanding, that do his commandments, Ps. 111. 10. Those who resemble God, are most likely to understand him.

(3.) That hereby it appeared that Christ, as a Teacher, did not speak of himself, because he did not seek himself, v. 18.

First, See here the character of a deceiver: he seeketh his own glory, which is a sign that he speaks of himself, as the false christs and false prophets did.

Here is the description of the cheat; they speak of themselves, and have no commission or instructions from God; no warrant but their own will, no inspiration but their own imagination, their own politics and artifice. Ambassadors speak not of themselves; those ministers declare that they speak the glory of God, that is, the glory of Christ. But see the discovery of the cheat; by this their pretensions are disproved, they consult purely their own glory; self-seekers are self-speakers. They who speak from God, will speak for God, and for his glory; they who aim at their own preferment and interest, make it to appear that they had no commission from God.

Secondly, See the contrary character Christ gives of himself and his doctrine; He that seeketh his glory that sent him, as I do, makes it to appear that he is true. 1. He was sent of God. Those teachers, and those only, who are sent of God, are to be received and entertained by us. Those who bring a divine message, must prove a divine mission, either by special revelation, or by regular institution. 2. He sought the glory of God. It is observable that the teachers of God, or the ministers of his word, are not the teachers of themselves, but the teachers of him that sent them. Where no uncovenanted grace, no external light, is seen in the discrepancies, or the practice, of the spiritual teachers, or the sham ministers, then is their work the work of the devil. See the case of the false prophets and teachers, and eschew them. It is observed that the word of the prophet and the impostor, the inspired and the imposthume, the truth and the falsehood, may appear as much alike as in themselves, as in expedience and reasoning. This was a proof that he was true, and there was no unrighteousness in him. False teachers are most unrighteous; they are unjust to God whose name they abuse, and unjust to the souls of men whom they impose upon. There cannot be a greater piece of unrighteousness than this. But Christ made it appear that he was true, that he was really what he said he was, that there was no unrighteousness in him; no falsehood in his doctrine, no fallacy or fraud in his dealings with us.

2. They discourse concerning the crime that was laid to his charge for curing the impotent man, and bidding him carry his bed on the sabbath-day, for which they had formerly prosecuted him; and which was still the pretence of their enmity to him. (b.) He argues against them by way of refutation, proving the truth of worse practices, v. 19.

How could they for shame censure him for a breach of the law of Moses, when they themselves were such notorious breakers of it! Did not Moses give you the law? And it was their privilege that they had the law, no nation had such a law; but it was their wickedness that none of them kept the law, that they rebelled against it, and lived contrary to it. Many that have the law given them, when they have it do not keep it. Their neglect of the law was universal; None of you keepeth it; neither those of them that were in posts of honour, who should have been most knowing, nor those who were...
in favor of subjection, who should have been most obedient. They boasted of the law, and pretended a zeal for it, and were enraged at Christ for seeming to transgress it, and yet none of them kept it; like those who say that they are for the church, and yet never go to church. It was an aggravation of their wickedness in persecuting Christ for breaking the law, that they themselves did not keep it; "None of you keepeth the law; why then goest thou about to kill me?" Note; These are commonly most censorious of others, who are most faultily themselves. Thus hypocrites, who are forward to pull a mote out of their brother’s eye, are not aware of a beam in their own. Why ye about to kill me? Some make this to be the instance of their not keeping the law; "Ye keep not the law; if ye did, ye would understand yourselves better than to go about to kill me for doing a good work." Those that support themselves and their interest by persecution and violence, whatever they pretend, (though they may call themselves custodes utriusque tabulæ—the guardians of both tables,) are not keepers of the law of God. Chemnittus understands this as a reason why it is time to supersede the law of Moses by the gospel, because the law was found insufficient to constrain sinners to goodness, and though you keep not it, but you do not keep it, nor are kept by it from the greatest wickedness; there is therefore need of a clearer light and better law to be brought in; why then do you aim to kill me for introducing it?

Here the people rudely interrupted him in his discourse, and contradicted what he said; (v. 20.) Thou hast a devil; who goest about to kill thee? This speaks. [1.] The good opinion they had of their rulers, who, they think, would never attempt so atrocious a thing as to kill him; no, such a vaporation they had for their elders and chief priests, that they would swear for them they would do no harm to an innocent man. Probably, the rulers had their little emissaries among the people, who suggested this to them; many deny that wickedness which at the same time they are contriving. [2.] The ill opinion they had of our Lord Jesus; Thou hast a devil, thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and art a bad man for saying so; some; or rather, Thou art melancholy, and art a weak man; thou flattest thyself with causeless fears, as hypochondriacal people are apt to do. Not only open frenzies, but silent melancholies, were then commonly imputed to the power of Satan. Thou art erodent, hast a dislocated brain. Let us not think it strange if the best of men be put under the worst of characters.

To this vile calumny our Saviour returns no direct answer, but seems as if he took no notice of it. Note, Those who would be like Christ, must put up with affronts, and pass by the indignities and injuries done them; must not regard them, much less revile them; and must not cast out evil slanderers. I, as a deaf ear, heard not. When Christ was reviled, he reviled not again. [2.] He argues by way of appeal and vindication. [1.] He appeals to their own sentiments of this miracle; (v. 21.) I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Ye cannot choose but marvel at it as truly great, and altogether supernatural; ye must all receive it, for ye cannot help it; though I have done but one work that you have all done, I have not fault with, yet ye marvel, you are offended and displeased as if I had been guilty of some horrid or enormous crime.

[2.] He appeals to their own practice in other instances; I have done one work on the sabbath, and it was done easily with a word’s speaking, and ye all marvel, ye make a mighty strange thing of it, that a religious man should dare to do such a thing, whereas ye yourselves many a time do that which is a much more servile work on the sabbath-day, in the case of circumcision; if it be lawful for you, nay, and your duty, to circumcise a child on the sabbath-day, when it happens to be the eighth day, as, no doubt, it is, much more was it lawful and good for me to heal a diseased man on that day. Observe, First, the rise and original of circumcision; Moses gave you circumcision, gave you the law concerning it, and commanded you to observe it; it was forgiven you, and (v. 23.) they are said to receive it; it was not imposed upon them as a yoke, but conferred upon them as a favour. Note, The ordinances of God, and particularly those which are seals of the covenant, are gifts given to men, and are to be received as such. 2. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was given by Moses; yet as Christ said of the man in the margin this was not of Moses first, but of the fathers, v. 22. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise four hundred and thirty years before, Gal. 3. 17. The church-membership of believers is more particularly under the law of Moses, and therefore did not fall with it; but was of old, belonging to the patriarchal church, and was part of that blessing of Abraham, which was to come upon the Gentiles, Gal. 3. 14.

Secondly, The respect had to the law of circumcision above that of the sabbath, in the constant practice of the Jewish church. The Jewish carnalists frequently take notice of it, Circumcision et gius saeculi, the power of the sabbath, Circumcision and its cure drive away the sabbath; so that if a child was born one sabbath-day, it was without fail circumcised the next. If then, when the sabbath-rest was more strictly insisted on, yet those works were allowed which were in ordine ad spiritualia—for the keeping up of religion, much more are they allowed now under the gospel, when the stress is laid more upon the sabbath-work.

Thirdly, The inference Christ draws from hence in justification of himself, and of what he had done; (v. 23.) A man-child on the sabbath-day receives circumcision, that the law of circumcision might not be broken; or, as the margin reads it, without breaking the law, namely, of the sabbath. Divine commands must be construed so as to agree with each other. Now, if this be allowed by yourselves, laws, unrighteous, or what you are angry with me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath-day! i. e. healed a child, and his healing a man on the sabbath-day. 1. Circumcision was but a ceremonial institution; it was of the fathers indeed, but not from the beginning; but what Christ did was a good work by the law of nature, a more excellent law than that which made circumcision a good work. 2. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance, and made sore; but what Christ did was healing, and made whole. The law works pain, and therefore if the work makes much pain, much more a gospel-work, which works peace. 3. Especially, considering that whereas, when they had circumcised a child, yet their care was only to heal up that part which was circumcised, which might be done, and yet the child remain under other illnesses, Christ had made this man every whit whole, i. e. I have made the whole man healthful and sound. The
whole body was healed, for the disease affected the whole body; and it was a perfect cure, such as left no relays of the disease behind; nay, Christ not only healed his body, but his soul too, by that admonition, Go, and sin no more, and so indeed made the whole man. Circumcision indeed was intended for the good of the soul, and to make the whole man as it should be; but they had perverted it, and turned it into a mere carnal ordinance; but Christ accompanied his outward cures with inward grace, and so made them sacramental, and healed the whole man.

He concludes this argument with that rule, (v. 24.) Judge not according to the outward appearance, but judge that which is right. This may be applied, either, (1.) In particular to this work which they quarrelled with as a violation of the law. Be not partial in your judgment; judge not according to persons; knowing faces, as the Hebrew phrase is, Deut. 1. 17. It is contrary to the law of justice, as well as charity, to censure those who differ in opinion from us, as transgressors, in taking that liberty which yet in those of our own party, and way, and opinion, we allow of; as it is also to commend that in some as necessary strictness and severity, which in others we condemn as imposition and persecution. Or, (2.) In general to Christ's person and preaching, which they were offended at and prejudged against. Those things that are false and designed to impose upon men, commonly appear best, when they are judged of according to the outward appearance. This was done with more malice, prima facie—at the first glance. This was it that gained the Pharisees such an interest and reputation, as at they appeared right unto men; (Matt. 23. 27, 28.) and men judged of them by that appearance, and so were sadly mistaken in them. "But," saith Christ, "be not too confident that all are real saints, who are seeming ones. With reference to himself, this sound, for the sound was the man. Circumcision was from the outward appearance, righteousness; and judging of Christ by that rule, their judgment was from first to last a continual mistake, for the kingdom of Christ was not to be of this world, nor to come with observation. If a divine power accompanied him, and God bare him witness, and the scriptures were fulfilled in him, though his appearance was ever so mean, they ought to receive him, and to judge by faith, and not by the sight of the outward man. Isa. 11. 3, and 1 Sam. 16. 7. Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but righteous judgment; if truth and justice may but pass the sentence, Christ and his cause will carry the day. We must not judge concerning any by their outward appearance, not by their titles, the figure they make in the world, and their flattering show, but by their intrinsic worth, and the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in them. Christ discourses with them here concerning himself, whence he came, and whither he was going, v. 25—36.

(1.) Whence he came, v. 25—31. In the account of this, observe, [1.] The objection concerning this, stated by some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who seem to have been of all others most prejudiced against him, v. 25. One would think that they who lived at the fountain-head of knowledge and religion, should have been most ready to receive the Messiah; but it proved quite contrary; those that have plenty of the means of knowledge and grace, it they are not made better by them, are commonly made worse; and our Lord Jesus has often met with the least welcome from those that one would expect the best from. But it was not without some good cause that it came into a proverb, the nearer the church, the further from God. These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ, First, By their reflecting on the rulers, because they let him alone; Is not this he whom they seek to kill? The multitude of the people that came up out of the country with Christ were amazed at this; there was any design on foot against him, and therefore they said, Who goes about to kill thee? v. 20. But they of Jerusalem knew the plot, and irritated their rulers to put it in execution. Is not this he whom they seek to kill? Why do they not do it then? Who hinderers them? They say that they have a mind to get him out of the way; and yet, In, he spake boldly, and they say nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? v. 26. Here they silyly and maliciously insinuate two things, to exasperate the rulers against Christ, when indeed they needed no spur. 1. That by continuing at his preaching they brought their authority into contempt. "Must a man that is condemned by the Sanhedrim as a deceiver, be permitted to speak boldly, without any check or contradiction? This makes their sentence to be rash and false, and hinders him from the mean menace; if our rulers will suffer themselves to be thus trampled upon, they may thank themselves if none stand in awe of them and their laws." Note, The worst of persecutions have often been carried on under colour of the necessary support of authority and government. 2. That hereby they brought their judgment into suspicion; Do they know that this is the Christ? It is spoken ironically, It is known to all men, but how came they to change their opinion? We wonder, by what discovery have they lighted on? They give people occasion to think that they believe him to be the Christ, and are concerned to act vigorously against him, to clear themselves from the suspicion. Thus the rulers, who had made the people enemies to Christ, made them seven times more the children of hell than themselves, Matt. 23. 15. When religion and the preferment of Christ's cause, were accompanied with contempt, and consequently out of repute, many are strongly tempted to persecute and oppose them, only that they may not be thought to favour them and incline to them. And for this reason apostates, and the degenerate offspring of good parents, have been sometimes worse than others, as it were to wipe off the stain of their profession. It was strange that the rulers, thus irritated, did not seize Christ; but his hour was not yet come, and God could not have his hands to admiration, though he do not turn their hearts.

Secondly, By their exception against his being the Christ; in which appeared more malice than matter, v. 27. "If the rulers think him to be the Christ, we neither can nor will believe him to be so, for we have this argument against it, that we know this Man, whence he is; but when Christ comes, no man knows whence he is." Here is a fallacy in the argument, for the prepositions are not both ad and unto adapted to the same view of the subject. 1. If they speak of his divine nature, it is true, that when Christ comes, no man knows whence he is, for he is a Priest after the order of Melchisedek, who was without descent, and his goings forth have been of old from everlasting, Mic. 3. 2. Put then it was not true, that as for this Man they knew whence he was, perhaps no more than his being a man; for the Word was made flesh. 2. If they speak of his human nature, it was true that they knew whence he was, who was his mother, and where he was.
bred up; but then it was false, that ever it was said of the Messiah, that none should know whence he was, for it was known before where he should be born, Matt. 2. 4, 5. Observe, (1.) How they detested him, because they knew whence he was. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we are apt to disdain the case of those whom we know the least of. Christ's own received him not, because he was their own, for which very reason they should the rather have loved him; and been thankful that their nation and their age were honoured with his appearance. (2.) How they endeavoured unjustly to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they encountenanced them, when there was no such thing. There were no scriptures concerning Christ, because they knew not the scripture.

[2.] Christ's answer to this objection, v. 28, 29. He spake freely and boldly, he cried in the temple, as he taught, he spake this louder than the rest of his discourse. First, To express his earnestness, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts; there may be a vehemency in contending for the truth, where yet there is no intemperate heat or passion. We may instruct gain-sayers with warmth, and yet with meekness. Secondly, The priests, and those that were prejudiced against him, did not come near enough to hear his preaching, and therefore he must speak louder than ordinary what he will have them to hear. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear this.

Now Christ's answer to their cavil, is,

1. By way of concession, granting that they did or might, know his original as to the flesh: "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am. Ye know I am of your own nation, and one of yourselves." It is no disparagement to the doctrine of Christ, that there is that in it which is level to the capacities of the meanest; plain truths discovered even by natural light, of which we may say, with Ye know me, and ye know whence they are. "Ye know me, ye think ye know me; but ye are mistaken; ye take me to be the carpenter's son, and born at Nazareth, but it is not so." 2. By way of negation, denying that that which they did see in him, and know of him, was all that was to be known; and therefore if they looked no farther, they did make a cursing of their judgment appearance only. They knew whence he came perhaps, and where he had his birth, but he will tell them what they knew not, from whom he came. (1.) That he did not come of himself; that he did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character. (2.) That he was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned: He hath sent me. And again, "He hath sent me to tell what I say, and do what I do." This he was himself well assured of, and therefore knew that his Father would bear him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by him. (3.) That he was from his Father, εγερεναι με απο τον πατην; I am from him; not only sent from him as a servant from his master, but_Preter the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, he is true, and will fulfill the promise in the calling of the Gentiles. (4.) That the Father who sent him, is true; he had promised to give the Messiah, and though the Jews had forfeited the promise, yet he that made the promise, is true, and has performed it; he had promised that the Messiah should see his seed, and be successful in his undertaking; and though the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, he is true, and will fulfill the promise in the calling of the Gentiles. (5.) That these unbelieving Jews did not know the Father; He that sent me, whom ye know not. There is much ignorance of God, even with many that have a form of knowledge; and the true reason why people reject Christ, is, because they do not know God; for there is such a harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such an admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that the right knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce, the latter. (6.) Our Lord Jesus was instantly acquainted with the Father that sent him, but I know him. He knew him so well, that he was not at all in doubt concerning his mission from him, but perfectly assured of that; nor at all in the dark concerning the work he had to do, but perfectly apprized of that, Matt. 11. 27.

[5.] The provocation which this gave to his enemies, who therefore hated him, because he told them the truth and the kingdom of God; and his enmity, because with that shall be a condemnation to lay violent hands on him, not only to do him a mischief, but some way or other to be the death of him; but by the restraint of an invisible power it was prevented, nobody touched him, because his hour was not yet come; that was not their reason why they did it not, but God's reason why he hindered them from doing it. Note, First, The faithful preachers of the truths of God, though they behave themselves with ever so much prudence and meekness, must expect to be hated and persecuted by those who think themselves tormented by their testimony, Rev. 11. 10. Secondly, God has wicked men in a chain, and whatever mischief they would do, yet they can do no more than God will suffer them to do, the malice of persecutors is ineffectual, when it is in the hand of God to frustrate it. Satan fills their hearts, yet God ties their hands. Thirdly, God's servants are sometimes wonderfully protected by indiscernible, unaccountable means. Their enemies do not do the mischief they designed, and yet neither they themselves nor any one else can tell why they do not. Fourthly, Christ had his hour set, which was to put a period to his day, and work on earth, he and all his ministers, and till that hour comes, the attempts of their enemies against them are ineffectual, and their day shall be lengthened as long as their Master has any work for them to do; nor can all the powers of hell and earth prevail against them, until they have finished their testimony.
then? In him we see, though not all the worldly
pomp we have found, yet all the divine power we
have believed, the Messiah should appear in; and
therefore why may not this be he?" They believe
it, but have not courage to own it. Note, Even
weak faith may be true faith, and so accounted, so
accepted by the Lord Jesus, who despiseth not the
day of small things.

(5.) Whither he was going, v. 32—36. Where
obtained he his information? [1.] The design of the Pharisees and chief priests against him, v. 32.

First, The provocation given them, was, they
had information brought them by their spies, who
insinuated themselves into the conversation of the
people, and gathered stories to carry to their jealous
masters, that the people murmured such things con-
cerning him, v. 32. And yet the day who had a re-
spect, and value for him, notwithstanding all the
people had done to make him odious. Though the
people did but whisper these things, and had not courage
to speak out, yet the Pharisees were enraged at it.

The equity of that government is justly suspected by
others, which is so suspicious of itself, as to take note
of, or be influenced by, the secret, various, and
uncertain mutterings of the common people. The
Pharisees and Jewish church-officers, as in the actions
of the public officers, and with the respect of the people, and were sensible that if
Christ did thus increase, they must decrease.

Secondly, The project they laid hereupon, was,
to seize Jesus, and take him into custody; They sent
officers to take him, not to take up those who mur-
mured concerning him, and frighten them; no, the
most effectual way to disperse the flock, is, to smile the
shepherd. The Pharisees seem to have been the
ringleaders in this quarter, but they, as such, had no power, and therefore they got the chief
for caste, the judges of the ecclesiastical court, to join
with them, they were ready enough to do so. The
Pharisees were the great pretenders to learning,
and the chief priests to sanctity. As the world by
wisdom knew not God, but the greatest philosophers
were guilty of the greatest blunders in natural reli-
gion, so the Jewish church by their wisdom knew
nothing of Christ, in his greatest rubrics were the
Greatest fools concerning him, nay, they were the
most invertebrate enemies to him. Those wicked
rulers had their officers, officers of their court,
church-officers, whom they employed to take Christ,
and who were ready to go on their errand, though it
was an ill errand. If Saul's footmen will not go, he
has a herdsman that will turn and fall upon the
priests of the Lord, 1 Sam. 22. Thus will those, who
are in the discharge of our Lord Jesus hereupon;
(v. 33, 34.) Yet a little while I am with you, and
then I go to him that sent me ye shall seek me, and
shall not find me; and where I am, thinke ye cannot
come. These words, like the pillar of cloud and fire,
have a bright side and a dark side.

First, They have a bright side towards our Lord
Jesus himself, and speak abundance of comfort to
him and all his faithful followers, that are exposed
to difficulties and dangers, for his sake. Three things
Christ here comforted himself with.

1. That he had but a little time to continue here in
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[3.] Their descent upon this discourse; v. 35, 36. They said among themselves, Whither will he go? and they went to see him. 

First. Their wilful ignorance and blindness. He had expressly said whither he would go—to him that sent him, to his Father in heaven, and yet they ask, Whither will he go? and What manner of saying is this? None so blind as those that will not see, that will not heed. Christ's sayings are plain to him that understands, and difficult only to those that are minded to quarrel. 

Secondly. Their daring contempt of Christ's threatenings. Instead of trembling at that terrible word, Ye shall see me, and not find me, which speaks the utmost degree of misery, they banter it and make a jest of it, as those sinners that mock at fear, and are not affrighted, Isa. 5. 19. Amos 5. 18. Let him make speed. But be ye not mockers, lest your hands be made strong. 

Thirdly. Their inveterate malice and rage against Christ. All they dreaded in his departure, was, that he would be out of the reach of their power; "Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? If he be above ground, we will have him; we will leave no place unsearched," as Ahab in quest of Elijah, 1 Kings 18. 

Fourthly. Their proud disdain of the Gentiles, whom they here call the dispersed of the Gentiles; meaning either the Jews that were scattered abroad among the Greeks, (James 1. 1. 1 Pet. 1. 1. he will go and make an interest among those silly people?) or, the Gentiles dispersed over the world, in distinction from the Jews, who were incorporated into one church and nation; will he make his court to them? 

Fifthly. Their jealousy of the least intimation of favour to the Gentiles; "Will he go and teach the Gentiles? Will he carry his doctrine to them?" Perhaps they had heard of some items of respect shewed by him to the Gentiles, as in his sermon at Nazareth, and in the case of the centurion of Capernaum, and there was nothing they dreaded more than the comprehension of the Gentiles. So common is it for those who have lost the power of religion, to be very jealous for the monopoly of the name. They now made a jest of his going to teach the Gentiles; but not long after he did it in good earnest by his apostles and ministers, and gathered those dispersed people, sorely to the grief of the Jews, Rom. 10. 19. So true is that of Solomon, "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him." 

37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 

38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) 40. Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet. 41. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? 42. Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? 43. So there was a division among the people because of him. 44. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. 

In these verses, we have, I. Christ's discourse, with the explication of it, v. 37—39. It is probable that these are only short hints of what he enlarged upon, but they have in them the substance of the whole gospel; here is a gospel-invitation to come to Christ, and a gospel-garment of comfort and happiness in him. Now observe, 

1. When he made this invitation; on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, that great day. The eighth day, which concluded that solemnity, was to be a holy convocation, Lev. 23. 36. Now on this day Christ published this gospel-call. Because, (1.) Much people being come together, yea, if the invitation was given to many, it might be hoped that some would accept of it, Prov. 1. 21. Numerous assemblies give opportunity of doing the more good. (2.) The people were now returning to their homes, and he would give them this to carry away with them as his parting word. When a great congregation is to be dismissed, and is about to scatter, as here, it is affecting to think, that in all probability they will never come all together again in this world, and therefore if we can say or do any thing to help them to heaven, that must be the time. It is good to be lively at the close of an ordinance. Christ made this offer on the last day of the feast; [1.] To those who had turned a deaf ear to his preaching on the foregoing days of this sacred week; he will try them once more; and if they will yet hear his voice, they shall live. [2.] To those who perhaps might never have such another offer made them, and therefore were concerned to accept of this; it would be half a year before there would be another feast, and in that time they would many of them be in their graves. Behold, now is the accepted time. 

2. How he made this invitation; Jesus stood, and cried; which denotes (1.) His great earnestness and importunity. His heart was upon it, to bring poor souls in to himself. The elevation of his body and the elevation of his voice were indications of the intense-ness of his mind. Love to souls will make preachers lively. (2.) His desire that all might take notice, and take hold of this invitation. He stood, and cried, that he might the better be heard; for this is what every one that hath ears, is commanded to do. Gospel-truth is delivered blastingly by them that peeped and muttered; but the oracles of the gospel were proclaimed by one that stood, and cried. How sad is the case of man, that he must be importuned to be happy, and how wonderful the grace of Christ, that he will importune him! No one, Isa. 55. 1. The invitation itself, which is, (1.) Very general; if any man thirst, whoever he be, he is invited to Christ. Be he high or low, rich or poor, young or old, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. (2.) Very gracious; "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. If any man desires to be truly and eternally happy, let him apply himself to me, and be ruled by me, and I will undertake to make him so." [1.] The invitations are such as third, which may be understood, either, First, Of the indifference of their cases; either as to their outward condition; if any man be destitute of the comforts of this life, or fatigued with the crosses of it, let his poverty and afflictions draw him to Christ for that peace which the world can neither give nor take away; or, as to their inward state; "If any man want spiritual things, he may be invited to Christ." Or, Secondly, Of the invitation of their souls and their desires towards a spiritual happiness. If any man hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is, truly
desire the good-will of God toward him, and the good work of God in him.

[2.] The invitation itself; Let him come to me. Let him not go to the ceremonial law, which would neither justify the conscience nor purify it, and therefore could not make the camera therinofflorful, Heb. 10. 1. Nor let him go to the heathen philosophy, that does but beguile men, lead them into a wood, and leave them there; but let him go to Christ, admit his doctrine, submit to his discipline, believe in him; come to him as the Fountain of living waters, the Giver of all comfort.

[3.] The satisfaction promised; Let him come and drink, he shall have what he comes for, and abundantly more; the thirsty land should bend only refresh, but replenish, a soul that desires to be happy.

A gracious promise annexed to this gracious call; (y. 38.) He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow—

(1.) See here what it is to come to Christ. It is to believe on him, as the scripture hath said; it is to receive and entertain him as he is offered to us in the gospel. We must not frame a Christ according to our fancy, but believe in a Christ according to the scripture.

(2.) See how thirsty souls, that came to Christ, shall be made to drink. Israel, that believed Moses, drank of the rock that followed them, the streams followed; but believers drank of a Rock in them, Christ in them, who was their Rock, and their Fountain of life, ch. 4. 14. Provision is made not only for their present satisfaction, but for their continual, perpetual comfort. Here is, [1.] Living water, running water, which the Hebrew language calls living, because still in motion. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to living (meaning running) water, because they are the active quickening principles of spiritual life, and the earnest and evidences of eternal life. See Jer. 2. 13. [2.] Rivers of living water, which denotes both plenty and constancy. The comfort flows in both plentifully and constantly as a river; strong as a stream to bear down the oppositions of doubts and fears. There is a fulness in Christ of grace for grace. [3.] These flow out of his belly, that is, out of his heart and soul. That is the subject of the Spirit's working, and the seat of his government. There gracious fruits grow; grace is a fountain of grace; and out of the heart, in which the Spirit dwells, flow the issues of life, Prov. 4. 23. There divine comforts are lodged, and the joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with. He that believes hath the witness in himself, 1 John 5. 10. Sat lucis intus—Light abounds within.

Observe, further, where there are springs of grace and comfort in the soul, they will send forth streams. Out of his belly shall flow rivers, first, Grace and comfort will evidence themselves. Good affections will produce good actions, and a holy heart will be seen in a holy life; the two is known by its fruits, and the fountain by its streams. Secondly, They will communicate themselves for the benefit of others; a good man is a common good. His mouth is a well of life, Prov. 10. 11. It is not enough that we drink waters out of our own cistern, that we ourselves should enjoy the comfort of the grace given us, but we must let our fountains be dispersed abroad, Prov. 15. 15. 16.

These words, as the scripture hath said, seem to refer to some promise in the Old Testament to this purport, and there are many; as that God would pour out his Spirit, which is a metaphor borrowed from rivers, (Prov. 1. 23. Joel 2. 18. Isa. 44. 3. Zech. 12. 10.) springs of water, (Isa. 44. 18.) that there should be rivers in the desert, (Isa. 43. 19.) that gracious souls should be like a spring of water, (Isa. 58. 11.) and

the church a well of living water, Cant. 4. 15. And here may be an allusion to the waters issuing out of Ezekiel's temple, Ezek. 47. 1. Compare Rev. 22. 1. and see Zech. 14. 8. Dr. Lightfoot and others tell us, it was a custom of the Jews, which they received by tradition, on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, to have a sacrifice, which they called Ishbaal.

The pouring out of water. They fetched a golden vessel of water from the pool of Siloam, brought it into the temple with sound of trumpet and other ceremonies, and, upon the ascent to the altar, poured it out before the Lord with all possible expressions of joy. Some of their writers make the water to signify the law, and refer to Isa. 12. 5. 33. 1. Others, that it signified the Spirit, which might here allude to this custom. Believers shall have the comfort, not of a vessel of water fetched from a pool, but of a river flowing from themselves. The joy of the law, and the pouring out of the water, which signified that, are not to be compared with the joy of the gospel in the wells of salvation.

3. Here is the evangelist's exposition of this promise; (y. 39.) This shall he of the Spirit; not of any outward advantages accruing to believers, (as perhaps some misunderstood him,) but of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit. See how scripture is the best interpreter of scripture.

Observe, (1.) It is promised to all that believe on Christ, that they shall receive the Holy Ghost. Some received his miraculous gifts; (Mark 16. 17. 18.) all receive his sanctifying graces. The gift of the Holy Ghost is on every regenerate soul, (Acts 2. 33.) and if promised, no doubt performed to all that have an interest in that covenant.

(2.) The Spirit dwelling and working in believers, is as a fountain of living, running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water, mollifying and moistening as water, making them fruitful, and others joyful; see ch. 3. 3. Where the apostles spake so fluently of the things of God, as the Spirit gave them utterance, (Acts 2. 4.) and afterward preached and wrote the gospel of Christ with such a flood of divine eloquence, then this was fulfilled, Out of his belly shall flow rivers.

(3.) This plentiful effusion of the Spirit was yet the matter of a promise; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. See here,

(1.) That the Holy Ghost is not yet given: It was certain that he should be glorified, and he was ever worthy of all honour; but he was as yet in a state of humiliation and contempt. He had never forfeited the glory he had before all worlds, nay, he had merited a further glory, and beside his hereditary honours, might claim the achievement of a mediate crown; and yet all this is in reverse. Jesus is now exalted in glory, and other souls; see ch. 3. 3. Where he was before so much contemptible, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) he is not yet glorified. And if Christ must wait for his glory, let not us think much to wait for our's.

(2.) That the Holy Ghost was not yet given, wos yap èp xov év ëwv éx wv—for the Holy Ghost was not yet. The Spirit of God was from eternity, for in the beginning he moved upon the face of the waters. He was in the Old Testament prophets and saints, Zechariah and Malachi, before he was ever given, and was given with the Holy Ghost. This therefore must be understood that eminent, plentiful, and general effusion of the Spirit which was promised, Joel 2. 28. and accomplished, Acts 2. 1. The Holy Ghost was not ye given in that visible manner that was intended. If we compare the clear knowledge and strong grace of the disciples of Christ themselves, after that day—up to the present ages—therefore, we shall understand in what sense the Holy Ghost was not yet given; the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit were given, but the full harvest was
not yet come. That which is most properly called the dispensation of the Spirit, did not yet commence. The Holy Ghost was not yet given in such rivers of living water as should issue forth to water the whole earth, even the Gentile world; not in the gifts of tongues, to which perhaps this promise principally refers.

[3.] That the reason why the Holy Ghost was not yet given, was, because Jesus was not yet glorified. First, The death of Christ is sometimes called his glorification; (ch. 13. 31.) for in his cross he conquered and triumphed. Now the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased by the blood of Christ, therefore the valuable consideration upon which the grant was grounded, and therefore till that price was paid, (though many other gifts were bestowed upon its being secured to be paid,) the Holy Ghost was not given. Secondly, There was not so much need of the Spirit while Christ was himself upon earth, as there was when he was gone, to supply the want of him. Thirdly, The giving of the Holy Ghost was to be both an answer to Christ's intercession, (ch. 14. 16.) and an act of his dominion; and therefore till he is glorified, and enters upon both these, the Holy Ghost is not given. Fourthly, The conversion of the Gentiles was the glorifying of Jesus. When certain Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, 

Now is the Son of man glorified. (ch. 12. 23.) Now the time for that was not yet come, when the gospel should be propagated in the nations, and therefore there was an want of occasion for the gift of tongues, that river of living water. But observe, though the Holy Ghost was not yet given, yet he was promised; it was now the great promise of the Father, Acts 1. 4. Though the gifts of Christ's grace are long deferred, yet they are well secured; and while we are waiting for the good promised, we hold the promise to live upon, which shall speak and shall not lie.

II. The consequences of this discourse; what entertainment it met with; in general, it occasioned differences; (v. 43.) There was a division among the people because of him. There was a schism, so the word is; there were diversities of opinions, and those managed with heat and contention; various sentiments, and these such as set them at variance. Think now, that Christ came to send peace, that all would unanimously embrace his gospel? No, the effect of the preaching of his gospel would be division, for while some are gathered to it, others will be gathered against it; and this will put things into a ferment, as here; but this is no more the fault of the gospel, than it is the fault of a wholesome medicine, that it stirs up the facetious humour in the body, in order to the discharge of them. Observe what the debate was: 1. Some were taken with him, and well-affect ed to him. Many of the people, when they heard this saying, heard him with such compassion and kindness invite poor sinners to him, and with such authority engage to make them happy, that they could not but think highly of him. (1.) Some of them were saved, but the Mis is him self. The Jews had which Moses spake of to the fathers, who should be like unto him; or, This is the prophet, who, according to the received notions of the Jewish church, is to be the harbingcr and forerunner of the Messiah; or, This is truly a prophet, one divinely inspired and sent of God. (2.) Others went further, and said, This is the Christ, (v. 41.) not the prophet of the Messiah, but the Mis is himself. The Jews had at this time a more than ordinary expectation of the Messiah, which made them ready to say upon every occasion, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there; and this seems to be only the effect of some such confused and floating notions, which caught at the first appearance, for we do not find that these people be came his disciples and followers; a good opinion of Christ is far short of a lively faith in Christ; many give Christ a good word, that give him no more. These here said, This is the Prophet, and this the Christ, but could not persuade themselves to leave the gospel and for the Messiah. For to whom Christ was but a testimony against themselves.

2. Others were prejudiced against him. No sooner was this great truth started, that Jesus is the Christ, than immediately it was contradicted and argued against; and this one thing, that his rise and original were (as they took it for granted) out of Galilee, was thought enough to answer all the arguments for his being the Christ. For, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the scripture said, that Christ comes of the seed of David?

See here, (1.) A laudable knowledge of the scripture. They were so far in the right, that the Messiah was to be a Rod out of the stem of Jesse, (Isa. 11. 1.) that out of Bethlehem should arise the Governor, Mic. 5. 2. This even the common people knew by the traditional expositions which their scribes gave them. Perhaps these people, who had these scriptures so ready to object against Christ, were not alike knowing in other parts of holy writ, but had these put into their mouths by their leaders, to fortify their prejudices against Christ. Many that espouse some corrupt notions, and spend their zeal in defence of them, seem to be very ready in the scriptures, when indeed they know little more than these scriptures which they have been taught to pervert.

(2.) A culpable ignorance of our Lord Jesus. They speak of it as certain and past dispute, that Jesus was of Galilee, whereas by inquiring of himself, or his mother, or his disciples, or by consulting the genealogies of the family of David, or the registers at Bethlehem, they might have known, that he was the Son of David, a native of Bethlehem but this they willingly are ignorant of. Thus gross falsehoods in matters of fact concerning persons and things, are often taken up by prejudiced and partial men, and great resolves founded upon them, even in the same place and the same age wherein the persons live and the things are done, while the truth might easily be found out. Others were prejudiced against him, and they would have taken him, v. 44. Though what he said was most sweet and gracious, yet they were exasperated against him for it. Thus did our Master suffer ill for saying and doing well. They would have taken him; they hoped somebody or other would seize him, and if they had thought no one else would, they would have done it themselves. They would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him, being restrained by an invisible power, because his hour was not come. As the malice of Christ's enemies is always unreasonable, so sometimes the suspension of it is unaccountable.

45. Then came the officers to the Chief Priests and Pharisees: and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? 46. The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47. Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? 48. Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? 49. But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. 50. Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51. Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?
They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. 53. And every man went unto his own house.

The chief priests and Pharisees are here in a close cabal, contriving how to suppress Christ; though this was the great day of the feast, they attended not the religious services of the day, but left that to the vulgar, to whom it was common for those great ecclesiastics to consign and turn over the business of devotion, while they thought themselves better employed in the affairs of church policy. They sat in the temple and in the synagogues, expecting Christ to come in the form of a prisoner to them, to have some issued out warrants for the apprehending of him, v. 52. Now here we are told,

1. What passed between them and their own officers, who returned him, re infecta—having done nothing. Observe,

1. The reproof they gave the officers for not executing the warrant they gave them; Why have ye not brought him? He appeared publicly, the people were many of them disgusted, and would have assisted them in taking him; this was the last day of the feast, and they would not have such another opportunity: "Why then did you neglect your duty?" It vexed them that those who were their own creatures, who depended on them, and on whom they depended, into whose minds they have instilled prejudices, took such insults upon Christ. Note, Mischievous men fear that they cannot do the mischief they would, Ps. 112. 10. Neh. 6. 16.

2. The reason the officers gave for the non-execution of their warrant; (v. 46.) Never man spake like this Man. Now, (1.) This was a very great truth, that never any man spake with that wisdom, and power, and grace, that convincing charmes, that exerting sweetness, wherewith Christ spake; none of the prophets, no, not Moses himself. (2.) The very officers that were sent to take him, were taken with him, and acknowledged this. Though it is probable that they were men who had no quick sense of reason or eloquence, and, it is certain, had no inclination to think well of Jesus, yet so much self-evidence was there in what Christ said, that they could not but prefer him before all others that sat in Moses's seat. Note, It was not that Christ was preserved by the power God has upon the consciences even of bad men. (3.) They said this to their lords and masters, who could not endure to hear any thing that tended to the honour of Christ, and yet could not avoid hearing this. Providence ordered it so, that this should be said to them, that it might be a vexation in their sin, and an aggravation of their sin. Their own officers are witnesses against them, who, or could not be suspected to be biased in favour of Christ. This testimon y of their's should have made them reflect upon themselves, with this thought, "Do we know what we are doing, when we are hating and persecuting one that speaks so admirably well?"

3. The Pharisees endeavour to secure their officers to their interest, and to beget in them prejudices against Christ, whom they saw them begin to be well affected to; to prevent which they suggest two things:

(1.) That, if they embrace the gospel of Christ, they will deceive themselves; (v. 47.) Are ye also deceived? Christianity has, from its first rise, been represented to the world as a great cheat upon it, and they that embrace it as men deceived, then when they began to be undeceived. They that looked for a Messiah in external pomp, thought them deceived who believed in a Messiah that appeared in poverty and disgrace; but the event declares that none were ever more shAMEFULLY deceived, or put a greater cheat upon themselves, than those who promised themselves worldly wealth and secular dominion with the Messiah. Observe what a compliment the Pharisees put upon these officers; "Are ye also deceived? What! men of your condition, and assembly, and office, who hold the name of Christ; but better than to be imposed upon by every pretender and upstart teacher?" They endeavour to prejudice them against Christ, by persuading them to think well of themselves.

(2.) That they will desparage themselves. Most men, even in their religion, are willing to be governed by the example of those of the first rank; inward and outward officers therefore, whose preferments, such as they were, gave them a sense of honour, are desired to consider,

[1.] That, if they become disciples of Christ, they go contrary to those who were persons of quality and reputation; "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? You know they have not, and you ought to be bound up by their judgment, and to believe and do in religion according to those who will either preserve their offices, or do better than they." Some of the rulers did embrace Christ, (Matt. 9. 18. ch. 4. 53.) and more believed in him, but wanted courage to confess him; (ch. 12. 42.) but when the interest of the Jews runs low in the world, it is common for its adversaries to represent it as lower than really it is. But it was too true, that few, very few, of them did. Note, First, The cause of Christ has seldom had rulers and Pharisees on its side. It needs not secular supports, nor proposes secular advantages, and therefore neither courts, nor is counted by the great men of this world. Self-denial and the cross are hard lessons to rulers and Pharisees. Secondly, This has confirmed many in their prejudices against Christ and his gospel, that the rulers and Pharisees have been no friends to them. Shall secular men pretend to be more con concerned at spiritual things than spiritual men themselves, or to see further into religion than those who make its study their profession? If rulers and Pharisees do not believe in Christ, they that do believe in him will be the most singular, unfashionable, ungentlemanly people in the world, and quite out of the way of preference; thus are people foolishly swayed by external motives in matters of eternal importance. Shall the people be content to be led to hell and to go to hell in compliment to the rulers and Pharisees.

[2.] That they will link themselves with the desplicable vulgar sort of people; (v. 49.) But this people who know not the law are cursed; meaning especially those that were well-affected to the doctrine of Christ. Observe,

First, How scandalously and dishonourably they call them; this people. It is not, εκεῖνος, this lay-people, distinguished from them that were the clergy, but ἔκεῖνος ἡμᾶς, this rabble-people, this pitiful scandalous scoundrel-people, whom they disdained to set with the dogs of their flock, though God had set them with the lambs of his. If they mean the commonalty of the Jewish nation, they were the seed of Abraham, and in covenant with God, and not to be spoken of with contempt; but the church's common interests are betrayed, when any one part of it studies to render the other mean and desppicable. If they mean the followers of Christ, though they were generally persons of small figure and fortune, yet by owning Christ they discovered such a sacred city, integrity, and interest in the favours of Heaven, as made them truly great and considerable. Note, As the way to gain the world, and things which are despised, so the folly of men has commonly debased and despised those whom God has chosen.
Secondly, How unjustly they reproach them as ign
orant of the word of God; They know not the law; as if none knew the law but those that knew it from them; and no scripture-knowledge were current but what came out of their mint; and as if none knew the law but such as were observant of their canons and traditions. Observe, Oyer and Terminer, P. 99, 100. If the common people did not know the law, yet the chief priests and Pharisees, of all men, should not have upbraided them with it: for whose fault was it but their's, who should have taught them better; but instead of that, took away the key of knowledge? Luke 11. 52.

Thirdly, How magisterially they pronounce sentence upon them; they are cursed; hateful to God and a witness against himself. Perhaps many of those whom they thus upbraised, knew the law, and the prophets too, better than they did. Many a plain, honest, unlearned disciple of Christ, by meditation, experience, prayers, and especially obedience, attains to a more clear, sound, and useful knowledge of the word of God, than some great scholars with all their wit and learning. Thus David came to understand many things of God's ordinances, Ps. 119, 110. Many of those who, with the chief priests and Pharisees, supposed themselves to be the only people in the kingdom of God, it is well that their saying they were cursed, did not make them so, for the curse causeless shall not come. It is an usurpation of God's prerogative, as well as great uncharitableness, to say of any particular persons, much more of any body of people, that they are reprobrates. We are unable to try, and therefore unfit to condemn, and our rule is, Bless, and curse not men; Acts 10, 17. They that are apt to be deceived, and made fools of; but they use this odious word, They are cursed, to express their own indignation, and to frighten their officers from having anything to do with them; thus the language of hell, in our profane age, calls every thing that is displeasing, cursed, and damned, and confounded. Now, forught that appears, these officers had their convictions fixed and shifted by these such threats, and they never inquire further after Christ; any word from a ruler or Pharisee will sway more with many than the true reason of things, and the great interests of their souls.

11. What passed between them and Nicodemus, a member of their own body, v. 50, &c. Observe,

1. The just and rational objection which Nicodemus made against their proceedings. Even in their corrupt and wicked Sanhedrim, God left not himself quite without witness against their enmity; nor was the vote against Christ carried nemine contradicente—unanimously. Observe, (1.) Who it was, that appeared against them; it was Nicodemus, he that came to Jesus by night, bringing one of them, v. 50. Observe, concerning him, (1.) That, though he had been with Jesus, and taken him for a Teacher, yet he retained his place in the council, and his vote among them. Some impute this to his weakness and cowardice, and think it was his fault that he did not quit his place; but Christ had never said to him, Follow me, else he would have done as others, that left all to follow him; therefore it seems rather to have been his want of understanding. Perhaps he knew not his place, because there he might have opportunity of knowing Christ, and his interest, and stemming the tide of the Jewish rage, which perhaps he did more than we are aware of. He might there he as Hushai among Absalom's counsellors, instrumental to turn their counsels into foolishness. Though we must in no case deny our Master, yet we may wait for an opportunity of getting him to the best advantage. God has his remnant in every age; and many times finds, or puts, or makes, some good in the worst places and societies. There was Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and Nehemiah in Artax-

2. What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in reason they made up in railing and reproach. Note, It is a sign of a bad cause, when men cannot bear to hear reason, and take it as an affront to be minded of its maxims. However much their reason may resist, give them not that reason is against them. See how they taunt him; Art thou also of Galilee? v. 52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among exres's. (2.) That, though at first he came to Jesus by night, for fear of being known, and still continued in his post; yet, when there was occasion, he boldly appeared in defence of Christ, and opposed the whole council that were set against him. Thus many believers, who at first were timorous, and got ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf, his cat length, by divine grace, grown courageous, and able to laugh at the shaking of a spear. Let none justify the disguising of their faith by the example of Nicodemus, unless, like him, they be ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone in it, for so Nicodemus did here, and ch. 15. 30. (2.) What he alleged against their proceedings, (v. 51.) Doth our law judge any man before he hear him, (eves ~ to~ hear from himself,) and know what he doth? By no means, nor doth the law of any civilized nation allow it. Observe,

1. He prudently argues from the principles of their own law, and an incontestable rule of justice, that no man is to be condemned unheard. Had he urged the excellency of Christ's doctrine, or the evidence of Christ's miracles, or the value of the divine discourse with him, (ch. 3.) it had been but to cast pearls before swine, who would trample them under their feet, and would turn again, and rend him; therefore he waves them.

2. Whereas they had reproached the people, especially the followers of Christ, as ignorant of the law, he here tacitly retorts the charge upon themselves, and shows them ignorant were they of some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others.

3. The law is here said to judge, and hear, and know, when magistrates that govern, and are governed by it, judge, and hear, and know; for they are the mouth of the law, and whatsoever they bind and loose according to the law, is justly said to be bound and loosed by the law; they were some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others.

4. It is highly fit that none should come under the sentence of the law, till they have first by a fair trial undergone the scrutiny of it. Judges, when they receive the complaints of the accuser, must always reserve in their minds room for the defence of the accused, for they have two ears to remind them to hear both sides; this is said to be the manner of the Romans, Acts 25. 16. The method of our law, to hear the Quer and Terminer, first to hear and then to determine.

5. Persons are to be judged, not by what is said of them, but by what they do; our law will not ask what men's opinions are of them, or outcries against them, but, What have they done? What overt act can they be convicted of? Sentence must be given, secundum allegata et probata—according to what is alleged and proved. Facts, and not faces, must be known in judgment; and the scale of justice be used before the sword of justice.

Now we may suppose that the motion Nicodemus made in the house upon this was, That Jesus should be desired to come and give them an account of himself and his doctrine, and that they should favour him with an impartial unprejudiced hearing; but, though none would have accused him as to his maxims, none of them would second his motion.

2. What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in reason they made up in railing and reproach. Note, It is a sign of a bad cause, when men cannot bear to hear reason, and take it as an affront to be minded of its maxims. However much their reason may resist, give them not that reason is against them. See how they taunt him; Art thou also of Galilee? v. 52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among
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In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's evading the snare which the Jews laid for him, in bringing to him a woman taken in adultery, v. 1. 11. II. Divers discourses or conferences of his with the Jews that cavilled at him, and sought occasion against him; and made every thing he said a matter of controversy. 1. Concerning his being the Light of the world, v. 12., 20. 2. Concerning the ruin of the unbelieving Jews, v. 21., 30. 3. Concerning liberty and bondage, v. 31., 45. 4. Concerning God and his Father, their Father, v. 38., 47. 5. Here is his discourse, in answer to their blasphemous reproaches, v. 48., 50. 6. Concerning the immortality of believers, v. 51., 59. And in all this he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

1. JESUS went unto the mount of Olives.

2. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. 3. And the Scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, 4. They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. 5. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what saest thou? 6. This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. 7. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. 8. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. 9. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? 11. She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

Though Christ was basely abused in the foregoing chapter, both by the rulers and by the people, yet here we have him still at Jerusalem, still in the temple; how often would he have gathered them! Observe, 1. His retirement in the evening out of the town, (v. 1.) He went unto the mount of Olives; whether to some friend's house, or to some booth pitched there, now at the feast of tabernacles, is not certain; whether he rested there, or, as some think, continued all night in prayer to God, we are not told. But he went out of Jerusalem, perhaps, because he had never a friend there, that had either kindness or courage enough to give him a night's lodging, while his persecutors had houses of their own to go to; (ch. 7. 53.) he could not so much as borrow a place to lay his head on, but what he must go a mile or two out of town for. He retired, (as some think,) because he would not expose himself to the peril of a popular tumult in the night. It is prudence to go out of the way of danger, whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty. In the daytime, when he had work to do in the temple, he willingly exposed himself, and was under special protection, Isa. 49. 2. But in the night, when he had not work to do, he withdrew into the country, and sheltered himself there.

II. His return in the morning to the temple, and to his work there, v. 2. Observe,

1. What a diligent Preacher Christ was: Early in the morning he came again and taught. Though he had been teaching the day before, he taught again to-day. Christ was a constant Preacher, in season and out of season. Three things are taken notice of here:—

1. The time early in the morning. Though he ledc out of town, and perhaps had spent much of the night in secret prayer, yet he came early. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls, it is good to begin betimes, and take the day before us. (2.) The place; in the temple: not so much because it was a consecrated place, (for then he would have chosen it at other times,) as because it was a place of concourse. And he would hereby countenance solemn assemblies for religious worship, and
encourage people to come up to the temple, for he had not yet left it desolate. (3.) His posture; he sat down, and was one having authority, and as one that intended to abide by it for some time.

2. How diligently his preaching was attended upon; All the people came unto him; and perhaps many of them were the country-people, who were this day to return home from the feast, and were desirous to hear one sermon more from the mouth of Christ, before they returned. They came to him, though he could not marry. They that seek him early shall find him. Though the rulers were displeased at those that came to hear him, yet they would come; and he taught them, though they were angry at him too. Though there were few or none among them that were persons of any figure, yet Christ bid them welcome, and taught them.

3. His dealing with those that brought him the woman in adultery, tempting him. The Scribes and Pharisees would not only not hear Christ patiently themselves, but they disturbed him when the people were attending on him. Observe here, 1. The case proposed to him by the Scribes and Pharisees, who herein contrived to pick a quarrel with him, and bring him into a snare, v. 3-6.

(1.) They set the prisoner to the bar; (v. 3.) they brought in a woman taken in adultery; perhaps now lately taken, during the time of the feast of the bernacles, when, it may be, their dwelling in booths, and their feasting and joy, might, by wicked minds, which corrupt the best things, be made occasions of sin. Those that were taken in adultery, were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed them the execution of, and therefore she was brought before the ecclesiastical court. Observe, She was taken in her adulterie; though adultery is a work of darkness, which the criminals commonly take all the care they can to conceal, yet sometimes it is strangely brought to light. Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin, deceive themselves. The Scribes and Pharisees bring her to Christ, and set her in the midst of the assembly, as if they would leave her wholly to the judgment of Christ, he having sat down, as a Judge upon the bench.

(2.) They prefer an indictment against her; (v. 4.) Master, this woman was taken in adultery. Here they call him Master, whom but the day before they had called a Deceiver; in hopes with their flatteries to have secured him as theirs. Luke 20. 20. But this esteemed shame to be imposed upon with compliments, he sets a mark upon the shore; let that be written, for they are so insidious as to propose, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets. Secondly, As a friend to sinners, and, consequently, a Favourer of sin; if he should seem to connive at such wickedness, and let it go unpunished, they would represent him as countenancing it, and being a Patron of offenders, if he were a Protector of offenders; than which no reflection could be more inviolate upon one that professed the strictness, purity, and business, of a Prophet.

2. The method he took to resolve this case, and so to break this snare.

(1.) He seemed to slant it, and turned a deaf ear to it; he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. It is impossible to tell, and therefore needless to ask, what he wrote; but it is the only mention made in the gospels of Christ's writings; Eusebius indeed tells us the minutes of an order, as the minutes of the business. Some think they have a liberty of conjecture as to what he wrote here. Grotius says, It was some grave weighty saying, and that it was usual for wise men, when they were very thoughtful concerning any thing, to do so. Jerom and Ambrose suppose he wrote, Let the names of these wicked men be written in the dust. Others this, The earth accuses the earth, but the judge ought to be persuaded by the evidence of the case. This is an example to us, how to proceed before we speak, when difficult cases are proposed to us, not quickly to shoot our bolt; and when provocations are given us, or we are batters, to pause and consider before we reply; think twice before we speak once; the heart of the wise studies to answer. Our translation furnishes some Greek copies, which add, ὅπερ πρέπει ἡ εἰσήκουσα, (though the most copies have it not,) give this account of the case, that he took her who heard them not. He did as it were look another way, to show that he was not willing to take notice of their address, saving, in effect, Who made me a Judge or a Divider? It is safe in many cases to be deaf to that which it is not safe to answer, Ps. 38. 13. Christ would not have his ministers to be entangled in secular affairs; let them rather employ themselves in any lawful studies, and fill up their time with work-
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ing on the ground, (which nobody will heed,) than busy themselves in that which does not belong to them. But when Christ seemed as though he heard him not, he made it appear that he not only heard their words, but knew their thoughts.

(2.) When they improperly or rather imprudently pressed him for an answer, he turned the conviction of the prisoner upon the prosecutors, v. 7.

[1.] They continued asking him, and his seeming not to take notice of them, made them more vehement, for now they thought sure enough that they had run him aground, and that he could not avoid the imputation they laid against him. But as for Moses, if he should acquit the prisoner, or his own doctrine of mercy and pardon, if he should condemn him; and therefore they pushed on their appeal to him with vigour; whereas they should have construed his disregard of them as a check to their design, and an intimation to them to desert, as they tendered their own reputation. 

[2.] At last, he put them to shame and silence with one word: He lifted up himself, awaking as one out of sleep, (Ps. 78. 63,) and said unto them, If that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

First, Here Christ avoided the snare which they had laid for him, and effectually saved his own reputation. He neither reflected upon the law, nor excused the prisoner’s guilt; nor did he on the other hand justify her; but he restrained their heat; see the good effect of consideration.

When we cannot make our point by steering a direct course, it is good to fetch a compass.

Secondly, In the net which they spread is their own foot taken. They came with design to accuse him, but they were forced to accuse themselves. Christ owns it was fit the prisoner should be prosecuted, but appeals to their consciences, whether they were fit to be the prosecutors.

1. He here refers to that rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the hands of the witnesses must be first upon them, (Deut. 17. 7,) as in the stoning of Stephen, Acts 7. 58. The Scribes and Pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Now Christ puts it to them, whether, according to their own law, they would dare to be the executioners. Durst they take away the life of a man, or woman, by the testimony of their own tongues, without their own consciences flying in their faces if they did?

2. He builds upon an uncontested maxim in morality, that it is very absurd for men to be zealous in punishing the offences of others, while they are every whit as guilty themselves, and they are not better than self-condemned, who judge others, and yet themselves do the same thing; “If there be any that are without sin,” without of this nature, that has not some time or other been guilty of fornication or adultery, let him cast the first stone at her.” Not that magistrates, who are conscious of guilt themselves, should therefore convoy at others’ guilt. But therefore, (1.) Whenever we find fault with others, we ought to reflect upon ourselves, and to be more severe against sin in ourselves than in others.

(2.) We ought to be favourable towards others, and not the persons that offend, and to restore them with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves and our own corrupt nature.

Aut sumus, aut simul vos possumus esse acud ece—We either are, or have been, or may be, what he is. Let this restrain us from throwing stones at our brethren, and provoking their fault. Let him that is without sin, begin such discourse as that, and then those that are truly humbled for their own sin, will blush at it, and be glad to let it fall. (3.) Those that are any way obliged to animadvert upon the faults of others, are concerned to look well to them-
1. The force of the word of Christ for the conviction of sin. They which heard it were convicted by their own consciences. Conscience is God's deity in the soul, and one word from him will set it on work, Heb. 4. 12. Those that had been old in adulteries, and long fixed in a proud opinion of themselves, the eldest even of them, were here startled by the word of Christ; even Scribes and Pharisees, who were most conviced of themselves, but the reader of Christ's word are made to retire with shame.

2. The folly of sinners under these convictions, which appears in these Scribes and Pharisees. (1.) It is folly for those that are under convictions, to make it their principal care to avoid shame, as Judah, (Gen. 38. 23.) lest we be ashamed. Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our credit. Saul evidenced his hypocrisy, when he said, I have sinned, yet now honour me, I pray thee. There is no way to get the honour and comfort of penitents, but by taking the shame of penitents. (2.) It is folly for those that are under conviction, to contrive how to shift off their convictions, and to get rid of them. The Scribes and Pharisees had the wound opened, and now they should have been discovered to themselves; but they would not, or could not, be healed, but that was the thing they dreaded and declined. (3.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to get away from Jesus Christ, as these here did, for he is the only one that can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those that are convicted by their consciences, will be condemned by their Judge, if they be not justified by their conscience, and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?

5. When the self-condemned prisoners quitted the field, and fled for the same, the self-condemning prisoner stood her ground, with a resolution to abide by the judgment of our Lord Jesus; Jesus was left alone from the company of the Scribes and Pharisees, free from their malcontentions, and the woman standing in the midst of the assembly that were attending on Christ's preaching, where they set her, v. 3. She did not seek to make her escape, though she had opportunity for it; but her prosecutors had appealed unto Jesus, and to him she would go, on him she would wait for her doom. Note, Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus, will never have occasion to remove it into any other court, for he is the highest and the realest, and he will answer for the cause, and calls for judgment upon us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw, its demands are answered, and its clamours silenced, by the blood of Jesus. Our cause is lodged in the gospel-court; we are left with Jesus alone, it is with him only that we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us therefore secure our interest in him, and we are made for ever. Let his gospel rule us, and it will infallibly save us.

6. Here is the conclusion of the trial, and the issue it was brought to; (v. 10, 11.) Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman. Though Christ may seem to take no notice of what is said and done, but leave it to the contending sons of men to deal it among themselves, yet, when the hour of his judgment approacheth, he will no longer keep silence. When David had appealed to God, he prayed, Lift up thyself, Ps. 7. 6. and 94. 2. The woman, it is likely, stood trembling at the bar, as one doubtful of the issue. Christ was without sin, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to sinners, for he is infinitely merciful and loving, at last he finds him so, now that he stands upon her deliverance.

Here is the method of the courts of judiciary ob served:

First, The prosecutors are called; Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? Not but that Christ knew where they were; but he asked, that he might shame them who declined his judgment, and encourage her who resolved to abide by it. St. Paul's challenge is like this, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Where are these their accusers? The accuser of the brethren shall be fairly cast out, and all indictments legaly and legally quashed.

Secondly, They do not appear when the question was asked; Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him Lord, but is silent concerning her prosecutors, says nothing in answer to that question which concerned them. Where are those thine accusers? She does not triumph in their retreat, or insult over them as witnesses against themselves, or, against her. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judges, we must forgive our accusers; and if their accusations, how invidious soever, were the happy occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily forgive them this wrong. But she answered the question which concerned herself, Has no man condemned thee? True penitents find it enough to give account of their own sins, and will not undertake to give account of other people.

Thirdly, The prisoner is therefore discharged; Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. Consider this,

1. As her discharge from the temporal punishment; "If they do not condemn thee to be stoned to death, neither do I." Not that Christ came to administer the ministration of his sword of justice, or, that it is his will that capital punishments should not be inflicted on malefactors; so far from that, the administration of public justice is established by the gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom; By me kings reign. But Christ would not condemn this woman, (1.) Because it was none of his business, he was no judge or divider, and therefore would not intermeddle in secular affairs. His kingdom was not of this world. Tractant fabricol fabri—Let every one act in his own province. (2.) Because she was prosecuted by those that were more guilty than she, and could not for shame insist upon their demand of justice against her. This law appointed the hands of the witnesses to be first upon the criminal, and afterward the hands of all the people, so that if they would condemn her, she would have had an opportunity to make her defense. The justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes takes notice of a comparative righteousness, and spares those who are otherwise obnoxious, when the punishing of them would gratify those that are worse than they, Deut. 32. 26, 27. But when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, Go, and sin no more. Impunity emboldens malefactors to do therefore those who are guilty, and yet have found means to escape the edge of the law, need to double their watch, lest Satan get advantage; for the fairer the escape was, the fairer the warning was to go and sin no more. They who help to save the life of a criminal, should, as Christ here, help to save the soul with this caution.

2. As her discharge from the eternal punishment When Christ said, I do forgive thee; and the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, and could upon good grounds give this absolution; for as he knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors, and therefore said that which would confound them, so he knew the tenderness and sincere repentance of the prisoner, and therefore said that which would comfort her, as he did to that woman who was a sinner, such a sinner as this, who was likewise look ed upon with disdain by a Pharisee; (Luke 7. 48.) Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace. So here
Neither do I condemn thee. Note. (1.) They are truly happy, whom Christ doth not condemn, for his discharge is a sufficient answer to all other challenges, they are all coram non judice—before an unauthorized judge. (2.) Christ will not condemn those, who, though they have sinned, will go and sin no more. Ps. 85. 3. Isa. 55. 7. He will not take the advantage he has against us for our former rebellions, if we will but lay down our arms and return to our allegiance. (3.) Christ’s favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past, should be a prevailing argument with us to go and sin no more, Rom. 6. 1. 2. Will not Christ condemn thee? Go then and sin no more.

12. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. 13. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. 14. Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go. 15. Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man. 16. And yet if I judge, my judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. 17. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. 18. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me. 19. Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. 20. These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come. The rest of the chapter is taken up with debates between Christ and contradicting sinners, who calimed at the most gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth. It is not certain whether these disputes were the same day that the adulteress was discharged, it is probable that they were, for the evangelist mentions no other day, and takes notice (v. 2.) how early Christ began that day’s work. Though those Pharisees that accused the woman, were absconded, yet there were other Pharisees, (v. 13.) to confront Christ, who had brass enough in their forehead to keep them in countenance, though some of their party were put to such a shameful retreat; and perhaps that made them the more industrious to pick quarrels with him, to retrieve, if possible, the reputation of their baffled party.

In these verses, we have,

1. A great doctrine laid down, with the application of it.
2. The doctrine is, That Christ is the Light of the world; (v. 12.) Then spake Jesus again unto them; though he had spoken a great deal to them, to little purpose, and what he had said was opposed, yet he spake again, for he spakehith once, ye twice. They had turned a deaf ear to what he said, and yet he spake again to them, saying, I am the Light of the world. Note. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world. One of the sabbies with Light, is the name of the Messiah, as it is written, Dan. 2. 22. And Light dwelleth with him. God is Light, and Christ is the Image of the invisible God; God of gods, Light of lights. He was expected to be a Light to enlighten the Gentiles, (Luke 2. 32.) and so the Light of the world, and not of the Jewish church only. The visible light of the world is the sun, and Christ is the Sun of Righteousness. One sun enlightens the whole world, so does one Christ. But Christ’s light is no more. Christ’s being the Light, speaks, (1.) What he is in himself—most excellent and glorious. (2.) What he is to the world—the Fountain of light, enlightening every man. What a dungeon would the world be without the sun? So would it be without Christ, by whom light came into the world, ch. 1. 9. 11. 2. The inference from this doctrine is, He that followeth me as a traveller follows the light in a dark night, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. If Christ be the Light, then,

(1.) It is our duty to follow him, to submit ourselves to his conduct, and in every thing take directions from him, in the way that leads to happiness. Many follow false lights—ignes crass, that lead them to destruction. (2.) Christ is the Light. It is not enough to look at this Light, and to gaze upon it, but we must follow it, believe in it, and walk in it, for it is a light to our feet, not our eyes only.

(2.) It is the happiness of those who follow Christ, that they shall not walk in darkness. They shall not be left destitute of these instructions in the way of truth, which are necessary to keep them from destroying error, and those directions in the way of duty, which are necessary to keep them from damming sin. They shall have the light of life, that knowledge and enjoyment of God, which will be to them the light of spiritual life in this world, and of everlasting life in the other world, where there will be no death nor darkness. Follow Christ, and we shall undoubtedly be happy in both worlds. Follow Christ, and he shall follow him to heaven.

11. The objection which the Pharisees made against this doctrine, and it was very telling and frivolous; (v. 13.) Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true. In this objection they went upon the suspicion which we commonly have of men’s self-commendation, which is concluded to be the native language of self-love, such as we are all ready to condemn in others, but few are willing to own in themselves. But in this case the objection was very unjust, for, 1. They made that his crime, and a diminution to the credibility of his doctrine, which in the case of one who introduced a divine revelation was necessary and unavoidable. Did not Moses and all the prophets bear witness of themselves, when they avouched themselves to be God’s messengers? Did not the Pharisees ask John Baptist, What saith thou of thyself? 2. They overlooked the testimony of all the other witnesses, which corroborated the testimony he bore of himself. Had he only borne record of himself, his testimony had indeed been suspicious; and the belief of it might have been suspended; but his doctrine was attested by more than two or three credible witnesses, enough to establish every word of it.

11. III. Christ’s reply to this objection, v. 14. He does not return upon them, as he might, ("Ye profess yourselves to be devout and good men; your witness is not true,"’) but plainly vindicates himself, and though he had waved his own testimony, in ch. 5. 31. yet here he avides by it, that it did not derogate from the credibility of his other proofs, but was necessary to shew the force of them. He is the Light of the world, and it is the property of light to self-evidencing. First principles prove themselves.

He urges three things, to prove that his testimony, though of himself, was true and effectual.
1. That he was conscious to himself of his own authority, and abundantly satisfied in himself concerning it. He did not speak as one at uncertainty, nor present a disputable notion, which he himself hesitated at, but declared a decree, and gave such an assurance of himself as he would abide by; I know whence I come and whither I go. He was fully approved of his own undertaking from first to last; knew where and what he was, before his manifestation to the world, and what he should be after; that he came from the Father, and was going to him, (ch. 16. 28.) came from glory, and was going to glory, and was therefore the true and pure image of his Father, and good Christians, that, though the world knew them not, as it knew him not, yet they knew whence their spiritual life comes, and whither it tends, and go upon sure grounds.

2. That they were very incompetent judges of him, and of his doctrine, and not to be regarded. (1.) Because they were ignorant, willingly and resolvedly ignorant; Ye cannot tell where I come, and whither I go. To what purpose is it to talk with those who know nothing of the matter, nor desire to know? He had told them of his coming from heaven and returning to heaven, but it was foolishness to them, they received it not, it was what the brutish man knows not, Ps. 92. 6. They took upon them to judge of that which they did not understand, which lay quite out of the reach of their acquaintance. They who had experience in the highest things of his divinity and dignities, speak evil of what they know not, Jude 8, 10.

(2.) Because they were partial; (v. 15.) Ye judge after the flesh. When fleshly wisdom gives the rule of judgment, and outward shows and appearances only are given in evidence, and the case decided according to them, then men judge after the flesh, and when the consideration of a secular interest turns the scale in judging of spiritual matters, when we judge in favour of that which pleases the carnal mind, and recommends us to a carnal world, we judge after the flesh; and the judgment cannot be right, when the rule is wrong. The Jews judged of Christ and his gospel by outward appearances, and because he appeared so mean, thought it impossible he should be the Light of the World; as if the sun, under a cloud, were no sun.

3. That his testimony of himself was sufficiently supported and corroborated by the testimony of his Father, with him, and for him, (v. 16.) And if I judge, my judgment is true. He did in his doctrine, (ch. 9. 39.) though not politically. Consider him then, (1.) As a Judge, and his own judgment was valid: If I judge, I who have authority to execute judgments, to whom all things are delivered, I who am the Son of God, and have the Spirit of God, if I judge, my judgment is true, of incontestable rectitude and uncontrollable authority, Rom. 2. 2. If I should judge, my judgment is true, and then you would be condemned: but the judgment-day is not yet come, you are not yet to be condemned, but warned, and therefore now I judge no man;" so Chrysostom.

Now that which makes his judgment unexceptionable, is,

[1.] His Father’s concurrence with him; I am not alone, but I and the Father. He had the Father’s concurrence to direct; as he was with the Father in his manifestation to the world, in forming the counsels, so the Father was with him in the world, in proposing and executing these counsels, and never let him into concili• without advice, Isa. 11. 2. All the counsels of judece (and of war too) were between them both, Zech. 6. 13. He had also the Father’s concurrence to authorize and confirm what he did; see Ps. 89. 21, 89. 42. 1. He did not act alone, or under his own authority, to the exclusion of his Father’s, and by the authority aforesaid, ch. 5. 37. and 14. 9. He,

[2.] His Father’s commission to him; ’’I is the Father that sent me.” Note, God will go along with them that he sends; see Exod. 3. 10, 12. Come, and I will send thee, and certainly, I will be with thee. Now, if Christ had a commission from the Father, and the Father’s presence with him in all his administrations, no doubt his judgment was true and valid; no exception lay against it, no appeal lay from it.

(2.) Look upon him as a Witness, and now he appeared no otherwise, (having not as yet taken the throne of judgment,) and as such his testimony was true and unexceptionable: this he shews, v. 17, 18, where,

First, he quotes a maxim of the Jewish law, v. 17. that the testimony of two men is true. Not as if it were always true in itself, for many a time, a hand was joined in hand to bear a false testimony, 1 Kings 21. 10. But it is allowed as sufficient evidence, upon which to ground a verdict, (verum dictum,) and if nothing appear to the contrary, it is taken for granted to be true. Reference is here had to that law, (Deut. 17. 6.) At the mouth of two witnesses shall he that is worthy of death, be put to death. And see Deut. 19. 15. Numb. 35. 30. It is in favour of life, that in capital causes two witnesses were required, as with us in case of treason. See Heb. 6. 18.

Secondly, He applies this to the case in hand; (v. 18.) I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me bears witness of me. Behold two witnesses! Though in human courts, where the testimony of two witnesses is required, the criminal or candidate is not admitted to the benefit of the law, even in a matter purely divine, which can be proved only by a divine testimony, and God himself must be the Witness, if the formality of two or three witnesses he insisted on, there can be no other than the eternal Father, the eternal Son of the Father, and the eternal Spirit. Now if the testimony of two distinct persons, that are men, and therefore may deceive, or be deceived, is conclusive, much more ought the testimony of the Son of God concerning himself, backed with the testimony of his Father concerning him, to command assent; see 1 John 5. 7, 8, 9-11.

Now this proves, not only that the Father and the Son are two distinct Persons, (for their respective testimonies are here spoken of as the testimonies of two several persons,) but that these two are one, not only in thought and design, but as a spiritual person, and therefore the same in substance. St. Austin here takes occasion to caution his hearers against Sabellianism on the one hand, which confounded the persons in the Godhead, and Arianism on the other, which denied the Godhead of the Son and Spirit. Alias est Filus, et alias patcr, non sani an alias; sed hoc siuant est fatcr, et filius, sibi potent em Deus. The Son is one Person, and the Father is another; these do not, however, constitute two Beings, but the Father is the same Being that the Son is, that is, the only true God. Tract. 36. in Joann.

Christ here speaks of himself and the Father
Witnesses to the world, giving in evidence to the reason and conscience of the children of men, whom he deals with as men. And these Witnesses to the world now, will in the great day be witnesses against those that perish in unbelief; and their word will justly reproach them.

This was the sum of the first conference between Christ and these carnal Jews; in the conclusion of which, we are told how their tongues were let loose, and their hands tied.

1. How their tongues were let loose, (such was the malice of hell,) to cavil at his discourse, v. 19. Though in what he said there appeared nothing of human policy or artifice, but a divine security, yet they set themselves to cross every thing with him. None so incurably blind, as those that resolve they will not see.

Observe, (1.) How they evaded the conviction with a cavil; Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? They might easily have understood, by the tenor of this and his other discourses, that when he spoke of his Father, he meant no other than God himself; yet they pretend to understand him of a common parent, as it appeared to him to his testimony, they bid him call his own, and challenge him, if he could, to produce him. Where is thy Father? Thus, as Christ said to them, (v. 15.) they judge after the flesh.

Perhaps they hereby intend a reflection upon the meanness and obscurity of his family; Where is thy Father, that he should be fit to give evidence in such a case as this? Thus they turn it off with a taunt, when they could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake.

(2.) How he evaded the cavil with a further correction; he did not tell them where his Father was, but charged them with wilful ignorance; Ye neither know me, nor my Father. It is to no purpose to discourse to you about divine things, who talk of them as blind men do of colours. Poor creatures! ye know nothing of the matter.

[1.] He charges them with ignorance of God; Ye know not my Father. in Judah was God known, (P's. 76. 1.) they had some knowledge of him as the God that made the world, but their eyes were darkened that they could not see the light of his glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ. The little children of the Christian church know the Father, knew him as a Father; (1 John 2. 13.) but these rulers of the Jews did not, because they would not, so know him.

[2.] He shews them the true cause of their ignorance of God; If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. The reason why men are ignorant of God, is, because they are unacquainted with Jesus Christ. Did we know Christ, First, In knowing him we should know the Father, whose Person he is the express image of. ch. 14. 9. Chrysostom proves hence the Godhead of Christ, and his equality with his Father. We cannot say, He that know a man, knows an angel, or, He that knows a creature, knows the Creator; but we may say, He that knows Christ, knows the Father. Secondly, By him we shall be instructed in the knowledge of God, and introduced into an acquaintance with him. If we knew Christ better, we should know the Father better; but where the Christian religion is slighted and opposed, natural religion will soon be lost and laid aside. Desult makes way for man policy or artifice, The more we become vain in these imaginations concerning God, that will not learn of Christ.

2. See how their hands were tied, though their tongues were thus let loose; such was the power of Heaven to restrain the malice of hell. These words spake Jesus, these bold words, these words of conviction and reproof, in the treasury, an apartment of the temple, where, to be sure, the chief priests, whose gain was their godliness, were mostly resident, attending the business of the revenue. Christ taught in the temple, sometimes in one part, sometimes in another, as he saw occasion. Now the priests who had so great a concern in the temple, and looked upon it as their demesne, might easily, with the assistance of their associates that were at their beck, either have seized him, and exposed him to the rage of the mob, and that punishment which they called the beating of the rebels; or, at least have silenced him, and stopped his mouth there, as Amos, though tolerated in the land of Judah, was forbidden to prophesy in the king's chapel, Amos 7. 12, 13. Yet even in the temple, where they had him in their reach, No man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come. See here, (1.) The restraint laid upon his persecutors by an invisible power; none of them durst meddle with him. God can set bounds to the wrath of men, as he does to the waves of the sea; let us not therefore fear danger in the way of duty. For God hath Satan and all his instruments in a chain. (2.) The reason of this restraint; His hour was not yet come. The frequent mention of this, intimates how much the time of our deliverance depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. It will come, it is coming; not yet come, but it is at hand. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father; which is very comfortable to every good man, who can look up and say with pleasure, My times are in thy hands; and better than in our own. His hour was not yet come, because his work was not done, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes there is a time.

21. Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. 22. Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? Because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come. 23. And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world. 24. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. 25. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning. 26. I have many things to say and to judge of you; but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him. 27. They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. 28. Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. 29. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. 30. As he spake these words, many believed on him.
I. The wrath threatened; (v. 21.) Jesus said, again unto them that which might be likely to do them good. He continued to teach in kindness to those few who received his doctrine, though there were many that resisted it, which is an example to ministers to go on with their work, notwithstanding opposition, because evangelists shall be saved. Here is a warning voice; he had piped to them in the offers of his grace, and they had not danced; nor now mourns to them in the denunciations of his wrath, to try if they would lament. He said, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins. Whither I go ye cannot come. Every word is terrible, and speaks spiritual judgments, which are the sorest of all others; worse than war, pestilence, and famine, &c., which the Old Testament prophets denounced.

Four things are here threatened against the Jews. 1. Christ's departure from them; I go my way, that is, "It shall not be long before I go; you need not take so much pains to drive me from you, I shall go of myself." They said to him, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; and he took his leave, as if it was his last, not for some other than for himself, where Christ departs. Ichabod, the glory is gone, our defence is departed, when Christ goes. Christ frequently warned them of his departure before he left them; he bid often farewell, as one to depart, and willing to be invited, and that would have them stir up themselves to take hold on him.

2. Their enmity to the true Messiah, and their fruitless and fruitless inquirings after another Messiah, who was gone away, which were both their sins and their punishments; Ye shall seek me, which speaks either, (1.) Their enmity to the true Christ; "Ye shall seek to ruin my interest, by persecuting my doctrine and followers, with a fruitless design to root them out." This was a continual vexation and torment to themselves, made them incurably all-natural, and brought wrath upon their (God's and our) own to the uttermost. Or, (2.) Their enmity to others, after false Christ; "Ye shall continue your expectations of the Messiah, and be the self-perplexing seekers of a Christ to come when he is already come;" like the Sodomites, who, being struck with blindness, wearied themselves to find the door, Rom. 9. 31, 32.

3. Their final impenitency: Ye shall die in your sins. This is an error in all our English Bibles, even the old bishops' translation, and that of Geneva, (the Rheinists only excepted,) for all the Greek copies have it in the singular number, ἀπεισοῦται ἐν σοί, in sin, all the Latin versions; and Calvin has a note upon the difference between this and v. 24. where it is plural, τὰς ἐσπευσίας, that here it is meant especially of the sin of unbelief, in hoc precato ταίς—sin of your unbelief. Note, These that live in unbelief, are for ever undone, if they die in unbelief. Or it may be understood in general, Ye shall die in your iniquity, as Ezek. 3. 19. and 33. 9. Many that have long lived in sin, by a timely repentance, through grace, are saved from dying in sin; but for those who go out of this world of probation into that of retribution under the guilt of sin unpardoned, and the power of sin unbroken, their safety doth not reform; salvation itself cannot save them, Job 20. 11. Ezek. 32. 27.

4. Their eternal separation from Christ and all happiness in him: Whither I go, ye cannot come. When Christ left the world, he went to a state of perfect happiness; he went to paradise, thither he took the penitent thief with him, that did not die in his sins; but the impenent not only shall not come to him, but they shall suffer more, as it was foretold of them for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified, and unworship for it. Ye cannot come, because ye have no right to enter into that Jerusalem, Rev. 22. 14. Whither I go, ye cannot come, to fetch me thence, so Dr. Whitby; and the same is the comfort of all good christians, that, when they are got to heaven, they will be out of the reach of their enemies' malice.

II. The things they made of this threatening. Instead of trembling at this word, they bantered it, and turned it into ridicule; (v. 22.) Will he kill himself? See here, 1. What slight thoughts they had of Christ's threatenings; they could make themselves and one another merry with them, as those that mocked the messengers of the Lord, and turned the barthen of the word of the Lord into a by-word, and fireth upon fireheat, line upon line, into a carnal song. Isa. 30. 14. They be ye fireheaters, let your hands be made, strong. 2. What ill thoughts they had of Christ's meaning, as if he had an inhuman design upon his own life, to avoid the indignities done him, like Saul. This is indeed (say they) to go whither we cannot follow him, for we will never kill ourselves. Thus they make him not only such a one as themselves, but worse, yet in the calamities brought by the Romans upon the Jews, many of them in discontent and despair did kill themselves. They had put a much more favourable construction upon this word of his; (ch. 7. 34, 35.) Will he go to the dispersed Gentiles? But see how indulged malice grows more and more malicious.

III. The confirmation of what he had said. He had said, Whither I go, ye cannot come, and here he further, for that; (v. 23.) Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world. Ye are κατά τὰς θέσεις—of those things which are beneath; noting, not so much their rise from beneath, as their affection to these lower things; "Ye are in with these things, as those that belong to them; how can ye come where I go, when your spirit and disposition are so directly contrary to mine?" See here, (1.) What the Saviour of the Lord Jesus was—not of this world, but from above. He was perfectly dead to the wealth of the world, the ease of the body, and the praise of men, and was wholly taken up with divine and heavenly things; and none shall be with him but those who are born from above, and have their conversation in heaven. (2.) How contrary to this their spirit was; "Ye are from beneath, and desire not the knowledge of my ways, but are subjects of the Pharisian, and a carnal worldly spirit; and what communion could Christ have with them?"

2. He had said, Ye shall die in your sins, and here he stands to it; "Therefore I said, Ye shall die in your sins, because ye are from beneath;" and he gives this further reason for it, If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins, v. 24. See here, (1.) What we are required to believe, that I am He, that is, He whom, or which, one is of God's names, Exod. 3. 14. It was the Son of God that there said, Ehojah asher Ehojah—I will be what I will be; for the deliverance of Israel was but a figure of good things to come, but now he saith, "I am He; he that should come; he that ye expect the Messias to be, that we shall have to be with you. I am more than the bare name of the Messias; I do not only call myself so, but I am in fact so; nor can I die of one empty sound of words, but affects it with the doctrine of Christ's mediation, as a real thing that has real effects. (2.) How necessary it is that we believe this; if we have not this faith, we shall die in our sins; for the matter is so settled, that without this faith, [1.] We cannot be saved from the power of sin while we live, and therefore shall certainly continue in sin while we live; it is impossible we should live for heaven would not be heaven to those that die unsanctified, and unworship for it. Whither I go, ye cannot come, because ye have no right to enter into that Jerusalem,
and that Spirit is given, and that doctrine given, to be effectual to those only who believe in Christ: so that if Satan be not by faith dispossessed, he has a lease of the soul for its life; if Christ do not cure us, our troubles and sins, and we shall die in them; while the believers hear him, and shall die in him. 

[2.] Without faith we cannot be saved from the punishment of sin when we die, for the wrath of God remains upon them that believe not, Mark 16. 16. Unbelief is the darning sin, it is a sin against the remedy. Now this implies the great gospel-promise, If we believe that Christ is he, and receive him accordingly, we shall not die in our sins. The law of nature is absolutely null, as Christ said, (v. 21.) Ye shall not die in your sins, for we are all guilty before God; but the gospel is a dispensation of the obligation, upon condition of believing; the curse of the law is vacated and annull'd to all that submit to the grace of the gospel; believers die in Christ, in his love, in his arms, and so are saved from dying in their sin.

IV. Here is a further discourse concerning himself, occasioned by his requiring faith in himself as the condition of salvation, v. 23—29. Observe, 1. The question which the Jews put to him; (v. 25.) Who art thou? They asked tamely, and not with any desire to be instructed. He had said, Ye must believe that I am he. By his not saying expressly who he was, he plainly intimated that in his person he was such a one as could not be described by any, and in his office such a one as was expected by all that have a redemption in Israel; yet this awful manner of speaking, which had so much significance in it, they turned to his reproach, as if he knew not what to say of himself; "Who art thou, that we must with an implicit faith believe in thee, that thou art some mighty He; we know not who, or what, nor are worthy to know?"

2. His answer to this question, wherein he directs them to believe on him, and says, I am he. He refers himself to what he had said all along; "Do you know who I am? Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning." The original here is a little intricate, τινας τήν τελείαν ἐτύπωσεν ὁ πατεράς, which some read thus; I am the beginning, which also I speak unto you. So Austin takes it, Christ is called άρχή—The Beginning, (Col. 1. 18. Rev. 1. 8—21. 6—3. 14.) and so it agrees with v. 24. The verb ἔγερσις, he rises, I am he, These who object that it is the accusative case, are therefore not properly answering to τις ὁ, must undertake to construe by grammar-rules that parallel expression, Rev. 1. 8—9. But most interpreters agree with our version. Do you ask who I am?

[1.] I am the same that I said to you from the beginning of time in the scriptures of the Old Testament, the same that from the beginning was said to be the Seed of the woman, that should break the serpent's head. Solo. 12, in all the ages of the church was the Mediator of the covenant, and the Faith of the patriarchs.

[2.] From the beginning of my public ministry, the account he had already given of himself, he resolved to abide by; he had declared himself to be the Son of God, (ch. 5. 17.) to be the Christ, (ch. 4. 26.) and the Bread of life, and had prepared himself as the Object of that faith which is necessary to the receiver of him, he refers his question to his answer to their question. Christ is one with himself, what he had said from the beginning, he saith still. His is an everlasting gospel.

[3.] He refers himself to his Father's judgment, and the instructions he had from him; (v. 26.) I have many things, more than you think of, to say, and in them to judge of you. But why should I trouble myself any further with you? I know very well that he who sent me, is true, and will stand by me, and bear me out, for I speak to the world (to which I am sent as an Ambassador) those things, all those, and those only, which I have heard of him." Here:

[1.] He suppresses his accusations of them. He had many things to charge them with, and many evidences to produce against them: but for the present he had said enough. Note, Whatever discoveries of sin are made to us, he that searches the heart, has still more to judge of us. 1 John 3. 20. How much seever God reckons with sinners in this world, there is still a further reckoning yet behind, Deut. 32. 34. Let us learn hence not to be forward to say all we can say, even against the worst of men; we may have the worse of it way by way of censure, which yet it be better to leave unprayed, for what is it to us?

[2.] He enters his appeal against them to his Father; He that sent me. Here two things comfort him.

First, That he had been true to his Father, and to the trust reposed in him; I speak to the world (for his gospel was to be preached to every creature) those things which I have heard of him. Being given for a Witness to the people, (Isa. 55. 4.) he was 'Ame, a faithful Witness, Rev. 3. 14. He did not conceal his doctrine, but spake it to the world: being of common concern, it was to be of common notice; nor did he change or alter it, nor vary from the instructions he received from him that sent him.

Secondly, That his Father would be true to him; true to his promise, that he would make his mouth like a sharp sword; true to his word he had given him, which was a decree, (Ps. 2. 7.) true to the threatenings of his wrath against these that should reject him. Though he should not accuse them to his Father, yet the Father, who sent him, would undoubtedly reckon with them, and would be true to what he had said, (Deut. 18. 19.) that whosoever would not hearken to that Prophet whom God would raise up, he would require of him and his name, and would not accuse them; "For," saith he, "he that sent me, is true, and will pass judgment on them, though I should not demand judgment against them." Thus when he lets fall the present presentation, he binds them over to the judgment day, when it will be too late to dispute what they will not now be persuaded to believe. I, as a deaf man, heard not, for they will hear, Ps. 38. 14. All things spoken of the Saviour's discourse the evangelist has a melancholy remark; (v. 27.) They understood not that he spake to them of the Father. See here, 1. The power of Satan to blind the minds of them who believe not. Though Christ spake so plainly of God as his Father in heaven, yet they did not understand whom he meant, but thought he spake of some father he had in Galilee. Thus the plainest things are riddles and parables to those who are hardened, and resolved to hold fast their prepossession. Being night are alike to the blind. 2. The reason why the threatenings of the word make so little impression upon the minds of sinners; it is because they understand not what the judgment is, that they made themselves obnoxious to.

[3.] He refers himself to their own convictions hereafter, v. 28. 29. He finds they will not understand him, and therefore adjourns the trial till further evidence should come in; they that will not see, yet shall see, Isa. 26. 11. Now observe here, 1. What they should ere long be convinced of; Ye shall know that I am he, that Jesus is the true Messiah. Whether you will own it or no, before men, you shall be made to know it in your own con-
sciences, the convictions of which, though you may
stifle, yet you cannot baffle: that I am he, not that
you represent me to be; but he that I preach myself
to be, he that should come after me, and do the things
they should do, in order to this, I say.
That he did nothing of himself, not of himself as
Man, of himself alone, of himself without the Fa-
ther, with whom he was one. He does not hereby
derogate from his own inherent power, but only
desires their charge against him as a false Prophet, of
whom it is said, that they prophesied of their
own heart, and not out of the mouth of God.

23. Secondly, it is said, (r. 24. for thus
(16. that I may
preach this, as
are not
29. 23.
16. that
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Man,
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Isa.
3. 14.) as the sacrifices under the law,
(for Christ is the great Sacrifice,) which, when
they were offered, were said to be elevated, or lifted up;
and hence the burnt-offerings, the most ancient and ho-
nor able of all, called the elevation, (Grec. Εκκεντρισμος,
from γενωθαι, ascended— he ascended,) and in many
other offerings they used the significant ceremony of
hearing the sacrifice up, and moving it before the
Lord; thus was Christ lifted up. Or it notes that
his death was his exaltation; that they that put him to
death, thought thereby for ever to have sunk him
and his interest, but it proved to be the advance-
ment of both. ch. 12. 24. When the Son of man
was crucified, the Son of man was glorified. Christ
had called his dying his going away, here his being
lifted up; thus the death of the saints, as it is their
departure out of this world, so it is their advance-
ment to a better. Observe, His speaks of those he
is now talking with, as the instruments of his death;
when ye have lifted up the Son of man: not that they
were to be the priests to offer him up, (no, that was
his own act, he offered up himself,) but they would
be his betrayers and murderers; see Acts 2. 23.
They lifted him up to the cross, but then he lifted
up himself to his Father. Observe with what ten-
derness and mildness Christ here speaks to those
who he certainly knew, would put him to death, to
teach us not to hate or seek the hurt of any, though
we have reason to think they hate us, and seek
our hurt.

Now Christ speaks of his death, as that which
would be a powerful conviction of the infidelity of the
Jews: When ye have lifted up the Son of man,
then shall ye know this. And why then? First,
Because careless and unthinking people are often
taught the worth of mercies by the want of them,
Luke 12. 13. Then, when putting Christ to death, would so awaken their con-
sciences, that they would be put upon serious inquir-
as after a Saviour, and then would know that Jesus
was he who alone could save them. And so it pro-
ved, when, being told that with wicked hands they
had crucified and slain the Son of God, they cried
out, What shall we do? and were made to know as
surely as Christ would of the Jews were of their
Acts 2. 37. Thirdly, There would be such signs
and wonders attending his death, and the lifting of
him up from death in his resurrection, as would give
a stronger proof of his being the Messiah, than any
that had been yet given; and multitudes were here-
by brought to believe that Jesus is the Christ, who
had before contradicted and opposed him. Fourthly,
By the death of Christ the pouring out of the Spirit
was purchased, which would convince the world that
Jesus is he, ch. 16. 7, 8. Fifthly, The judgments
which the Jews brought upon themselves, by putting
Christ to death, which filled up the measure of their
iniquity, were a sensible conviction to the most har-
sh, and yet most serious, of all those Jews who had
then been called to be his hearers, and had been
often foretold that desolation as the just punishment of
their invincible unbelief, and when it came to pass, (lo, it did come,) they could not but know that
the great Prophet had been among them, Ezek. 33. 33.

[3. What supported our Lord Jesus in the mean-
time, they say, v. 29. He that sent me is with me, in
my whole undertaking, for the Father (though Christ had
first spring of this affair, from whom, as its great
cause and author it is derived) hath not left me alone
to manage it myself, nor deserted the business or me,
in the prosecution of it, for I do always those things
that please him.

Here is, First, The assurance which Christ had
of his Father's presence with him, which includes
both a divine power going along with him to enable
him for his work, and a divine favour manifested to
him to encourage him in it. He that sent me is with
me, Isa. 42. 1. Ps. 89. 21. This greatly emboldens
our faith in Christ and our reliance upon his word,
that he had, and knew he had, his Father with him,
to confirm the word of his Servant, Isa. 44. 26. The
whole undertaking is called the pleasure of the Lord,
to attest his mission, and assist his management, and
never left him alone, either solitary or weak; it also
aggravated the wickedness of those that opposed
him, and was an intimation to them of the promis-
ure they run themselves into by resisting him, for
thereby they were found fighters against God. How
ever sofer they might think to crush him and run
him down, let them know that he had one to back
him, with whom it is the greater readiness that can
be to contend.

Secondly, The ground of this assurance; For I
do always those things that please him. That is, 1.
That great affair which our Lord Jesus was con-
tinually engaged in, was an affair which the Father
that sent him was highly well pleased with. His
whole undertaking is called the pleasure of the
Lord, (Isa. 53. 10,) because of the counsels of the
ternal mind about it, and the complacency of the
ternal mind in it. 2. His management of that affa-

4. Here is the good effect which this discourse of
Christ had upon some of his hearers; (v. 30.) To
make them away with this object on him. Note,
1. Though multitudes perish in their unbelief, yet
there is a remnant according to the election of grace,
who believe to the saving of the soul. If Israel,
the whole body of the people, be not gathered, yet there
are those of them, in whom Christ will be glorious,
Isa. 45. 9. This the apostle insists upon, to recon-
cile the Jews' rejection with the promises made into
their fathers. There is a remnant, Rom. 11. 5. 2.
The words of Christ, and particularly his threaten-
ing words, are made effectual by the grace of God, to bring to poor souls to believe in him. When Christ told them that if they believed not, they should die in their sins, and never get to heaven, he thought it was time to look about them, Rem. 1. 16, 18. Sometimes there is a wide door opened, and an effectual one, even there where there are many adversaries. Christ will carry on his work, though the heathen rage. The gospel gains great victories, sometimes, there where it meets with great opposition. Let this encourage God's ministers to preach the gospel, though it be with much contention, for they shall not labour in vain. Many may be secretly brought home to God by those enervating, which are openly contradicted and cavilled at by men of corrupt minds. Austin has an affectionate ejaculation in his lecture upon these words, Utinam et, me loquenter, multi credat; non in me, sed mecum in eo—I wish that when I speak, many may believe, not on me, but with me on him.

31. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? 34. Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. 35. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. 36. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. 37. I know that ye are Abraham's seed: but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

We have, in these verses,
I. A comfortable doctrine laid down concerning the spiritual liberty of Christ's disciples, intended for the encouragement of those Jews which believed. Christ, knowing that his doctrine began to work upon some of his hearers, and perceiving that virile spirits, which are openly contradicted and cavilled at by men of corrupt minds, Austin has an affectionate ejaculation in his lecture upon these words, Utinam et, me loquenter, multi credat; non in me, sed mecum in eo—I wish that when I speak, many may believe, not on me, but with me on him.

1. [1.] It is implied that there are many who profess themselves Christ's disciples, who are not his disciples indeed, but only in show and name. [2.] It highly concerns those that are not strong in faith, yet to see to it that they be sound in the faith, that, though they be not disciples of the highest form, yet that they be disciples indeed. [3.] Those who seem willing to be Christ's disciples, ought to be told that they had as good never come to him, unless they come with a resolution by his grace to abide by him. Let those who have thoughts of covenanting with Christ, have no thoughts of reserving a power of revocation. Children are set to school, and bound apprentices only for a few years; but those only are bound who are effectually made to believe, and to the new life. [4.] They only that continue in Christ's word, shall be accepted as his disciples indeed, that adhere to his word in every instance without parly, and abide by it to the end without apostacy. It is wise— to dwell in Christ's word, as a man does at home, which is his centre and rest and refuge. Our converse with the word and conformity to it must be constant. If we continue disciples to the last, then, and not otherwise, we approve ourselves disciples indeed.

2. The privilege of a true disciple of Christ. Here are two precious promises made to those who thus approve themselves disciples indeed, v. 32.

1. [1.] "Ye shall know the truth, shall know all that truth which it is needful and profitable for you to know, and shall be more confirmed in the belief of it, shall know all that truth which is needful and profitable for you to know. Even those who are true believers and disciples indeed, may be, and are, much in the dark concerning many things which they should know. God's children are but children, and understand and speak as children. Did we not need to be taught, we should not need to be disciples. Secondly, It is a very great privilege to know the truth; to know the particular truths which we are to believe, in their mutual dependences and connections, and the grounds and reasons of our belief; to know what is truth, and what proves it to be so. Thirdly, It is a gracious promise of Christ to all who continue in his word, that they shall know the truth as far as is needful and profitable for them. Christ's scholars are sure to be well taught.

2. The truth shall make you free. That is, First, The truth which Christ teaches tends to the free mind men. Isa. 61. 1. [1] Justification makes us free from the guilt of sin, by which we were bound over to the judgment of God, and bound under amazing fears; sanctification makes us free from the bondage of corruption, by which we are restrained from that service which is perfect freedom, and constrained to that which is perfect slavery. Gospel-truth frees us from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and the more grievous burthens of the traditions of the elders. It makes us free from our spiritual enemies, free in the service of God, free to the privileges of sons, and free of the Jerusalem which is from above, which is free. Secondly, The knowing, entertaining, and believing, of this truth does actually make us free, free from prejudices, mistakes, and false notions, than which nothing more enslaves and entangles the soul, free from the domestication of lusts and passions, which are the sinews to the government of itself, by reducing it into obedience to its Creator. The mind, by admitting the truth of Christ in the light and power, is vastly enlarged, and has scope and compass given it, is greatly elevated and raised above things of sense, and never acts with so true a liberty as when it acts under a divine command, 2 Cor. 3. 17. The enemies of Christianity pretend to free-thinking, whereas really those are the freest reasonings, that are guided by faith, and those are men of free thought,
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whose thoughts are captivated and brought into obedience to Christ.

II. The offence which the carnal Jews took at this doctrine, and their objection against it. Though it were a doctrine that they were glad of, and had that liberty to the privileges yet they cavilled at it, v. 33.

The Pharisees, who grudged this comfortable word to them that believed, the standers by, who had no "tart or lot in this matter", they thought themselves reflected upon and affronted by the gracious charter, of liberty granted to them that believed; and therefore, with a great deal of pride and envy, they an- swered Christ, that "He were born of a man", and that therefore they were free-born, and have not lost our birthright, freedom, we were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou then, to us Jews, Ye shall be made free?"

1. See here what it was that they were grieved at; it was an incitement in those words, Ye shall be made free; as if the Jewish church and nation were in some sort of bondage, which reflected on the Jews in general; and as if all that did not believe in Christ continued in that bondage, which reflected on the Pharisees in particular. Note, The privi- leges of the faithful are the envy and vexation of unbelievers, Ps. 112. 10.

2. See what it was that they alleged against it; whereas Christ intimated that they needed to be made free, (v. 34.); Abraham's seed, and Abraham was a prince, and a great man; though we live in Canaan, we are not descended from Canaan, nor under his doom, a servant of serv- ants shall he be; we hold in frank-almoil—free alms, and not in villenage—by a servile tenure."

It is common for a sinking decaying family to boast of the glory and dignity of its ancestors, and to bor- row his Christ to be, to obtuq his freedom, when dying; so was the case, so the Jews here did. But this was not all; Abraham was in covenant with God, and his children by his right, Rom. 11. 28. Now that coven- ant, no doubt, was a free charter, and invested them in privileges not consistent with a state of slavery, Rom. 9. 4. And therefore they think they had no occasion with so great a sum as they reckon- ed faith in Christ to be, to obtain this freedom, when they were free-born. Note, It is the common fault and folly of those that have pions parentage and education, to trust to it, and boast of it, as if it would atone for the want of real holiness. They were Abraham's seed, but what would that avail them, when we find one in hell, that could call Abraham father? Saving benefits are not, like common privileges, conveyed by entail to us and our issue, nor can a title to heaven be made by descent, nor may we claim as heirs at law, by making out our pedigree; our title is purely by purchase, not our own, but our Redeemer's for us, under certain pro- visions and limitations, which if we do not observe, it will not avail to us to be Abraham's seed. Thus many, when they are pressed with the necessity of regenerating grace, turn it off with this. We are the church's children; but they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. (2) We were never in bondage to any man. Now observe, [1.] How false this allegation was. I wonder how they could have the confidence to say a thing in the face of a congregation, which was so notoriously untrue. Was not the seed of Abraham in bondage to the Egyptians? Were they not often in a state of slavery amongst the Semitic nations, in the time of the judges? Were they not seventy years captives in Babylonia? Nay, were they not at this time tributaries to the Romans, and though not in a personal, yet in a national bondage to them, and grieving to be made free? And yet, to confront Christ, they have the imposition to say, We were never in bondage. Thus they would expose Christ to the ill-will both of the Jews, who were very jealous for the honour of their liberty, and of the Romans, who would not be thought to enslave the nations they conquered. [2.] How foolish the application was. Christ had spoken of a liberty wherewith the truth would make them free, which must be mean the spiritual liberty, for truth, as it is the enriching, so is it the enfran- chising, of the mind, and the enlarging of that from the captivity of error and prejudice; and yet they plead against the effec of spiritual liberty, that they were never in corporal thrallism; as if because they were never in bondage to any man, they were never in bondage to any lust. Note, Carnal hearts are so bound with the false security of self-righteousness, that molest their body, and distress their secular affairs. Talk to them of encroachments upon their civil liberty and property; tell them of waste committed upon their lands, or damage done to their houses, and they under- stand you very well, and can give you a sensible answer, the thing touches them, and affects them; but discourse to them of the bondage of sin, a cap- tivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ; tell them of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare, and you bring certain strange things to their ears; they say of it, as they did, Ezek. 20. 49. Dost he not speak parables? This here was much like the blunder Nicodemus made about being born again.

III. The Saviour's vindication of his doctrine from these objections, and the further explication of it, v. 34—37. where he does these four things.

1. He shews that, notwithstanding their civil liber- ties, and their visible church-membership, it was possible that they might be in a state of bondage; (v. 34.) Whosoever commits sin, though he be of Abraham's seed, and never in bondage to any man, yet he is the servant of sin. Observe, Christ does not suppose them, that they could not be in bondage to sin, or their present bondage, but further explains what he had said for their edification. Thus ministers should with meekness instruct those that oppose them, that they may recover themselves, not with passion provoke them to entangle themselves yet more. Now here,

(1.) The preface is very solemn; Verily, verily, I say unto you, an awful assercion, which our Saviour often used, to command a reverent attention and a ready assent. The style of the prophets was, Thus saith the Lord, for they were faithful as servants; but Christ, being a Son, speaks in his own name, I say unto you, I the Amen, the faithful Witness; he pawns his veracity upon it. "I say it to you, who boast of your relation to Abraham, as if that would save you." (2.) The truth is of universal concern, though here delivered upon a particular occasion; Whoso- ever committeth sin, is the servant of sin, and sadly wants to be made free. A state of sin is a state of bondage.

(3.) See who it is on whom this word is fastened—him that commits sin. "I make choice of sin, of every one that makes sin, of every man that makes sin, of every man that makes choice of sin, prefers the way of wickedness before the way of holiness; (Jer. 44. 16, 17.) that makes a covenant with sin, enters into league with it, and makes a marriage with it; that makes covenants with sin, that has a companion, is a companion to sin, that makes a league with sin, that is a member of the public outcry, and that makes a custom of sin, who walks after the flesh, and makes a trade of sin."

(2.) See what the brand is, which Christ fastens upon them that thus commit sin—he stigmatizes them, gives them a mark of servitude. They are servants of sin; imprisoned under the guilt of sin, under an arrest, in hold for it, concluded under sin, and they are subject to the power of sin. He is a
servant of sin, he makes himself so, and is so accounted; he has sold himself to work wickedness; his lusts give law to him, he is at their beck, and is not his own master. He does the work of sin, supports its interest, and accepts its wages, Rom. 6. 16.

2. He shews them that being in a state of bondage, having a room in the house of God would not entitle them to the inheritance of sons: for (v. 33.) the servant, though he be in the house for a while, yet, being but a servant, abideth not in the house for ever; services (we say,) are no inheritances, they are but temporary, and not for a perfection; but the son of the family abideth ever.

Now, (1.) This points primarily at the rejection of the Jewish church and nation. Israel had been God's son, his first-born; but they wretchedly degenerated into a servile disposition, were enslaved to the world and the flesh, and therefore though, by virtue of their birthright, they had a right to be among the sons of God, of their church-membership, Christ tells them that having thus made themselves servants, they should not abide in the house for ever. Jerusalem, by opposing the gospel of Christ, which proclaimed liberty, and adhering to the Sinaitic-covenant, which tended to bondage, after its term was expired, came to be in bondage with her children, (Gal. 4. 24, 25.) and therefore was unchristian and disfavored. The church, which was the bond-woman, Christ says was cast out as the son of the bond-woman, Gen. 21. 10.

Chrysostom gives this sense of this place, "Think not to be made free from sin by the rites and ceremonies of the law of Moses, for Moses was but a servant, and had not that perpetual authority in the church, which the Son had; but if the Son make you free, it is well," v. 36. But, (2.) It looks further, to the rejection of all that are the servants of sin, or receive not the adoption of the sons of God; though these unprofitable servants may be in God's house a while, as retainers to his family, yet there is a day coming, when the children of the bond-woman and of the free shall be distinguished. True believers only, who are the children of the promise and of the covenant, are accounted free, and shall abide for ever in the house, as Isaac: they shall have a nail in the holy place on earth, (John 14. 2.) and mansions in the holy place in heaven, ch. 14. 2.

3. He shews them the way of deliverance out of this state of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. 8. 21. The case of those that are the servants of sin, is sad, but thanks be to God it is not helpless, it is not hopeless. As it is the privilege of all the sons of the family, and their dignity above the servants, that they abide in the house for ever; so he who is the Son, the First-born among many brethren, and the Heir of all things, he has a power both of manumission and of adoption; (v. 36.) If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Note, (1.) Jesus Christ in the gospel offers us our freedom; he has authority and power to make free. [1.] To discharge prisoners; this he does in justification, by their satisfaction for our sins, upon which the gospel-offer is grounded, which is all to a conditional act of indemnity, and to all true believers, upon their believing, an absolute charter of pardon; moreover he makes satisfaction for our debts, for which we were by the law arrested and in execution. Christ, as our Surety, or rather our Bail, (for he was not originally bound with us, but upon our insolvency bound for us,) compasses with the Creditors, and answers the demands of injured justice with more than an equivalent, takes the bond and judgment into his own hands, and gives them up cancelled to all that by faith and repentance give him (if I may so say) a counter-security to save his honour harmless, and so they be made free; and from the debt, and every part thereof, they are for ever acquitted, exonerated, and discharged, and a general release sealed of all actions and claims; while against those who refuse to come up to these terms, the securities lie still in the Redeemer's hands, in full force. [2.] He has a power to rescue bondslaves, and thus he does in sanctification; by the powerful arguments of his gospel, and the powerful operations of his Spirit, he breaks the power of corruption in the soul, rallies the scattered members, revives reason and virtue, and fortifies God's interest against sin and Satan, and so the soul is made free. [3.] He has a power to naturalize strangers and foreigners, and this he does in adoption. This is a further act of grace; we are not only forgiven and healed, but preferred, there is a charter of privileges as well as pardon; and thus the Son makes us free demesnes of the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the new Jews, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

(2.) Those whom Christ makes free, are free indeed. It is not is2, the word used, v. 31, for disciples indeed, but in'se—really. It notes, (1.) The truth and certainty of the promise; the liberty which the Jews boasted of, was an imaginary liberty, they boasted of a false gift, but the liberty which Christ gives, is a certain thing, it is real, and has real effects; the servants of sin promise themselves something, but who has seen that they have broken religious bands asunder; but they cheat themselves, none are free indeed but these whom Christ makes free. [2.] It notes the singular excellency of the freedom promised; it is a freedom that deserves the name, in comparison with which all other liberities are no better than slaverys, so much does it turn to the honour and advantage of those that are made free by it. It is a glorious liberty. 1. It is the liberty that is Christ's, that is to be exercised in liberty (for liberty is that which is to be taken by itself;) it is substance; (Prov. 8. 21.) while the things of the world are shadows, things that are not.

4. He applies this to these unbelieving cavilling Jews. In answer to their boasts of relation to Abraham, (v. 37.) "I know very well that ye are Abraham's seed, but now ye seek to kill me, and therefore have forfeited the honour of your relation to Abraham, because my word hath in it place in you." Observe here,

(1.) The dignity of their extraction allowed them; "I know that ye are Abraham's seed, every one knows it, and it is your honour." He grants them what was true, and in what they said that was false, (that they were never in bondage to any,) he does not contradict them, for he studied to profit them, and not to provoke them, and therefore said that what they would please them, I know that ye are Abraham's seed. They boasted of their descent from Abraham, as that which aggrandized their names, and made them exceeding honourable, whereas really it did but aggravate their crimes, and make them exceeding sinful. Out of their own mouths will he judge vain-glorious hypocrites, who boast of their parentage and education; "Are you Abraham's seed? Why then did you not tread in the steps of his faith, and of his obedience?"

(2.) The disagreeableness of their practice with this dignity; But ye seek to kill me. They had attempted it several times, and were now设计ing it, which quickly appeared, (v. 59.) when they took up stones to cast at him. Christ knows all the wickedness, not only which men do, but which they seek and design, and endeavour to do. To seek to kill any innocent man, is a crime black enough, but to confound and imagine the death of him that was King of kings, was a crime which we want words to express the heinousness of.

(3.) The reason of this inconsistency: why were they that were Abraham's seed, so very inveterate against Abraham's promised Seed, in whom they
and all the families of the earth should be blessed? Our Saviour here tells them, It is because my word hath no place in you, εὐχαριστούν ἀπὸ σαρκιῶν. Non capiunt in viribus, so the vulgar; "My word does not take with you, you have no inclination to it, no relish of it, other things are more taking, more pleasing." Or, "It does not take hold of you, it has no power over you, makes no impression upon you." Some of the critics read it, My word does not penetrate into you; it descended as the rain, but it came upon them as the rain upon the rock, which runs off, and did not sink into their hearts, as the rain upon the ploughed ground. The Syriac reads it, "Because ye do not acquiesce in my word; you are not persuaded of the truth of it, nor pleased with the goodness of it." Our translation is very significant. It has no place in you. They sought to kill him, and so effectually to silence him, not because he had done them any harm, but because they could not bear the convincing, commanding power of his word. Note, [1.] The word of Christ ought to have a place in us, the innermost and uppermost place; a dwelling place, as a man at home, and not as a stranger or sojourner, a working place, it must have room to operate, to work sin out of us, and to work grace in us; it must have a ruling place, its place must be upon the throne, it must dwell in us richly. [2.] There are many that make a profession of religion, in whom the Word of Christ has no place; they will not allow it a place, for they do not like it; Satan does all he can to displace it; and other things possess the place it should have in us. [3.] Where the Word of God has no place, no good is to be expected, for room is left there for all wickedness. If the unclean spirit find the heart empty of Christ's word, he enters in, and dwells there.

38. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. 39. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. 40. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. 41. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. 42. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. 43. Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. 44. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. 45. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. 46. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? 47. He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.

Here Christ and the Jews are still at issue; he sets himself to convince and convert them, while they still set themselves to contradict and oppose him.

1. He here traces the difference between his sentiments and their's to a different rise and original; (v. 38.) I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. Here are two fathers spoken of, according to the two families, into which the sons of men are divided—God and the devil, and without controversy these are contrary the one to the other.

1. Christ's doctrine was from heaven, it was coped out of the counsels of infinite wisdom, and the kind intentions of eternal love. (1.) I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and he doeth with me, as the Father doeth with the Son. Now there were none so near to Christ as his own natural relations, and of God and another world, are not grounded upon guess and hearsay, but upon ocular inspection; so that he was thoroughly assured of the nature, and ascertained of the truth, of all he said. He that is given to be a Witness to the people, is an Eye-wit ness, and therefore unexceptionable. (2.) It is what I have seen with my Father. The doctrine of Christ is not a fallacious hypothesis, supported by probable arguments, but it is an exact counterpart of the incontestable truths lodged in the eternal mind. It was not only what he had heard from his Father, but what he had seen with him, when the counsel of peace was between them both. Moses spake what he heard from God, but he might not see the face of God; Paul had been in the third heaven, but what he had seen there, he could not tell, his mouth was not utter for it was Christ's prerogative to have seen what he spake, and to speak what he had seen.

2. Their doings were from hell; "Ye do that which ye have seen with your father. Ye do, by your own works, father yourselves, for it is evident whom ye resemble, and therefore easy to find out your original." As a child that is trained up with his father, learns his father's words and fashions, and grows like him by an affected imitation as well as by a natural image, so these Jews, by their malicious opposition to Christ and the gospel, made themselves as like the devil as if they had industriously set him before them for their pattern.

II. He takes off and answers their vain-glorious boasts of relation to Abraham and to God, as their fathers, and shews the vanity and falsehood of their pretensions:

1. They pleaded relation to Abraham, and he replied to that plea. They said, Abraham is our father, v. 39. In this they intended, (1.) To do honour to themselves, and to make themselves look great. They had forgotten the mortification given them by that acknowledgment prescribed them, (Deut. 28. 5.) A stranger and a sojourner shalt thou be in the land which is going forth of Egypt, and the charge exhibited against their degenerate ancestors (whose steps they trod in, and not those of the first founder of the family,) thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite, Ezek. 16. 3. As it is common for those families that are sinking and going to decay, to boast most of their pedigree, so it is common for those churches that are corrupt and de prepaid, to value themselves upon their antiquity, and the eminence of their first planters, Jacob's Trees, fuit Illum—we have been Trojans, and there once was Troy. (2.) They designed to cast an odium upon Christ, as if he reflected upon the patriarch Abraham, in speaking of their father, as one they had learned evil from. See how they sought an occasion to quarrel with him.

Now I must overthrow this plea, and discovers the vanity of it by a plain and cogent argument; "Abraham's children will do the works of Abraham, but ye do not do Abraham's works, therefore ye are not Abraham's children."

[1.] The proposition is plain; "If ye were Abra-
ham's children, such children of Abraham as could claim an interest in the covenant made with him and his seed, which would indeed put an honour upon you, then ye would do the works of Abraham, for to those only of Abraham's house, who kept the way of the Lord, as Abraham did, would God perform what he had spoken," Gen. 18. 19. Those only are reckoned the seed of Abraham, who are so much like him, and so much his children, as to deserve his blessing, and to be called his seed in the same sense as his natural seed, were not more so by the law than by the promise.

[Note, many and some this literal. They were not the sons of the bond-woman, as the Ishmaelites were; nor begotten in incest, as the Moabites and Ammonites were; (Deut. 23. 3.) nor were they a spurious brood in Abraham's family, but Hebrews of the Hebrews; and being born in lawful wedlock, they might call God Father, who instituted that honourable estate in innocency; for a legitimate seed, not tainted with divorces or the plurality of wives, is called a seed of God, Mal. 2. 15.]

[2.] The assertion is evident likewise; But ye do not do the works of Abraham, for ye seek to kill me, a man that has told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham, v. 40. First, He shews them what their work was, their present work, which they were now then doing. They sought to kill him; and three things are intimated as an aggravation of their intention. 1. They were so unnatural as to seek the life of a man, a man like themselves, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, he who had done them no harm, nor given them any provocation. Ye imagine mischief against a man, Ps. 62. 3. 2. They were so ungrateful as to seek the life of one who had told them the truth, had not only done them no injury, but done them the greatest kindness that could be; had not only not imposed upon them with a lie, but had instructed them in the most necessary and important truths; was he therefore become their enemy? 3. They were so ungodly as to seek the life of one who told them the truth, which he had heard from God, who was a Messenger sent from God to them, so that their attempt against him was quasi delictum—a sin to the highest degree. This was their work, and they persisted in it.

Secondly, He shows them this did not become the children of Abraham; for this did not Abraham. 1. He did nothing like this. He was famous for his humanity, witness his rescue of the captives; and for his piety, witness his obedience to the heavenly vision in many instances, and some tender ones. Abraham believed God, these were obsequious in mind; they were not. They thought Abraham followed God, these fought against him; so that he would be ignorant of them, and would not acknowledge them, they were so unlike him, Isa. 63. 16. See Jer. 22. 15—17. 2. He would not have done thus if he had lived now, or I had lived then. How Abraham non fecisset—He would not have done this; some read it. We should thus reason ourselves out of any way of wickedness; we should remember the love of God, and Isau, and Jacob have done so. We cannot expect to be ever with them, if we be never like them.

[3.] The conclusion follows of course; (v. 41.) Whatever your boasts and pretensions be, you are not Abraham's children, but father yourselves upon another family; (v. 41.) there is a father whose deeds you do, whose spirit ye are of, and whom you resemble. He does not say plainly that he meant the devil, till they by their continued civilities forced him so to explain himself; which teaches us to treat even bad men with civility and respect, and not to be forward to say that of them, or to them, which, though true, sounds harsh. He tried whether they would suffer their own consciences to infer from what he said, that they were the devil's children; and it is better to hear it from them now that we are callers, and not in the manner of the devil, to change our father, and change our family, by enquiring of our way, and way, than hear it from Christ in the great day.

2. So far were they from owning their unworthiness of relation to Abraham, that they pleaded relation to God himself as their father; We are not born of fornication, we are not bastards, but legitimate sons; we have one Father, even God.

(1.) Some understand this literally. They were not the sons of the bond-woman, as the Ishmaelites were; nor begotten in incest, as the Moabites and Ammonites were; (Deut. 23. 3.) nor were they a spurious brood in Abraham's family, but Hebrews of the Hebrews; and being born in lawful wedlock, they might call God Father, who instituted that honourable estate in innocency; for a legitimate seed, not tainted with divorces or the plurality of wives, is called a seed of God, Mal. 2. 15.

(2.) Others take it figuratively. They begin to be aware now, that Christ spake of a spiritual not a carnal fatherhood, of the father of their religion; and so,

[1.] They deny themselves to be a generation of idolaters; We are not born of fornication, are not the children of idolatrous parents, nor have been bred up in idolatrous worship. Idolatry is often understood of all religion which is not that of God. They are called children of whoredoms, Hosea 2. 4. Isa. 57. 3. Now if they said that they were not the posterity of idolatry, the allegation was false, for no nation was more addicted to idolatry than the Jews before the captivity; if they mean no more than that they themselves were not idolaters, what then? A man may be free from idolatry, and yet perish in another sin, and be shut out of Abraham's covenant. If thou commit no idolatry, (apply it to this spiritual fornication,) yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the covenant. A rebellious prodigal son will be disinherited, though he be not born of fornication.

[2.] They boast themselves to be true worshippers of the true God. We have not many fathers, as the heathen had, gods many, and lords many, and yet were without God, as Pharaoh's—sons of which the people has many fathers, and yet none certain; no, the Lord our God is one Lord and one Father, and therefore it is well with us. Note, These flatter themselves, and put a damning cheat upon their own souls, who imagine that their professing of the true religion, and worshipping of the true God, will save them, though they worship not God in spirit and in truth, nor are true to their profession.

Now our Saviour gives a full answer to this fallacious plea, (v. 42, 43.) and proves, by two arguments, that they had no right to call God Father.

First, They did not love Christ; If God were your Father, you would love me. He had disproved their relation to Abraham by their going about to kill him; (v. 46.) but here he disproves their relation to God by their not loving Christ. A child may pass for a child of Abraham, if he do not appear an enemy to Christ by gross sin; but he cannot approbe himself a child of God, unless he be a faithful friend and follower of Christ. Note, All that have God for their Father, have a true love to Jesus Christ, an esteem of his person, a grateful sense of his love, a sincere affection to his cause and kingdom, a complacency in the salvation wrought out by him, and in the method and terms of it, and a care to keep his commandments, which is the
arest evidence of our love to him. We are here in a state of probation, upon our trial how we will conduct ourselves to our Maker, and accordingly it will be with us in the state of retribution. God has taken various methods to prove us, and this was one; he sent his Son into the world, with sufficient proofs of his sonship and mission, concluding that all that called on his name should be welcome, who was the First-born among many brethren; see 1 John 5. 1. By this our adoption will be proved or disproved—Did we love Christ, or no? If any man do not, he is so far from being a child of God, that he is anathema, accursed, 1 Cor. 16. 22.

Now our Saviour proves that if they were God's children, they would love him, for, saith he, I proceed forth from God, and am the Son of God; 15. (that is, of God, as is known, from his communication of the divine nature, glory, and power.)—and all that were born of God, are the beloved of God, because, being the beloved of the Father, he is certainly the Beloved of all the saints, Eph. 1. 6. But he was sent of God, came from him as an Ambassador to the world of mankind. He did not come of himself, as the false prophets, who had not either their mission or their message from God, Jer. 23. 21. Observe the emphasis he lays upon this, I came from God, and am sent of God; but he sent me: he had both his credentials and his instructions from God; he came to gather together in one the children of God, (ch. 11. 32.) to bring many sons to glory, Heb. 2. 10. And would not all God's children embrace with both arms a messenger sent from their Father on such errands? But these Jews made it appear that they were nothing akin to God, by their manner of treating Jesus Christ.

Secondly, They did not understand him. It was a sign that they did not belong to God's family, that they did not understand the language and dialect of the family; Ye do not understand my speech, v. 43. They were strangers to the doctrine of Christ, and find knots in it, and I know not what stumbling-stones. Could a Galilean he known by his speech? An Ephraimit by his sibboleth? And would any have the confidence to call God Father, to whom the Son of God was a barbarian, even when he spake the will of God, in the words of the Spirit of God? Note, Those who are not acquainted with the divine speech, have reason to fear that they are strangers to the divine nature. Christ spake the words of God (ch. 3. 34.) in the dialect of the kingdom of God; and yet they who pretended to belong to the kingdom, understood not the idioms and properties of it, but, like strangers, and rude stoners, stumbled at it.

And the reason why they did not understand Christ's speech made the matter much worse; even because ye cannot hear my word, that is, Ye cannot persuade yourselves to hear it attentively, impartially, and without prejudice, as it should be heard. The meaning of this cannot, is an obstinate will not; as the Jews could not hear Stephen, (Acts 7. 53.) nor Paul, Acts 26. 10. Note, The rooted antipathy of men's corrupt hearts, to the doctrine of Christ, is the true reason of their ignorance of it, and their errors and mistakes about it. They do not like it nor love it, and therefore they will not understand it; like Peter, who pretended he knew not what the damsel said, (Matt. 26. 70.) when in truth he knew not what to say to it. Ye cannot hear my words, for ye have stuffed your ears, (Ps. 8. 4, 5.) and God, in a way of righteous judgment, has made your ears heavy, Isa. 6. 10.

III. Having thus disproved their relation both to Abraham and to God, he comes next to tell them plainly that they were the children of Satan, that they were the enemys of God, of Christ, and of the church, and hence they did not love God, or Christ, or his doctrine.

1. By a general argument; They have not called in their speech on the name of their father the devil, v. 44. If they be not God's children, they are the devil's, for God and Satan divide the world of mankind; the devil is therefore said to work in the children of disobedience, Eph. 2. 2. All wicked people are the devil's children, children of Belial, (2 Cor. 6. 13.) the serpent's seed, (Gen. 3. 15.) children of the wicked one, Matt. 13. 38. They make the promisses of God to profane purpose, and overthrow his commands, and follow his example. Idolaters said to a stock, Thou art my father, Jer. 2. 27.

This is a high charge, and sounds very harsh and horrid, that any of the children of men, especially the church's children, should be called children of the devil, and therefore our Saviour fully proves it, 1. (a) By a general argument; They have not called in their speech on the name of their father the devil.

"Ye are the devil's lusts, the lusts which he would have you to fulfill; you gratify and please him, and comply with his temptations, and are led captives by him at his will; you, do those lusts which the devil himself fulfils." Fleshly lusts and worldly lusts the devil tempts men to; but, being a spirit, he cannot fulfill them himself. The peculiar lusts of the devil are: Pride, envy, hatred, malice, to see that which is good, and enticing others to that which is evil; these are lusts which the devil fulfils, and these who are under the dominion of these lusts, resemble the devil, as the child does the parent. The more there is of contemplation, and contrivance, and secret complacency, in sin, the more it resembles the devil's lusts. "The lusts of your father you delight to do;" so Dr. Hammond; they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel.

2. By particular instances, wherein they manifestly resembled the devil—murder and lying. The devil is an enemy to life, because God is the God of life, and life is the happiness of man; and an enemy to truth, because God is the God of truth, and truth is the bond of human society.

(a) He was a murderer from the beginning, not from his own beginning, for he was created an angel of light, and had a first estate, which was pure and good, but from the beginning of his apostasy, which was soon after the creation of man. He was ως πριν—hence, a man-slayer, [1]. He was a harbiter of murder, and scorner of affection, and disposition a murderer of man. He has his name Satan, from Sitnah—Hatred. He malignèd God's image upon man, and his happiness, and earnestly desired his ruin, was an avowed enemy to the whole race. [2] He was man's tempter to that sin which brought death into the world, and so he was effectually the murderer of all mankind, which in Adam had but one murder, when a murderer of souls, deceived them into sin, and slew them; (Rem. 7. 11.) poisoned man with the forbidden fruit, and, to aggravate the matter, made him his own murderer. Thus he was not only at the beginning, but from the beginning, which intimates that thus he has been
ever since; as he began, so he continues, the murderer of men by his temptations. The great tempter is the great destroyer. The Jews called the devil, 

And the angel of death. [3.] He was the first wheel in the first murder that ever was committed by Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, 1 John 3. 12. If the devil had not been very strong in Cain, he could not have done such an unnatural thing as to kill his own brother. Cain killing his brother by the instigation of the devil, the devil is called the murderer, which does not speak Cain's personal guilt the less, but the devil's the more, whose tormentors, we have reason to think, will be the greater when the time comes, for all that wickedness which he has drawn men into. See what the apostles were taught when they were against the rules of the devil, and never to hearken to him, (for he is a murderer, and certainly aims to do mischief, even when he speaks fair,) and to wonder that he who is the murderer of the children of men, should yet be, by their own consent, so much their master.

Now herein these Jews were followers of him, as murderers like him; murderers of souls, which they led blindfold into the ditch, and made the children of hell; sworn enemies to Christ, and now ready to be his betrayers and murderers, for the same reason that Cain killed Abel. These Jews were that seed of the serpent, that were to bruise the heel of the Seed of the woman; Now ye seek to kill me.

[1.] He was a liar. A lie is opposed to truth, (1 John 2. 21.) and, accordingly, the devil is here described to be, 

First, He is a deceiver from truth; he abode not in the truth, did not continue in the purity and rectitude of his nature wherein he was created, but left his first state; when he degenerated from goodness, he departed from truth, for his apostasy was founded in a lie. The angels were the hosts of the Lord; those that fell, were not true to their Commander and Sovereign, they were not to be trusted, being charged with folly and defection, Job 4. 18. By the truth here we may understand the revealed will of God concerning the salvation of man by Jesus Christ, the truth of which Christ was now preaching, and which the Jews opposed; herein they did like their father the devil, who, seeing the honour put upon the human nature in the second Adam, foreseeing the much greater honour intended it in the second Adam, would not be reconciled to that counsel of God, nor stand in the truth concerning it, but, from a spirit of pride and envy, set himself to resist it, and to thwart the designs of it; and so did these Jews here, as his children and agents.

Secondly, He is destitute of the truth; There is no truth in him. His interest in the world is supported by lies and fables, and there is no truth, nothing you can confide in, in him, nor in any thing he says or does. The notions he propagates concerning good and evil, are false and erroneous, his proofs are lying wonders, his temptations are all cheats; he has great knowledge of the truth, but having no affection to it, but on the contrary, being a sworn enemy to it. His interest in the world is supported by lies and fables, and there is no truth, nothing you can confide in, in him, nor in any thing he says or does. The notions he propagates concerning good and evil, are false and erroneous, his proofs are lying wonders, his temptations are all cheats; he has great knowledge of the truth, but having no affection to it, but on the contrary, being a sworn enemy to it.

[2.] He is a friend and patron of lying; When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own. Three things are here said of the devil, with reference to the sin of lying.

First, That he is a liar; his oracles were lying oracles, his prophets lying prophets, and the images in which he was worshipped, teachers of lies; he tempted our first parents with a downright lie; all his temptations are carried on by lies, calling evil good, and good evil, and promising impunity in sin; he knows them to be lies, and suggests them with an intention to deceive, and so to destroy. When he now contradicted the gospel in the Seraphs and Pharisees, it was by lies, and when afterward he corrupted it in the man of sin, it was by strong delusions, and a great complicated lie.

Secondly, That when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, 1 John 4. 24. It is the proper idiom of his language; for, first, his Creator never put it into him. When men speak a lie, they borrow it from the devil, Satan fills their hearts to lie; (Acts 5. 3.) But when the devil speaks a lie, the model of it is of his own framing, the motives to it from himself, which speaks the desperate depth of wickedness into which those apostate spirits are sunk, as in their first defection they had no tempter, as their sin is greater than that of their抡. They
counsel, (1 John 5. 19.) Then we have reason to believe, that as the devil has been the author of all the lying and deceit in the world, he has been the original author of all the lying and deceit in the world, he has been the original author of all the lying and deceit in the world, he has been the original author of all the lying and deceit in the world.

Thirdly, That he is the father of it, 1 John 4. He is the father of every lie; not only of the lies which he himself suggests, but of those which others speak; he is the author and founder of all lies; when men speak lies, they speak from him, and as his mouth, they come originally from him, and bear his image. 2. He is the father of every liar; so it may be understood: that he is the originator of all lies, the source of them. A disposition to truth, it is congruous to reason and natural light, to the order of our faculties, and the laws of society, that we should speak truth; but the devil, the author of sin, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, has so corrupted the nature of man, that the wicked are said to be estranged from the womb, speaking lies; (Ps. 58. 3.) he has taught them with their tongues to use deceit, Rom. 3. 13. He is the father of these liars, who begat them, who taught them up in the way of lying, whom they resemble and obey, and with whom all liars shall have their portion for ever. Christ having thus proved all murderers and all liars to be the devil's children, he leaves it to the consciences of his hearers to say, Thou art the man.

But he comes in the following verse to assist them in the application of it to themselves; he does not call them liars, but shews them that they were no friends to truth, and therein resembled him who abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Two things he charges upon them,

1. That they would not believe the word of truth, (v. 43.) ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ λεγεῖ, οὐκ εἰρήνευεν με. Two ways it may be taken, (1.) Though I tell you the word, yet you will not believe me, (2.) That I do so. Though he gave abundant proof of his commission from God, and his affection to the children of men, yet they would not believe that he told them the truth. Now was truth fallen in the street, and could not enter, Isa. 59. 14, 15. The greatest truths with some gained not the least credit; for they rebelled against the light, Job 24. 15. Or, (2.) Because I tell you the truth, (so we read it,) therefore ye believe me not. They would not receive him, nor entertain him as a prophet, because he told them some unpleasing truths, which they did not care to hear of; told them the truth concerning themselves and their own case, showed them their faces in a glass that would not flatter them; therefore they would not believe a word he said. Miserable is the case of those to whom the light of divine truth is become a torment.

Now, to shew them the unreasonableness of their infidelity, he condescends to put the matter to this fair issue, v. 46. He and they being contrary, either he was in an error or they were. Now take it either way.

[1.] If he were in an error, why did not they convince him? The falseness of pretending prophets was discovered either by the ill tendency of their doctrines, (Deut. 13. 2.) or by the ill tenor of their conversation; Ye shall know them by their fruits;
but (saith Christ) which of you, or you of the Sanh
dehrim, that take you to judge of prophets, which of you convinceth me of sin? They accused him of some of the worst of crimes—gluttony, drunkenness, blasphemy, sabbath-breaking, con
demnity with Satan, and what not. But they were al
malignant groundless calumnies, and such as even when they knew him, knew to be utterly false. When they had done their utmost by trick and arti
cifice, subornation and perjury, to prove some crime upon him, the very judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him.

The sin he here challenges them to convict him of, is, First, An inconsistent doctrine. They had accused him of saying anything not true; that he knew anything in it absurd or unworthy to be believed, any contradic
tion, either of himself or of the scriptures, or any

49. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? 49. Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dis Honour me. 50. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

Here is,

1. The malice of hell breaking out in the base lan

guage which the unbelieving Jews gave to our Lord Jesus. Hitherto they had cavilled at his doctrine, and had made invidious remarks upon that; but, having shewn he had a devil, they now turn to a new un

cry when he complained (v. 43, 47) that they would not hear him, now at length they fall to downright railing, v. 48. They were not the common people, but, as it should seem, the Scribes and Pharisees, the men of con

sequence, who, when they saw themselves convicted of an obstinate infidelity, scornfully turned off the conviction with this, Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, what hast thou a devil? See here, see it and wonder, see it and tremble:

1. What was the blasphemous character com

monly given of our Lord Jesus among the wicked Jews, to which they refer.

(1.) That he was a Samaritan, that is, that he was an enemy to their church and nation, one that they hated, and could not endure. Thus they exposed him as ill-will of the people, with whom you could not put a man into a common name, than to call him a Samaritan.

If he had been a Samaritan, he had been punishable, by the beating of the rebels, (as they called it,) for coming into the temple. They had often called him a Galilean—a mean man; but, as if that were not enough, though it contradicted the other, they will have him a Samaritan—a bad man. The Jews to this day call the Christians, in Church, "Cuthi—Samaritans.

Note, Great endeavours have in all ages been used to make good people odious by putting them under black charac
ters, and it is easy to run that down with a crowd and a cry, which is once put into an ill name. Per

haps because Christ justly inviged against the pride and tyranny of the priests and elders, they hereby suggest that he aimed at the ruin of their religion, and was the cause of the reformation, and was falling away to the Samaritans.

(2.) That he had a devil. Either, [1.] That he was in league with the devil; having reproached his doctrine as tending to Samaritanism, here they re

reflect upon his miracles as done in combination with Beelzebub. Or rather, [2.] That he was possessed with a devil, that he was a melancholy man, whose brain was clouded, or a mad man, whose brain was heated, and that which he said was no more to be believed than the extravagant rambles of a distracted

d man, or one in a delirium. Thus the divine reve

lation of those things which are above the dis
convey of reason, have been often branded with the charge of enthusiasm, and the prophet was called a mad fellow, 2 Kings 9. 11. Hosea 9. 7. The inspiration of the Pagan oracles and prophe...and that which was truly divine was not so. Wisdom is justified of her children, as wisdom indeed.

2. They undertook to justify this character, and applied it to the present occasion; Say we not well that thou art so? One would think that his excellent discourses should have altered their opinion of him, and made them reflect on the appearance of their own minds; but their hearts were more hardened, and their prejudices confirmed. They value themselves on their enmity to Christ, as if they had never spoken better than when they spake the worst they could of Jesus Christ. Those have arrived at the highest pitch of wickedness, who aver their impurity, repeat what they should retract, and justify themselves in that for which they ought to condemn themselves. It is bad to say and do ill, but it is worse to stand to it; I do well to be angry. When Christ spake with so much boldness against the sins of the great men, and thereby incensed them against him, they who were sensible of no interest but what is secular and sensual, concluded him beside himself, for they thought that none but a madman would lose his preferment, and hazard his life, for his religion and righteousness.

II. Here is the meekness and mercifulness of Heaven shining in Christ's reply to this vile calumny, v. 49, 50.

1. He denies their charge against him; I have not a devil; as Paul, (Acts 26. 23.) I am not mad. The imputation is unjust; "I am neither actuated by a devil, nor in compact with one;" and this he evidenced by what he did against the devil's kingdom. He takes no notice of their calling him a Samaritan, because it was a calumny that disproved itself, it was a personal reflection, and not worth taking notice of; but saying he had a devil, reflected on his commission, and therefore he answered that. St. Augustine gives this descent upon his not saying any thing to their calling him a Samaritan—that he was indeed a good Samaritan spoken of in the parable, Luke 10. 35.

2. He asserts the sincerity of his own intentions; But I honour my Father. They suggested that he took undue honours to himself, and derogated from the honour due to God only, both which he denies here, in saying that he made it his business to honour his Father, and him only. It also proves that he had not a devil, for, if he had, he would not honour God. Note, They who can truly say that they make it their constant care to honour God, are sufficiently armed against the censures and reproaches of men.

3. He complains of the wrong they did him by their calumnies; Ye do dishonour me. By this it appears that, as Man, he had a tender sense of the disgrace and indignity done him, reproach was a sword in his bones; and he undertook for defence of his salvation. It is the will of God, that all men should honour the Son, yet there are many that dishonour him; such a contradiction is there in the carnal mind to the will of God. Christ honoured his Father so as never man did, and yet was himself dishonoured so as never man was; for though God has promised that those who honour him he will honour, he never promises that men should honour them.

4. He clears himself from the imputation of vainglory, in saying this concerning himself, v. 50. See here,

(1.) His contempt of worldly honour; I seek not mine own glory. He did not aim at that in what he had said of himself, or against his persecutors; he did not court the applause of men, nor covet preferment in the world, but industriously declined both. He did not seek his own glory distinct from his Father's, nor had any separate interest of his own. For men to search their own glory, is not glory, Luke 14. 10, (Prov. 25. 27.) but their shame rather, to be held much out in their aim. This comes in here as a reason why Christ made so light of their reproaches; "You do dishonour me, but cannot disturb me, shall not disquiet me, for I seek not mine own glory." Note, Those who are dead to men's praise, can safely bear their contempt.

(2.) His meekly to bear dishonour; There is one that seetheth and judgeth. In two things Christ made it appear that he sought not his own glory; and here he tells us what satisfied him as to both.

[1.] He did not court men's respect, but was indifferent to it, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that seetheth, that will secure and advance, my interest in the esteem and affections of the people, while I am in no care about it." Note, God will seek their honour, that do not seek their own; for before honour is humility. [2.] He did not revenge men's affronts, but was unconsidered at them, and in reference to this he saith, "There is one that judgeth, that will vindicate my honour, and severely reckon with those that trample upon it." Probably, he refers here to the judgments that were coming upon the nation of the Jews for the indignities they did to the Lord Jesus. See Ps. 28. 12-15. I heard not, for thou wilt hear. If we undertake to judge for ourselves, whatever damage we sustain, our amends is in our own hands; but if we be, as we ought to be, humble appellants and patient expectants, we shall find, to our comfort, there is one that judgeth.

51. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. 52. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. 53. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom maketh thou thyself? 54. Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: 55. Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. 56. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. 57. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? 58. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, Lam. 59. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

In these verses, we have,

I. The doctrine of the immortality of believers laid down, v. 51. It is ushered in with the usual solemn preface, Verily, verily, I say unto you, which commands both attention and assent, and this
is it he saith, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death. Where we have, 
1. The character of a believer; he is one that keeps the sayings of the Lord Jesus, τὸ ἔρμα μου ἀκούει—my word; that word of mine which I have delivered to you; this we must not only receive, but keep; not only have, but hold. We must keep it in mind and memory, keep it in love and affection, so keep it as in nothing to violate it, or go contrary to it, keep it without spot, (1 Tim. 6. 14.) keep it as a trust committed to us, keep in it as our way, keep to it as our rule. 
2. The privilege of a believer; He shall by no means see death for ever; so it is in the original. Not as if the bodies of believers were secured from the stroke of death, no, even the children of the Most High must die like men, and the followers of Christ have been, more than other men, in deaths often, and killed all the day long; how then is this promise made good, that they shall not see death? Ans. (1.) The property of death is so altered to them, that they do not see it as death, they do not see the terror of death, it is quite taken off; their sight does not terminate in death, as their's does who live by sense, no, they look so clearly, so comfortably, through death, and beyond death, and are so taken up with their state on the other side death, that they overlook death, and see it not. (2.) The power of death is so broken, that though there is no remedy, but they must see death, yet they shall not see death for ever, shall never see death to any arrest of the soul; it will come when death shall be swallowed up in victory. (3.) They are perfectly delivered from eternal death, shall not be hurt of the second death. That is the death especially meant here, that death which is for ever, which is opposed to everlasting life, this they shall never see, for they shall never come into condemnation; they shall have their everlasting lot where there will be no more death, where they cannot die any more, Luke 23. 36. Though now they cannot avoid seeing death, and tasting it too, yet they shall shortly be there where it will be seen no more for ever, Exod. 14. 13. 

I. The Jews' cavil at this doctrine. Instead of laying hold on this precious promise of immortality, which the nature of man has an ambition of; (who is there that does not love life, and dread the sight of death?) they lay hold on this occasion to reproach him, and to make it them such an offer. Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead. Observe here, 
1. Their railing; *Now we know that thou hast a devil, that thou art a madman; thou ravest, and sayest that thou knowest not what.* See how these swine trample under foot the precious pearls of gospel-promises. If now at last they had evidence to prove him mad, why did they say, (z. 48.) before they had that proof, Thou hast a devil? But this is the method of malice, first to fasten an invidious charge, and then to fish for evidence of it; *Now we knew that thou hast a devil.* If he had not abundantly proved himself a Teacher come from God, his promises of immortality to his credulous followers might justly have been ridiculed, and charity itself would have imputed them to a crazed fancy; but he had the consolation which was with him, and confirmed it, and the Jewish religion taught them to expect such a Prophet, and to believe in him; for them therefore thus to reject him, was to abandon that promise to which their twelve tribes hoped to come, Acts 26. 7. 
2. Their reasoning, and the colour they had to run him down thus. In short, they look upon him as capable of deceiving his disciples, making himself a greater than Abraham and the prophets; Abraham is dead, and the prophets they are dead too; very true, by the same token that these Jews were the genuine offspring of those that killed them. Now, (1.) It is true, Abraham and the prophets were great men, great in the favour of God, and great in the esteem of all good men. (2.) It is true, they kept God's sayings, and were obedient to them, and yet, (3.) It is true, they died, they never pretended to have, much less to give in victual, but every one in his own order was gathered to his people. It was their honour that they died in faith, but die they must. Why should a good man be afraid to die, when Abraham is dead, and the prophets are dead? They have tracked the way through that darksome valley, which should reconcile us to death, and help to take off the terror of it. Now they think Christ will walk the way when he saith, If a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death. Thusing death means the same thing with seeing it; and well may death be represented as grievous to several of the senses, which is the destruction of them all. Now their arging goes upon two mistakes: 
[1.] They understood Christ of an immortality in this world, and that was a mistake. In the sense that Christ spake, it was not true that Abraham and the prophets were dead, for God is still the God of Abraham, and the God of the holy prophets; (Rev. 22. 6.) now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore Abraham and the prophets are still alive, and, as Christ meant it, they had not seen nor tasted death. 
[2.] They thought none could be greater than Abraham or the prophets, where they could not be mistaken that he meant by Abraham any of the prophets, who did virtuously, but he excelled them all; nay, they borrowed their greatness from him. It was the honour of Abraham, that he was the Father of the Messiah, and the hon. of the prophets, that they testified beforehand concerning him; so that he certainly obtained a far more excellent name than they. Therefore instead of inferring from Christ's making himself greater than Abraham, that he had a devil, they should have inferred from his proving himself so, (by doing the works which neither Abraham nor the prophets ever did,) that he was the Christ; but their eyes were blinded. 
They scornfully asked, Whom maketh thou thyself? As if he had been guilty of pride and vain-glory; whereas he was so far from making himself greater than any other, he glorified himself, his own glory, emptied himself, and made himself less than he was, and was the greatest Example of humility that ever was. 

III. Christ's reply to this cavil; still vouchsafes to reason with them, that every mouth may be stopped. No doubt, he could have struck them dumb or dead upon the spot, but this was the day of his patience. 
1. In his answer he insists not upon his own testimony concerning himself, but waves it as not sufficient or conclusive; (v. 54.) If I honour myself, my honour is nothing, ελαχιστον ἐγώ μη δείσασθαι ἑγώ; if I glorify myself. Note, Self-honour is no honour; and the affectation of glory is both the forfeiture and the defacement of it; it is not glory, (Prov. 23. 27.) but so great a reproach, that there is no sin which men are more inhumanly to hide than this; even he that most affects praise, would not be thought to do it. Honour of our own creating is a mere chimera, has nothing in it, and therefore is called vain-glory. Self-admirers are self-deceivers. Our Lord Jesus was not one that honoured himself, as they represented him; he was crowned by him who is the Fountain of honour, and glorified not himself to be made a High-Priest, Heb. 5. 5. 
2. But he refers himself to his Father, God; and to their father, Abraham. 
(1.) To his Father, God; It is my Father, the
honour me. By this he means, [1.] That he derived from his Father all the honour he now claimèd; he had commanded them to believe in him, to follow him, and to keep his word, all which put an honour upon him, but it was the Father that laid help upon him, that lodged all fullness in him, that sanctified him, and sealed him, and sent him into the world to receive all the honours due to the Messiah, and this kind of honour is what the Father before the world was. He aimed at an advancement with which the Father was satisfied, that is, not that he should be equal with the Father, but that he should be his equal. [2.] That he depended upon his Father for all the honour he further looked for; he counted not the applause of the age, but despised them; for his eye and heart were upon the glory which the Father had promised him, and which he had with the Father before the world was. Phil. 2, 8, 9. Note, Christ, and all that are his depend on God for their honour; and he is sure of honour where he is known, cares not though he be slighted where he is in disguise.

Appealing thus often to his Father, and his Father's testimony of him, which yet the Jews did not admit or give credit to, First, He here takes occasion to shew the reason of that dependence, that the Jews had not withstanding this testimony and that was, their unacquaintedness with God; as if he had said, "But why should I talk to you of my Father's honouring me, when he is one you know nothing of? You say of him, that he is your God, yet you have not known him." Where observe,

1. The profession they made of relation to God; "Ye say that he is your God, the God ye have chosen; and ye would not have been a better God to Israel; but all are not so indeed, that are of Israel," Rom. 9, 6. Note, Many pretend to have an interest in God, and say that he is their's, who yet have no just cause to say so. They who called themselves the temple of the Lord, having professed the excellency of Jacob, did but trust in lying words. What will it avail us to say, He is our God, if we be not in sincerity his jewels, nor such as he will own?

2. Their ignorance of him, and estrangement from him, notwithstanding this profession; Yet ye have not known him. (1.) Ye know him not at all. These Pharisees were so taken up with the study of their traditions concerning things foreign and trifling, that they never minded the most needful and useful knowledge; like the false prophets of old, who caused people to forget God's name by their dreams, Jer. 22, 27. Or, (2.) Ye know him not aright, but mistake concerning him; and that is as bad as not knowing him at all, or worse. Men may be able to dispute subtly concerning God, and yet may think him such a one as themselves, and not know him. Ye say that he is your's, and it is natural to us to desire to know our own, yet ye know him not. Note, There are many who, if I may so speak, are not only unacquainted with, but not of acquaintance with him. It is only the name of God which they have learned to talk of, and to hearken with; but for the nature of God, his attributes and perfections, and relations to his creatures, they know nothing of the matter; we speak this to their shame, 1 Cor. 13, 34. Multitudes satisfy themselves, but deceive themselves, with a titular relation to an unknown God.

This Christ charges upon the Jews here, [1.] To shew how vain and groundless their pretensions of relation to God were. "Ye say that he is your's, but ye give yourselves the lie, for it is plain that you do not know him;" and we reckon that a cheat is effectually convicted, if it be found that he is ignorant of the persons he pretends alliance to. [2.] To shew the true reason why they were not wrought upon by Christ's doctrine and miracles. They knew not God, and therefore perceived not the image of God, nor the voice of God in Christ. Note, The reason why the world was in darkness was, because they have not the knowledge of God. Men therefore submit not to the righteousness of Christ, because they are ignorant of God's righteousness, Rom. 10, 3. They that know not God, and obey not the gospel of Christ, are put together, 2 Thess. 1, 8. Secondly, He gives them the reason of his assurance, that his Father would honour him and own him; But I know him; and again, I know him; which bespeaks, not only his acquaintance with him, having lain in his bosom, but his confidence in him, to stand by him, and bear him out in his whole undertaking; as was prophesied concerning him; (Isa. 50, 7, 8.) "I know that I shall not be ashamed, for He is near that justifies;" and as Paul, [1.] I know from my heart; (2.) I know him to be faithful, and powerful, and heartily engaged in the cause which I know to be his own." Observe,

1. How he professes his knowledge of his Father, with the greatest certainty, as one that was neither afraid, nor ashamed to own it; If I should say I know him not, I should be a liar like unto you. He did not fear to own his knowledge of God, nor shrink from the Jews, and to avoid their reproaches, and prevent further trouble; nor would he retract what he had said, nor confess himself either deceived or a deceiver; if he should, he would be found a false witness against God and himself. Note, They who disown their relation and relation to God, as Peter, are liars, as much as hypocrites are, who pretend to know him who they do not. See 1 Tim. 6, 13, 14. Mr. Clark observes well upon this, that it is a great sin to deny God's grace in us.

2. How he proves his knowledge of his Father; I know him and keep his saying; or his word. Christ, as Man, was obedient to the moral law, and, as Redeemer, to the mediatorial law; and in both he kept his Father's word, and his own word with the Father. Christ requires of us, (e. 51.) that we keep his saying; and he has set before us in a copy of obedience, a copy without a blot, he kept his Father's sayings; well might he who learned obedience, teach it; see Heb. 5, 8, 9. Christ by this evidences that he knew the Father. Note, The best proof of our acquaintance with God is our obedience to him. Those only know God aright, that keep his word; it is a ruled case, 1 John 2, 3. Hereby we know that we know him, (and do not only fancy it,) if we keep his commandments.

(2.) Christ refers them to their father, whom they boasted so much of a relation to, and that was Abraham, and this closes the discourse.

[1.] Christ asserts Abraham's prospect of him, and respect to him; (e. 56.) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad; this by he proves that he was not at all out of the way, when he made himself greater than Abraham.

Two things he here speaks of as instances of that patriarch's respect to the promised Messiah. First, The ambition he had to see his day; he re joiced, εὐλογήσεται—he leaped at it. The word, though it commonly signifies rejoicing, must here signify an earnest transport of desire rather than joy, or otherwise the latter part of the verse would be a tautology; he saw it, and was glad. He reached out, or stretched himself forth, that he might see my day.
as Zaccheus, that ran before and climbed the tree, to see Jesus. The notices he had received of the Messiah to come, had raised in him an expectation of something great, which he earnestly longed to know more of. The dark intimation of that which is considerable, puts men upon inquiry, and makes them earnestly ask Who? and What? and Where? and When? and How? And thus the prophets of the Old Testament, having a general idea of a grace that should come, would not be satisfied till it came. (1 Pet. 1. 10.) And Abraham was as industrious herein as any of them. God told him of a land that he would give his posterity, and of the wealth and honour he designed them; (Gen. 15. 14.) but he never leaped thus to see that day, as he did to see the day of the Son of man. He could not look with so much indifference upon the promised Seed as he did upon the perishing Irascible—It shall be seen, but to the other he could not be, contentionly, a stranger. Note, Those who rightly know anything of Christ, cannot but be earnestly desirous to know more of him. Those who discern the dawning of the light of the Sun of righteousness, cannot but wish to see his rising. The mystery of redemption is that which angels desire to look into, much more should we, who are more immediately concerned in it. And God designed it, not only for Abraham's day, though it was at a great distance; but this degenerate seed of his discerned not his day, nor bid it welcome when it came. The appearing of Christ, which gracious souls love and long for, carnal hearts dread and loathe.

Secondly, The satisfaction he had in what he did see of it; He saw it, and was glad. Observe here, 1. His soul glorified the pious desire of Abraham; he longed to see Christ's day, and he saw it. Though he saw it not so plainly and fully and distinctly as we now see it under the gospel, yet he saw something of it, more afterward than he did at first. Note, To him that has, and to him that asks, shall be given; to him that uses and improves what he has, and that desires and prays for more of the knowledge of Christ, God will give more. But how did Abraham see Christ's day? (1.) Some understand it of the sight he had of it in the other world. The separate soul of Abraham, when the veil of flesh was rent, saw the mysteries of the kingdom of God in heaven. Calvin mentions this sense of it, and does not much disallow it. Note, The longings of gracious souls after Jesus Christ will be fully satisfied when they come to heaven, and not till then. But, (2.) Abraham did not see only the first sight he had of Christ's day in this world. They that received not the promises yet saw them after off. Heb. 11. 13. Balaam saw Christ, but not now, not nigh. There is room to conjecture that Abraham had some vision of Christ and his day, for his own private satisfaction, which is not, nor must be, recorded in his story, like that of Daniel's, which must be sealed up, and sealed, unto the time of the end, Dan. 12. 4. Christ knew what Abraham saw better than Moses did. But there are divers things recorded, in which Abraham saw more of that which he longed to see, than he did when the promise was first made to him. He saw in Melchizedek, one made like unto the Son of God, and a priest for ever; he saw an appearance of Jehovah, attended with two angels, and waited, unto the time of the end, Dan. 9. 24. In the prevalence of his intercession for Sodom he might have seen the manifestation of Christ's intercession; in the casting out of Ishmael, and the establishment of the covenant with Isaac, he saw a figure of the gospel-day, which is Christ's day, for these things were an allegory. In offering Isaac, and the ram instead of Isaac, he saw a double type of the great Sacrifice; and his calling the place Jehovah-jireh—It shall be seen, intimates that he saw something more in it than others did, which they could produce; and in making his servant put his hand under his thigh, when he swore, he had a regard to the Messiah.

2. How Abraham entertained these discoveries of Christ's day, and bid them welcome; he saw, and was glad. He was glad of what he saw of God's favour to himself, and glad of what he foresaw of the mercy God had in store for the world. Perhaps this refers to Abraham's laughing when God assured him of a son by Sarah; (Gen. 17. 16, 17.) for that promise was soon after he was told of Christ, and may be signified by that promise he saw Christ's day, and it filled him with joy unspeakable. Thus he embraced the promises. Note, A believing sight of Christ and his day will put gladness into the heart. No joy like the joy of faith; we are never acquainted with true pleasure, till we are acquainted with Christ.

[2.] The Jews cavil at this, and reproach him for it. (Gen. 17. 18.) But, (1.) It is not probable that Abraham would have told his son a story so absurd as that, that he was to be born of his old age, or that he saw Abraham? Here, First, They suppose that if Abraham saw him and his day, he also had seen Abraham, which yet was not a necessary intendment, but this turn of his words would best serve to expose him; yet it was true that Christ had seen Abraham, and had talked with him as a man talks with his friend. Secondly, They suppose it a very extraordinary thing to have seen him so old, when Abraham, who was dead so many ages before he was born. The state of the dead is an invisible state; but here they ran upon the old mistake, understanding that corporally, which Christ spake spiritually. Now this gave them occasion to despise his youth; and to upbraid him with it, as if he were but of yesterday, and knew nothing; Thou art not yet fifty years old. They might as well have said, Thou art not forty; for he was now but thirty-two, or thirty-three years old. As to this, Irenæus, one of the first fathers, with this passage supports the tradition which he says he had from some that had conversed with St. John, that our Saviour lived to be fifty years old, which he contends for, Advers. Heres. lib. 2. cap. 59. 40. See what little credit is to be given to tradition; and as to this here, the Jews spake at random; some year they would mention, and therefore pitched upon one that they thought he was far enough short of; he did not look to be forty, but they were sure he could not be fifty, much less contemporary with Abraham. Old age is reckoned to begin at fifty, (Num. 4. 47.) so that they mean no more than, 'Thou art not to be reckoned an old man; many of us are much thy seniors, and yet pretend not to be old.' And so the sight of Christ, which was not to affect his countenance as so many supposed, was thus put in an alteration with grief and watching, that, together with the gravity of his aspect, it made him look like a man of fifty years old: his visage was so marred, Isa. 52. 14.

[3.] Our Saviour gives an effectual answer to this cavil, by a solemn assertion of his own seniority even to Abraham himself, (e. 58.) 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am;' he knew, and he knew the time, he knew the place, he knew the person, he knew the year of his birth; I am; (Gen. 22. 18.) as God his Father; (Exod. 3. 14.) it speaks his self-existence; he does not say, I was, but, I am, for he is the First and the Last, immutably the same; (Rev. 1. 8.) thus he was not only before Abraham, but before all worlds, Prov. 8. 23. ch. 1. 1. Secondly, As Mediator. He was the appointed Messiah, long before Abraham; the Lamb of God; (John 1. 29.) from the foundation of the world, (Rev. 13. 8.) the channel of conveyance of light, life, and love, from God to man. This supposes his
vined nature, that he is the same in himself from eternity, (Heb. 13. 8.) and that he is the same to man ever since the fall; he was made of God Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemp
tion, to Adamic, or Man's first Father and Noah, and Shep
er, and all the patriarchs that lived and died by faith in him before Abraham was born. Abraham was the root of the Jewish nation, the rock out of which they were hewn. If Christ was before Abraham, his doctrine and religion were no novelty, but were, in the substance of them, prior to Judaism, and ought to take place of it.

4. This great word ended the dispute abruptly, and put a period to it: they could hear to hear no more from him, and he needed to say no more to them, having witnessed this good confession, which was sufficient to support all his claims. One would think that Christ's discourse, in which shone so much both of grace and glory, should have captivated them all; but their inveterate prejudice against the holy spiritual doctrine and law of Christ, which were so contrary to their pride and worldliness, baffled all the methods of conviction. Now was fulfilled that prophecy, (Mal. 3. 1. 2.) that when the Messenger of the covenant should come to his temple, they would not abide the day of his coming, because he would be like a refiner's fire. Observe here.

First, How they were enraged at Christ for what he said; They took up stones, to cast at him, v. 59. Perhaps they looked upon him as a blasphemer, and such indeed were to be stoned; (Lev. 24. 16.) but they must be first legally tried and convicted, farewell justice and order, if every man pretend to execute a law at his pleasure. Besides, they had said but just now, that he was a distracted man, and if so, it was against all reason and equity to punish him as a malefactor for what he said. They took up stones. Dr. Lightfoot will tell you how they came to have stones so ready in the temple; they had workmen at this time repairing the temple, or making some additions, and the pieces of stone which they threw off, served for this purpose. See here the desperate power of sin and Satan in and over the children of disobedience. Who would think that ever there should be so much wickedness as this in men; such an open and daring rebellion against one that undeniably proved himself to be the Son of God. Thus every one has a stone to throw at his holy religion, Acts 28. 22.

Secondly, How he made his escape out of their hands.

1. He absconded; Jesus hid himself, v. 56—-he was hid, either by the crowd of those who wished well to him, to shelter him; (he ought to have been upon a throne, high and lifted up, is content to be lost in a crowd;) or perhaps he concealed himself behind some of the walls or pillars of the temple; (In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, Ps. 27. 5.) or by a divine power, casting a mist before them, and lifting him up, that he might be invisible. Thus the waked wise, a man is hidden, a wise and good man, Prov. 28. 12. 28. Not that Christ was afraid, or ashamed to stand by what he said, but his hour was not yet come, and he would countenance the flight of his ministers and people in times of persecution, when they are called to it. The Lord hid Jeremiah and Baruch, Jer. 36. 26.

2. He departed, he went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, undiscovered, and so passed by. This was not a cowardly inglorious flight, nor such as argued either guilt or fear. It was fore
told concerning him, that he should not fail or be discouraged, Isa. 42. 4. But, (1.) It was an instance of his power over his enemies, and that they could do no more against him than he gave them leave to do; by which it appears, that when afterward he was taken in their pits, he offered himself, ch. 10.

18. They now thought they had him sure, and yet he passed through the midst of them, either their eyes being blinded, or their hands tied, and thus he left them to vex, like a lion disappointed of his prey. (2.) It was an instance of his prudent provision for his own safety, which he knew he could not do, nor his testimony finished; thus he gave an example to his own rule, When they persecute you, in one city, flee to another; so, if Elijah did, (1 Kings 19. 3, 4.) and the woman, the church, Rev. 12. 6. When they took up loose stones to throw at Christ, he could have commanded the fixed stones, which did cry out of the wall against them to avenge his cause, or the earth to open and swallow them up; but he chose to accommodate himself to the state he was in, to make the example imitable by the prudence of his followers, without a miracle. (3.) It was a righteous deserting of those who (worse than the Gadarenes, who praised him to depart) stoned him from among them. Christ will not long stay with those who bid him be gone. Christ did again visit the temple after this; as one loath to depart, he bid oft farewell; but at last he abandoned it; it was like a fire, and left it desolate. Christ now went through the midst of the Jews, and none of them counted his stay, or stirred up themselves to take hold on him, but were even content to let him go. Note, God never forsakes any till they have first provoked him to withdraw, and will have none of him. Calvin ob
terves, that these chief priests, when they had driv
en Christ out of the temple, valued themselves on the possession they kept of it; "But," (says he) "thosesecive themselves, who are proud of a church or temple which Christ has forsaken. Longe faltentur, cum templum se habere patuit Domus sancta sanctorum." When Christ left them, it is said that he passed by silently and unobserved; (apax telo, μη δαπανηθηναι;) so that they were not aware of him. Note, Christ's departures from a church, or a particular soul, are often secret, and not soon taken notice of. As the kingdom of God comes not, so it goes not with obser
vation. See Judg. 16. 20. Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him. Thus it was with these forsaken Jews—God left them, and they never missed him.

CHAP. IX.

After Christ's departure out of the temple, in the close of the foregoing chapter, and before he had been de

scribed in this chapter, he had been for some time abroad in the country; it is supposed about two or three months; in which interval of time Dr. Lightfoot and other harmonists place all the passages that occur from Luke 10. 17. to Luke 13. 17. What is recorded, chapter 2, and 8. were the feast of tabernacles, in September; what is recorded in this and the following chapter, was at the feast of dedi

cation, in December, chapter 10. 22. Mr. Clark and others place this imposture at the last of the tabernacles, which they have supposed to attend the feast. In this chapter, we have, 1. The miraculous cure of a man that was born blind, v. 1. 7. II. The discourses which were occasioned by it. 1. A discourse of the neighbours among themselves, and with the Pharisees and the poor man, v. 13. 15. 34. 2. Between Christ and the Pharisees, v. 35. 38. 4. Between Christ and the Pharisees, v. 39. ad finem—to the end.

1. And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

2. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? 3. Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. 4. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man
can work. 5. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. 6. When he had thus spoken, he spit on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay.

7. And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

We have here sight given to a poor beggar that had been blind from his birth. 

Observe, 1. The case of the blind man took of the pitiful case of this poor blind man; (v. 1.) As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. The first words seem to refer to the last of the foregoing chapter, and countenance their opinion, who in the harmony place this story immediately after that. There it was said, οὕτως ἐπέρευξεν — and here, without so much as repeating his name, (though our translators supply it;) ὅπως ἐπέρευξεν — and as he passed by, 1. Though he had so basely abused him, and both by word and deed gave him the highest provocation imaginable, yet he did not slip any opportunity of doing good among them, nor take up a resolution, as justly he might have done, never to have favoured them with any good offices. The care of this blind man was a kindness to the public, and enabled him to work for his living, who before was a charge and burthen to the neighbourhood. It is noble, and generous, and Christ-like, to be willing to serve the public, even when we are slighted and disoblige by it, or think ourselves so. 2. Though he was in his flight from a threatening danger, and escaping for his life, yet he willingly halted and stayed a while to show mercy to this poor man. We may here see how good an opportunity he had of doing good to him, who had been so many times had so many opportunities of doing good. 3. When the Pharisees drove Christ from them, he went to this poor blind beggar. Some of the ancients make this a figure of the bringing of the gospel to the Gentiles, who sit in darkness, when the Jews had rejected it, and driven it from them. 4. Christ took this poor blind man in his way, and cured him in transitu — as he passed by, Thus should we take occasion of doing good, even as we pass by, when we are.

Now, (1.) The condition of this poor man was very sad; he was blind, and had been so from his birth. If the light is sweet, how melancholy must it needs be for a man, all his days, to eat in darkness? He that is blind, has no enjoyment of the light, but he that is born blind, has no idea of it. He thinks, such a one would have a greater deal to have his curiosity satisfied with, but one day's sight of light and colours, shapes and figures, though he were never to see them more. Why is the light of life given to one that is in this misery, that is deprived of the light of the sun; whose way is thus hid, and whom God hath thus hedged in? Job 3. 20, 23. Let us bless God that it was not our case. The eye is one of the most curious parts of the body, its beauty, its structure exceeding nice and fine. In the formation of animals, it is said to be the first part that appears distinctly discernible. What a mercy is it that there was no miscarriage in the making of our's. Christ cured many that were blind by disease or accident, but here he cured one that was born blind. [1.] That he might give an instance of his power to help in the most desperate cases, and to relieve when none else can. [2.] That he might give a specimen of the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those that were by nature blind.

(2.) The compassion of our Lord Jesus toward him were very tender. He saw him; that is, he took cognizance of his case, and looked upon him with concern. When God is about to work deliverance, he is said to see the affliction; so Christ saw this poor man. Others saw him, but not as he did. This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him, and anticipated both his prayers and expectations with a surprising cure. Christ is often found of those that seek him not, nor see him, Isa. 63. 1. And if he know or approve of any thing of Christ, it is because we were first known of him, (Gal. 4. 9.) and apprehended by him, Phil. 3. 12.

II. The discourse between Christ and his disciples concerning this man. When he departed out of the temple, they went along with him, for these were they that continued with him in his temptations, and were with him in his sufferings. Therefore, whatsoever he went; and they lost nothing by their adherence to him, but gained experience abundantly. Observe, 1. The question which the disciples put to their Master upon this blind man's case, v. 2. When Christ looked upon him, they had an eye to him too; Christ's compassions should kindle our's. It is probable that Christ told them that this poor man was born blind, or they knew it by common fame; but they did not move Christ to heal him; instead of that, they started a very odd question concerning him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Now this question of their's was, (1.) Uncharitably cursorious. They take it for granted that this extraordinary calamity was the punishment of some extraordinary uncommon wickedness. They might have thought this man was a sinner or an alien man that dwelt at Jerusalem, Luke 13. 4. For the barbarous people to infer, Surely this man is a murderer, was not so strange; but it was inexusable in them who knew the scriptures, who had read that all things come alike to all, and knew that it was adjudged in Job's case, that the greatest sufferers are not therefore to be looked upon as the greatest sinners. The greater part of God's punishment is upon sin itself, not persons of persons, and not by their parents, but that the grace of charity calls the afflictions of others trials, unless the contrary is very evident. (2.) It was unnecessarily curious. Concluding this calamity to be inflicted for some very heinous crime, they ask, Who were the criminals, this man, or his parents? And what was this to them? Or what good would it do to them to know it? Was it not to be the inquisition concerning other people's cases than our own? whereas, it is more our concern to know wherefore God contends with us, than wherefore he contends with others; for to judge ourselves is our duty, but to judge our brother is our sin.

They enquire, [1.] Whether he was punished for his own sins, or committed the fault before his birth. Some think that the disciples were tainted with the Pythagorean notion of the pre-existence of souls, and their transmigration from one body to another. Was this man's soul condemned to the dungeon of this blind body, to punish it for some great sin committed in another body which it had before animated? The Pharisees seem to have had the same opinion of his case, when they said, Thou wast already at the point of sinning; perhaps the disciples asked this, not as believing that this was the punishment of some actual sin of his own, or his parents, but Christ having intimated to another patient that his impotency was the cause of his sin, ch. 5. 14. "Master," say they, "whose sin is this of the impotency?" Being at less what construction to put upon
His providence, they desire to be informed. The equity of God's dispensations is always certain, for his righteousness is as the great mountains, but not always to be accounted for, for his judgments are a great deep.

2. Christ's answer to this question. He was always apt to teach, and to rectify his disciples' mistakes.

(1.) He gives the reason of this poor man's blindness; "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents; but therefore he was born blind, and hath continued so to this day, that now at last the works of God should be made manifest in him," v. 3. Here Christ, who perfectly knew the secret springs of the divine counsels, has told two things concerning such unaccountable dispensations.

[1.] That they are not always inflicted as punishments of sin. The sinfulness of the whole race of mankind does indeed justify God in all the miseries of human life; so that they who have the least share of them, must say that God is kind; and they who have the largest share, must not say that he is unjust; but many are made much more miserable than others in this life, who are not at all more sinful. Not that he was the most likely to be used as sinners, but it was not any uncommon guilt that God had an eye to in inflicting this upon him. Note, We must take heed of judging any to be great sinners, merely because they are great sufferers, lest we be found, not only persecuting those whom God has smitten, (Ps. 69. 26.) but accusing those whom he has justified, and condemning those for whom Christ died, which is daring and dangerous, Rom. 3. 33, 34.

[2.] That they are sometimes intended purely for the glory of God, and the manifesting of his works. God has a sovereignty over all his creatures, and a propriety in them, and may make them serviceable to his glory in such a way as he thinks fit, in doing or suffering; and if God be glorified, either by us or in us, we were not made in vain.

This man was born blind, and it was worth while for him to be so, and continue thus long dark, that the works of God might be manifested in him. That is, First, That the attributes of God might be manifested in him: his justice in making sinful man liable to such grievous calamities; his ordinary power and goodness in supporting a poor man under such a grievous and tedious affliction; especially, that his extraordinary power and goodness might be manifested in curing him. Note, The difficulties of Providence, otherwise unaccountable, may be resolved in this:—God intends in them to shew himself, to declare his glory, to make himself to be taken notice of. Those who regard him not in the ordinary course of things, are sometimes alarmed by things extraordinary. How contentedly then may a good man be a loser in his comforts, while he is sure that thereby God will be one way or other a gainer in his glory! Secondly, That the counsels of God concerning the Redeemer might be manifested in him. He was born blind, that our Lord Jesus might have the honour of curing him, and might therein prove himself sent of God to be the Light of the world. Thus the fall of man was permitted, and the blindness that followed it, that the works of God might be manifest in opening the eyes of the blind. It was a great good while since this man was born blind, and yet it never appeared till now why he was so. Note, The intentions of Providence are sometimes hid till the day of event, and perhaps many years after the event, before they are discovered. The sentences in the book of Providence are sometimes long, which you must read a great way before you can apprehend the sense of.

(2.) He gives the reason of his own forwardness and readiness to help and heal him, v. 4, 5. It was not for ostentation, but in pursuance of his under-
not be long, I am the Light of the world. He had said this before, ch. 8. 12. He is the Sun of righteousness, that has not only light in his wings for those that can see, but healing in his wings, or beams, for those that are blind and cannot see, therein far exceeding in virtue that great light which rules by day. Christ would therefore cure this blind man, the representative of a blind world, because he came to be the Light of the world, not only in light, but to be a Healing Light. First, A genuine visitation to come to him, as a guiding, quickening, refreshing Light. To whom should we look but to him? Which way should we turn our eyes, but to the light? We partake of the sun's light, and so we may of Christ's grace, without money, and without price. Secondly, A good example of usefulness in the world. What Christ saith of himself, he saith of his follower, Ye are lights in the world, and if so, let your light shine. What were candles made for but to burn? III. The manner of the cure of the blind man, v. 6, 7. The circumstances of the miracle are singular, and, no doubt, significant. When he had thus spoken for the instruction of his disciples, and the opening of their understandings, then he addressed himself to the opening of the blind man's eyes. He did not send him to the pool of Siloam, but rather more privately, for his greater safety, or more publicly, for his greater honour, or till the sabbath was past, when it would give less offence; what good we have opportunities of doing, we should do it quickly; he that will never do a good work till there is nothing to be objected against it, will leave many a good work for ever undone, Eecl. 11. 4. In the cure observe, 1. The preparation of the eye-salve. Christ spit on the ground, and made clay of the spittle. He could have cured him with a word, as he did others, but he chose to do it this way, to shew that he is not tied to any method. He made clay of his own spittle, because there was no water near; and he would teach us not to be too nice or curious, but, when we have at any time occasion, to be willing to take up with that which is next hand, if it will but be made to serve the turn. Why should we go about for that which may as well be had and done a nearer way? Christ's making use of his own spittle intimates that there is healing virtue in everything that belongs to Christ; clay made of Christ's spittle was much more precious as the balm of Gilead. 2. The application of it to the place: He anointed the eyes of the blind man, and made the margin reads it, He spread (signifying) he doubled the clay upon the eyes of the blind man, like a tender physician; he did it himself with his own hand, though the patient was a beggar. Now Christ did this, 1. To magnify his power in making a blind man to see by that method which one would think more likely to make a seeing man blind. Drawing clay on the eyes would close them up, but never open them. 2. It was an act of gentleness to the poor poor creatures; and he makes men feel their own blindness before he gives them sight. 2. To give an intimation that it was his mighty hand, the very same that at first made man out of the clay; for by him God made the worlds, both the great world, and man the little world. Man was formed out of the clay, and moulded like the clay, and hence Christ used the same materials to give sight, as he used to give sight to the body; and thus he used to give sight to him that he who bid him do it, was that Jesus whom he had heard so much of, else he would not have done, at his bidding, on that which looked so like a fool's errand. In confidence of Christ's power, as well as in obedience to his command, he went, and washed. 5. The cure effected: he came seeing. There is more glory in this concise narrative, He went, and washed, and came seeing, than in Casar's Vest, vidit...
As to this man, 1. It was well ordered by Providence, that he on whom this miracle was wrought, should be a common beggar, and so generally known and remarkable, by which means the truth of the miracle was the better attested, and there were no witnesses against those infidel Jews who would not believe that he had been blind, than if he had been maintained in his father's house. 2. It was the greater instance of Christ's condescension, that he seemed (as I may say) to take more pains about the cure of a common beggar than of others. When it was for the advantage of his miracles that they should be wrought on these that were remarkable, he that wished to make it so by their poverty and misery, not by their dignity.

In answer to this inquiry, (1.) some said, This is he, the very same man; and these are witnesses to the truth of the miracle, for they had long known him stone-blind. (2.) Others, who could not think it possible that a man born blind should thus on a sudden receive his sight, for that reason, and no other, said, He is not he, but is like him, and so, by their confession, if it be he, it is a great miracle that is wrought upon him. Hence we may take occasion to think, (1.) Of the wisdom and power of providence in ordering such a universal variety of the faces of men and women, so that no two are so like, but that they may be distinguished, which is necessary to society, and commerce, and the administration of justice. And, (2.) Of the wonderful change that comes with this. Here is a poor blind beggar, some who before were very wicked and vile, but are thereby so universally and visibly altered, that one would not take them to be the same persons.

This controversy was soon decided by the man himself; he said, "I am he, the very man that so lately sat and begged; I am he that was blind, and was an object of the charity of men, but now, see, my sight is come, and I am become a benefactor, to one and all of mankind, and of God." We do not find that the neighbours appealed to him in this matter, but he, hearing the debate, interposed, and put an end to it. It is a piece of justice we owe to our neighbours, to rectify their mistakes, and to set things before them, as far as we are able, in a true light. Applying it spiritually, it teaches us that those who are savingly enlightened by the grace of God, should be ready to own what they were; that bless'd change was wrought, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 14.

11. How he came to have his eyes opened, v. 10—12. They will now turn aside, and see this great sight, and inquire further concerning it. He did not sound a trumpet when he did these alms, nor perform his cures upon a stage; and yet, like a city upon a hill, they could not be hid.

Two things these neighbours inquire after.

1. The manner of the cure: How were thine eyes opened? The works of the Lord being great, they ought to be sought out, Psalm 111. 2. It is good to observe the way and method of God's works, and they will appear the more wonderful. We may apply it spiritually; it is strange that blind eyes should be opened, but more strange when we consider how they are opened; how weak the means are, that are used, and how strong the opposition thus is overcome.

In answer to this, he gives them a plain and full account of the matter; (v. 11.) A man that is called Jesus, made clay,—and I received sight. Note, Those who have experienced special instances of God's power and goodness in temporal or spiritual things, should be ready upon all occasions to communicate their experiences, for the good of others.

See David's collection of his experiences, his own and others', Ps. 34. 4—6. It is a debt we owe to our benefactor, and to our brethren. God's favours
are lost upon us, when they are lost with us, and go no farther.

2. Concerning the Author of it; (v. 12.) Where is he? Some perhaps asked this question out of curiosity; "Where is he, that we may see him?" A man that did such cures as these, might well be a show, which one would go a good way for the sight of. Others, perhaps, asked out of ill will; "Where is he, that we may seize him?" There was an approbation for the discovering and apprehending of him; (ch. 11. 57.) and the unthinking crowd, in spite of all reason and equity, will have ill thoughts of those that are put into an ill name. Some, we hope, asked this question out of good will; "Where is he, that we may be acquainted with him? Where is he, that we may come to him, and share in the favours he is so free of?"

In answer to this he could say nothing; I knew not. As soon as Christ had sent him to the pool of Siloam, it should seem, he withdrew immediately, (as he did, ch. 5. 13.) and did not stay till the man returned, as if he either doubted of the effect, or waited for the man's thanks. Humble souls take more pleasure in doing good than in hearing of it again; it will be time enough to hear of it in the resurrection of the just, when they shall see Jesus, for by the time he had gained his sight he had lost his Physician; and he asked, it is probable, Where is he? None of all the new and surprising objects that presented themselves, could be so grateful to him as one sight of Christ, but as yet he knew no more of him than that he was called, and rightly called, Jesus—a Saviour. Thus in the work of grace wrought upon the soul we see the change, but see not the hand that makes it; for the way of the Spirit is like that of the wind, which thou heardest the sound of, but canst not tell whence it comes, or whether it goes.

13. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. 14. And it was the sabbath-day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. 15. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. 16. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. 17. They say unto the blind man again. What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. 18. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. 19. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see? 20. His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind. 21. But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him; he shall speak for himself. 22. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. 23. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. 24. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. 25. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. 26. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes? 27. He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? Will ye also be his disciples? 28. Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. 29. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. 30. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. 31. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him heareth. 32. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. 34. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.

One would have expected that such a miracle as Christ wrought upon the blind man, should have settled his reputation, and silenced and shamed all opposition, but it had the contrary effect; instead of being embraced as a prophet for it, he is prosecuted as a criminal.

1. Here is the information that was given in to the Pharisees concerning this matter; (v. 13.) They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. They brought him to the great Sanhedrim, which consisted chiefly of Pharisees, at least the Pharisees in the Sanhedrim were most active against Christ.

1. Some think that they who brought this man to the Pharisees, did it with a good design, to shew them that this Jesus, whom they persecuted, was not one of them, that he was not a native of them, but brought a man from another country, and one that gave considerable proofs of a divine mission. What hath convinced us of the truth and excellency of religion, and hath removed our prejudices against it, we should be forward, as we have opportunity, to offer to others for their conviction.

2. It should seem rather, that they did it with an ill design, to exasperate the Pharisees the more against Christ. For there was no need of that, for they were bitter enough of themselves. They brought him with such a suggestion as that, (ch. 11. 47, 48.) If ye let him thus alone, all men will believe on him. Note, Those rulers that are of a persecuting spirit, shall never want ill instruments about them, that will blow the coals, and make them worse.

II. The ground which was pretended for this in
1. The honour of this miracle, which would have lessened the reputation of all the rest. But God so ordered and over-ruled this counsel of their's, that it turned to the more effectual proof of the miracle, and left them under a necessity of being either convinced or confounded.

Now in this part of the examination we have,

1. The questions that were put to them: (v. 19.) They asked them in an imperious threatening way, "Is this your son? Dare you swear it? Do you say he was born blind? Are you sure of it? Or did he pretend to be so, to have an excuse for his begging? How then doth he now see? That is impossible, and therefore you had better say it." Those who cannot bear the light of truth, do all they can to eclipse it, and hinder the discovery of it.

2. The answers to these interrogatories, in which,

First, They fully attest that which they could safely say in this matter; safely, that is, upon their oaths; and that being known by their enemies themselves into a perjury; (v. 20.) We know that this is our son: (for they were daily conversant with him, and had such a natural affection to him as the true mother had,) (1 Kings 3. 26.) which made them know it was their own; and we know that he was born blind. They had reason to know it, inasmuch as it had cost them many a sad thought, and many a careful troublesome hour, about him. How often had they looked upon him with grief, and lamented their child's blindness more than all the burdens and inconveniences of their poverty, and wished he had never been born, rather than be born to such an uncomfortable life! Those who are ashamed of their children, or any of their relations, because of their bodily infirmities, may take a reproof from these parents, who freely owned, This is our son, though he was born blind, and lived upon alms.

Secondly, They cautiously decline giving any evidence concerning his cure; partly, because they were not themselves eye-witnesses of it, and could say nothing to it of their own knowledge; and partly, because they found it was a tender point, and would not bear to be meddled with. And therefore having owned that he was their son, and was born blind, further these deponents say nothing about the matter.

Observe how truly they express themselves; (v. 21.) "By what means he now sees, we know not, or who has opened his eyes, we know not, otherwise than by hear-say; we can give no account, either by what means or by whose hand it was done." See how the wisdom of this world teaches men to trim the matter in critical junctures. Christ was accused as a sabbath-breaker, and as an impostor. Now these parents of the blind were not eye-witnesses of the cure, were yet fully assured of it, and were bound in gratitude to have borne their testimony to the honour of the Lord Jesus, who had done their son so great a kindness; but they had not courage to do it, and then though it might serve to atone for their not appearing in favour of him, that they said nothing to his prejudice; whereas in the day of trial, he that is not able to speak for himself, and intercede for his own son as real against him, Luke 11. 23. Mark 8. 58.

That they might not be further urged in this matter, they refer themselves and the court to him: He is of age, ask him, he shall speak for himself. This implies that while children are not of age, (while they are infants, such as cannot speak,) it is incumbent upon their parents to speak for them,
speak to God for them in prayer, speak to the church for them in baptism; but when they are of age, it is fit that they should be asked whether they be willing to stand to that which their parents did for them; and let them speak for themselves. This man, though he was born blind, seems to have been of quick understanding above many, which enabled him to speak for himself better than his friends could speak for him. He was thus enabled to make up his mind what is wanting in the body, 1 Cor. 12. 23, 24. His parents turning them over to him, was only to save themselves from trouble, and expose him; whereas they that had so great an interest in his mercies, had reason to embark with him in his hazards for the honour of that Jesus who had done so much for them.

The way which they were so cautious—(v. 22, 23)—because they feared the Jews. It was not because they would put an honour upon their son, by making him his own advocate, or because they would have the matter cleared by the best hand, but because they would shift trouble off from themselves, as most people are in care to do, no matter on whom they throw it. Near is my friend, and nearer is my servant. They were not afraid to receive him, but nearer is myself—Proximus ego nimi. But christianity teaches another lesson, 1 Cor. 10. 24. Esth. 8. 6.

Here is, (1.) The late law which the Sanhedrin had made. It was agreed and enacted by their authority. That if any man within their jurisdiction did confess that Jesus was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. (2.) The present design was to be punished, and so prevented by this statute, and that was embracing Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, and discovering this by any overt-act, which amounted to a confessing of him. They themselves did expect a Messiah, but they could by no means hear to think that this Jesus should be he, nor admit the question whether he were or no, for two reasons. First, Because his persecutors were all so contrary to their traditional laws. The spiritual worship he pre-scribed, overthrew their formalities; nor did any thing more effectually destroy their singularity and narrow-spirituedness than that universal charity which he taught; humility and mortification, repentance and self-denial, were lessens new to them, and sounded harsh and strange in their ears. Secondly, Because his promises and appearances were so many and so strong, that they could not but believe. They expected a Messiah in outward pomp and splendour, that should not only free the nation from the Roman yoke, but advance the grandeur of the Sanhedrin, and make all the members of it princes and peers: and now to hear of a Messiah, whose outward circumstances were all mean and poor, whose first appearance and principal residence were in Galilee, a despised province, who never made his evidence them, nor sought their favour, whose followers were neither sword-men, nor gown-men, nor any men of honour, but contemptible fishermen, who proposed and promised no redemption but from sin, no consolation of Israel but what is spiritual and divine, and at the same time bid his followers expect the cross, and count upon persecution; this was such a rebuke for these ideas, he had founded, and filled the minds of their people with such a spirit of power and interest, and such a disappointment to all their hopes, that they could never be reconciled to it, nor so much as give it a fair or patient hearing, but, right or wrong, it must be crushed.

The penalty to be inflicted for this crime. If any should own himself a disciple of Jesus, he should be dead and taken as an apostate from the faith of the Jewish church, and a rebel and traitor against the government of it, and should therefore be put out of the synagogue, as one that had ren-dered himself unworthy of the honours, and incapable of the privileges, of their church; he should be excommunicated, and expelled the common-wealth of Israel. Now was this merely an ecclesiastical censure, which a man that made no conscience of their authority, might slight, but it was, in effect, an outlawry, which excluded a man from civil com-pact, state, and society, and is a remembrancer of the consequences of sin. Note, First, Christ's holy religion, from its first rise, has been opposed by penal laws made against the professors of it; as if men's consciences would otherwise naturally embrace it, this unnatural force has been put upon them. Secondly, The church's authority, when the command of it has fallen into ill hands, has often been turned against itself, and ex-erts itself to serve a carnal secular interest. It is no new thing to see these cast out of the synagogue, that were the greatest beauties and blessings of it, and to hear those that expelled them say, The Lord be glorified, Isa. 66. 5.

Now of this edict it is said, 1. That the Jews had agreed it, or conspired it. Their consultation and communion herein, were a perfect conspiracy against Christ and his followers, in their rebellion against the Lord and his Anointed. 2. That they had agreed it. Though he had been but a few months in any public character among them, and, one would think, in so short a time could not have made then, jealous of him, yet thus early were they aware of his growing interest, and already agreed to do their utmost to suppress it. He had lately made his es-cape out of the temple, and when they saw them they hasted forth. He had, as it were, presently taken this course, to make it penal for any body to own him. Thus unanimous and thus expedi-tious are the enemies of the church, and their counsels; but he that sits in heaven, laughs at them, and has them in derision, and so may we.

(2.) The influence which this law had upon the parents of the blind man. They declined saying any thing of Christ, and shuffling it off to their son, because they feared the Jews. Christ had incurred the frowns of the government, to do their son a kindness, but they would not incur them, to do him any honour. Note, The fear of man brings a snare. (Prov. 29. 25.) and often makes people deny and disdain Christ, and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. Well, the parents have thus disentangled themselves, and are discharged from all ill-will they had against the examination of the man himself; the doubt of the Pharisees, whether he was born blind, was put out of doubt by them; and therefore,

2. They inquired of him concerning the manner of the cure, and made their remarks upon it, v. 15. 16.

[1.] The same question which his neighbours had put to him, now again the Pharisees asked him, how he had received his sight. This they inquired, not with any sincere desire to find out the truth, by tracing the report to the original, but with a desire to find an occasion against Christ; for if the man should relate the matter fully, they would prove Christ a sabbath-breaker; if he should vary from his former story, they would have some colour to suspect the whole of his history. Note, The fear of man brings a snare (Prov. 29. 25) and often makes people deny and disdain Christ, and his truths and ways, and act against their consciences. Well, the parents have thus disentangled themselves, and are discharged from all ill-will they had against the examination of the man himself; the doubt of the Pharisees, whether he was born blind, was put out of doubt by them; and therefore, they inquired of him concerning the manner of the cure, and made their remarks upon it, v. 15. 16.

[2.] The same answer, in effect, which he had before given to his neighbours, he here repeats to the Pharisees; He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. He does not here speak of the making of the clay, for indeed he had not seen it made. That circumstance was not essential, and might give the Pharisees most occasion against him, and therefore he waves it. In the former account he said, I washed, and received sight; but lest they should think it was only a glimpse for the present,
which a heated imagination might fancy itself to have, he now says, "I do see: it is a complete and last answer."

[3.] The remarks made upon this story were very different, and occasioned a debate in the court, v. 16.

First, Some took this occasion to cesure and condemn Christ for what he had done. Some of the Pharisees said, This man is not of God, as he pretends, because he keepeth not the sabbath-day. 1. To bring in this premiss which this censure is grounded, is very true—that there are a number of those pretenders to prophecy not sent of God; those pretenders to sanctity not born of God, who do not keep the sabbath-day. 2. They that are of God, will keep the commandments of God; and this is his commandment, that we sanctify the sabbath. They that are of God, keep up communion with God, and delight to hear from him, and speak to him, and therefore, so many, so evident, which is so day appointed for intercourse with heaven. The sabbath is called a sign, for the sanctifying of it is a sign of a sanctified heart, and the profaning of it a sign of a profane heart. 2. The application of it to our Saviour is very unjust, for he did religiously observe the sabbath-day, and in no instance violated it, never did otherwise than well on the sabbath-day. He did not keep the sabbath according to the tradition taught by the Pharisees, but he kept it according to the command of God, and therefore, no doubt, he was of God, and his miracles proved him to be Lord also of the sabbath-day. Note, Much unrighteous and uncharitable judging is occasioned by men's making the rules of religion more strict than God has made them, and adding their own fancies to God's appointments; as these were here, in the case of sabbath-sanctification. We ourselves may forbear such and such things, on the sabbath-day, as we find a distraction to us, and we do well, but we must not therefore tie up others to the same strictness. Everything that we take for a rule of practice, must not presently be made a rule of judgment.

Secondly, Others spake in his favour, and very pertinently urged, How can a man that is a sinner, do such miracles? It seems that even in this council of the ungodly there were some that were capable of a free thought, and were witnesses for Christ, even in the midst of his enemies. The matter of fact was plain, that this was a true miracle, the more it was searched into, the more it was cleared; and this brought his former like works to mind, and gave occasion to speak magnificently of them, triszc resumes, so great signs, so many, so evident. And the inference from it is very natural; such things as these could never be done by a man that is a sinner, that is, not by any mere man, in his own name, and by his own power; or rather, not by one that is a cheat or an impostor, and in that sense a sinner; such a one may indeed shew some signs and lying wonders, but not such signs and true wonders as Christ wrought. How could a man produce such divine credentials, if he had not a divine commission? Thus there was a division among them, a schism, so the word is; they clashed in their opinion, a warm debate arose, and the house divided upon it. Thus God defeats the councils of his enemies by dividing them; and by such testimonies as these given against the malice of persecutors, and the rubs they meet with, their designs against the church are sometimes rendered ineffectual, and always inexcusable.

3. After their inquiry concerning the cure, we must observe their inquiry concerning the Author of it, and here observe,

(1.) What the man said of him, in answer to their inquiry. They ask him, (v. 17.) "What saith thou of him, seeing that he has opened thine eyes?" What dost thou think of his doing this? And what shall I have to say of him that did it? He should speak slightly of Christ, in another sense, that he was tempted to do, to please them, now that he was in the hands, as his parents had done; if he should say, "I know not what to make of him, he may be a conjurer for aught I know, or some mountebank," they would have triumphed in it. Nothing confirms Christ's enemies in their enmity to him, so much as this, that he was guilty by those that have passed for his friends. But if he should speak honourably of him, they would prosecute him upon their new law, which did not except, no, not his own patient; would make him an example, and so deter others from applying themselves to him for cures, which, though, they came cheap from Christ, yet they would make them pay dear for. Or perhaps Christ's friends proposed to have the man's own sentiments concerning his Physician, and were willing to know, since he appeared to be a sensible man, what he thought of him. Note, Those whose eyes Christ has opened, know best what to say of him, and have great reason, upon all occasions, to say well of him. What think we of Christ?

To this question the poor man makes a short, plain, and direct answer: "He is a Prophet, he is one blessed of God, and a prophet, and speaks the words of God, and works miracles, and delivers to the world of the sorrows of God's people." There had been no prophets among the Jews for three hundred years; yet they did not conclude that they should have no more, for they knew that he was yet to come, who should seal up vision and prophecy, Dan. 9. 24. It should seem, this man had not any thoughts that he was the Messiah, the great Prophet, but one of the same rank with the other prophets. The former was a prophet, (ch. 4. 19.) so this blind man thought well of Christ according to the light he had, though he did not think well enough of him; but, being faithful in what he had already attained to, God revealed even that unto him. This poor blind beggar had a clearer judgment of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and was further into the proofs of a divine mission, than the masters in Israel, that assumed an authority to judge of prophets.

(2.) What they said of him, in reply to the man's testimony. Having in vain attempted to invalidate the evidence of the fact, and finding that indeed a notable miracle was wrought, and they could not deny it; they sought their attempt to hinder it, and ran it down, and do all they can to shake the opinion the man had of him that opened his eyes, and to convince him that he was a bad man; (p. 24.) Give God the glory, we know that this man is a sinner. Two ways this is understood; either,

[1.] By way of advice, to take heed of ascribing the praise of his cure to a sinful man, but to give it all to God, to whom it was due; thus, under colour of caution the men of the sabbath-day oppose the honour, as those do, who will not worship Christ as God, under pretence of zeal for this great truth, that there is but one God to be worshipped; whereas this is his declared will, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; and in confessing that Christ is Lord, we give glory to God the Father.

[2.] When God makes use of men that are sinners, as vessels for the conveyance of his own, we must give God the glory, for every creature is that to God which he makes it to be: and yet there is a gratitude owing to the instruments. It was a good word, Give God the praise, but here it was ill used; and there seems to be this further in it, This man is a sinner, a bad man, and therefore give the praise so much the
more to God who could work by such an instrument."  
[2.] Or by way of adoration; so some take it;  
 "We know (though thou dost not, who hast but lately come, as it were, into a new world) that this man is a sinner; a great impostor that cheats the country, this we are sure of, therefore give God praise," (as Joshua said to Achan) "by making an ingenious confession of the fraud and collusion which we are confident there is in this matter; in God's name, man, tell the truth." Thus is God's name abused in papal inquisitions, when by oaths, ex officio, they extort accusations of themselves from the innocent, as a goodly from the serpent. The history told they speak of the Lord Jesus; We know that this man is a sinner, is a man of sin. In which we may observe, First, Their insolvency and pride. They would not have it thought, when they asked the man what he thought of him, that they needed information; nay, they knew very well that he is a sinner, and nobody can convince them of the contrary. He had challenged them to their faces, (ch. 8. 46.) to convince him of sin, and they had nothing to say; but now behind his back they speak of him as a malefactor, convicted upon the notorious evidence of the fact. Thus false accusers make up in confidence what is wanting in proof. Secondly, The injury and indignity hereby done to the Lord Jesus. When he became man, he took upon him the form, not only of a servant, but of a sinner, (Rom. 8. 3.) and passed for a sinner in the common estimation. No, he was represented as a sinner of the first magnitude, a sinner above all men; and, being made sin for us, he despised even this shame. The debate that arose between the Pharisees and this poor man concerning Christ. They say, He is a sinner; he says, He is a prophet. As it is an encouragement to those who are concerned for the cause of Christ, to hope that it shall never be last for want of witnesses, we shall consider the blind beggar picked up from the way-side, and made a witness for Christ, to the faces of his most impudent enemies; so it is an encouragement to those who are called out to witness for Christ, to find with what prudence and courage this man managed his defence, according to the promise, It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. Though he had never seen Jesus, he had felt his goodness. Now in the parley between the Pharisees and this poor man we may observe three steps.  
(1.) He sticks to the certain matter of fact, which they endeavour to shake the evidence of. That which is doubtful, is best resolved into that which is plain, and therefore,  
[1.] He adheres to that which to himself at least, and to his own satisfaction, was past dispute; (v. 25.)  
"Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not, I will now stand to dispute, nor need I, the matter is plain, and, though I should altogether hold my peace, would speak for itself," or, as it might better be rendered,  
"If he be a sinner, I know it not, I see no reason to say so, but the contrary; for this one thing I know, and can be more sure of than you can be of that which you are so confident of, that whereas I am not his sinner, he is a prophet; I am both able and bound to speak well of him." Now here, First, He tacitly refutes their great assurance of the ill character they gave of the blessed Jesus; "You say that you know him to be a sinner; I, who know him as well as you do, cannot give him any such character." Secondly, He by this reason brings up the experience of the power and goodness of the holy Jesus, and resolves to abide by it. There is no disputing against experience, nor arguing a man out of his senses, here is one that is properly an eye-witness of the power and grace of Christ, though he had never seen him. Note, As Christ's mercies are most valued by those that have felt the want of them, that have been blind, and now see, so the most powerful and durable affections to Christ are thence, every one, born from an experimental knowledge of him, I John I. 10. 14, 15.  
He does not here give a nice account of the method of the cure, nor pretend to describe it philosophically, but, in short, Whereas I was blind, now I see. Thus, in the work of grace in the soul, though we cannot tell when, and how, by what instruments, and by what steps and advances, the blessed change was wrought, yet we may take the comfort of it, if we can say, at least, "Whereas I was blind, now I see." I did live a carnal, worldly, sensual life, but, thanks be to God, it is now otherwise with me," Eph. 5. 8.  
[2.] They endeavour toaffle and stifle the evidence by a needless repetition of their inquiries into it; (v. 26.) What did he to thee? How opened he thine eyes? They asked these questions, First, Because they wanted something to say, and would rather speak insincerely, than seem to be silenced, or run aground. Thus eager disputants, that resolve they will have the last word, by such vain repetitions, to avoid the shame of being silenced, make themselves accountable for many idle words. Secondly, Because they hoped, by putting the man upon repeating his evidence, to catch him tripping in it, or wavering, and then they would think they have gained the point.  
(2.) He upbraids them with their obstinate indelity, and invincible prejudices, and they revile him as a disciple of Jesus, (v. 27—29.) where the man is more bold with them, and they more sharp upon him than before.  
[1.] The man boldly upbraids them with their wilful and unreasonable opposition to the evidence of this miracle, v. 27. He would not gratify them with a repetition of the story, but bravely replied, I have told you already, and ye did not hear, wherefore would ye hear it again, will ye also be his disciples? Some think that he spoke seriously, and really expecting that they would be convinced. "He has many disciples, I will be one, will you also come in among them?" Some zealous young christian see so much reason for religion, that they are ready to think is this year was for conveying his message to their mind. But it rather seems to be spoken ironically; "Will ye be his disciples? No, I know you abhor the thoughts of it; why then should ye desire to hear that which will either make you his disciples, or leave you inexusable if ye be not?" Those that wilfully shut their eyes against the light, as these Pharisees here did, First, They make themselves contemptible and base, as these here did, who were justly judged: by this year was for conveying the conclusion, when they had nothing to object against either of the premises. Secondly, They forfeit all the benefit of further instructions and means of knowledge and conviction: they that have been told once, and would not hear, why should they be told it again? Jer. 51. 9. See Matt. 10. 14. Thirdly, They hereby receive the grace of God in vain. This is implied in things. "He that is not convinced, can hardly be saved;" or, as the age now speaks, scolded him, began to call names, and give him ill language. See what Christ's faithful witnesses must
expect from the adversaries of his truth and cause; let them count upon all manner of evil to be said of them, Matt. 5. 11. The method commonly taken by unreasonable men, is, to make out with railing what is wanting in truth and reason.

First, They taunted this man for his affliction to God and his people, as if it were reproach enough, and they could not say worse of him. "We seem to be his disciples, and will leave that preference to thee, and such as thou art." They do what they can to put Christ's religion in an ill name, and to represent the profession of it as a contemptible scandalous character. They reviled him. The vulgar reads it, malefactorum eum—\(\text{\textit{they cursed him}}\); and what was their curse? It was this, "\textit{May such a curse be upon thee as was upon the house of the temple!}" (Luke 19. 40.) "\textit{Ever be on us and on our children!}"

If we take our measures of credit and disgrace from the sentiment or clamours rather of a blind deluded world, we shall glory in our shame, and be ashamed of our glory. They had no reason to call this man a disciple of Christ, he had neither seen him, nor heard him preach, only he had spoken favourably of a kindness he had done him, and this they could not deny.

Secondly, They gloried in their relation to Moses as their Master; "We are Moses' disciples, and do not either need or desire any other teacher." Note 1. Carnal professors of religion are very apt to trust in, and be proud of, the dignities and privileges of their profession, while they are strangers to the principles and powers of their religion. These Pharisees had before boasted of their good parentage, He is the Lord's seed; hear of our good education, \textit{We are Moses' disciples}, as if these would save them. 2. It is sad to see how much one part of religion is opposed, under colour of zeal for another part; there was a perfect harmony between Christ and Moses; Moses prepared for Christ, and Christ perfected Moses, so that they might be disciples of Moses, and become the disciples of Christ too; and yet they here put them in opposition, nor can they have represented Christ but under the umbrage of the abused name of Moses. Thus they who gain the doctrine of free grace, value themselves as promoters of man's duty, \textit{We are Moses' disciples}; while, on the other hand, they that cancel the obligation of the law, value themselves as the ascenders of free grace, and as if none were the disciples of Jesus, but they; whereas, if we rightly understand the matter, we shall see God's grace and mercy do meet together, and kiss and benviéd each other.

Thirdly, They gave some sort of reason for their adhering to Moses against Christ; (v. 2.) \textit{We know that God spake unto Moses; as for this fellow, we know not whence he is.} But did they not know that among other things which God spake unto Moses, this was one, that they must expect another Prophet, and a further revelation of the mind of God; yet, when the Lord Jesus, pursuant to what God said to Moses, did appear, and gave sufficient proofs of his being that Prophet, under pretence of sticking to the old religion and the established church, they not only forfeited, but forsook, their own mercies. In this argument of their observe.

1. How impertinent they allege, in defence of their enmity to Christ, that which none of his followers ever denied, \textit{We know that God spake unto Moses;} and that shows, plainly to Moses than to any other of the prophets; but what then? God spake to Moses, and does it therefore follow that Jesus is an impostor? Moses was a prophet, it is true, and might not Jesus be a prophet too? Moses spake hopefully of Jesus, (ch. 5. 46.) and Jesus spake hopefully of Moses; (Luke 16. 20.) they were both faithful in the same house of God, Moses as a servant, Christ as a Son; therefore their pleasing Moses' divine warrant in opposition to Christ's, was an artifice to make unthinking people believe it was as certain that Jesus was a false Prophet, as that Moses was a true one; whereas they were both true.

How strangely they urge their ignorance of Christ, as a reason to justify their contempt of him; \textit{As for this fellow.} Thus scornfully do they speak of the blessed Jesus, as if they did not think it worth while to charge their memories with a name so inconsiderable; they expressed themselves with as much disdain of the Shepherd of Israel, as if he had not been worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock; as for this fellow, this sorry fellow, we know not from whence he is. They supposed themselves to have the key of knowledge, that none might come in but by a licence first had and obtained from them, under the seal of their court; they expected that all who set up for teachers, should apply themselves to them, and give them satisfaction, which this Jesus had never done, never so far owned their power to ask their leave, and therefore they concluded him an intruder, and one that came not in by the door; they knew not whence he was, nor knew who he was, and therefore concluded him a sinner; "We know little of him, we should judge charitably of him; but proud and narrow souls will think none good but themselves, and those that are in their interest. It was not long ago, that the Jews had made the contrary to this, an objection against Christ; (ch. 7. 27.) \textit{We know this man whence he is, but when Christ comes, no man knows whence he is.} Thus they could with the greatest assurance either affirm or deny the same thing, according as they saw it would serve their turn. They knew not whence he was; and whose fault was that? (1.) It is certain that they ought to have inquired; the Messiah was to appear about this time, and it concerned them to look about them, and examine every indication; but these priests, like these, Jer. 2. 8. said not, \textit{Where is the Lord?} (2.) It is certain that they might have known whence he was, might have known, not only, by searching the register, that he was born in Bethlehem; but, by inquiring into his doctrine, miracles, and conversation, they might have known that he was sent of God, and had better orders, a better commission, and far better instructions, than any they could give him. See the absurdity of infidelity; men will not know the doctrine of Christ, because they are resolved they will not believe it, and then pretend they do not, because they do not know it. Such ignorance is unutterable, which support one another, aggravate one another. (5.) He reasons with them concerning this matter, and they excommunicate him.

1. The poor man, finding that he had reason on his side, which they could not answer, grows more bold, and, in prosecution of his argument, is very clear upon their own side. First, He wonders at their obstinate infidelity; (v. 30.) not at all daunted by their frowns, nor shaken by their confidence, he bravely answered, \textit{Why, herein is a marvellous thing, the strangest instance of wilful ignorance that ever was heard of among men that pretended to sense, that you know not from whence he is, and yet he has opened mine eyes.} Two things he wonders at.

1. That they should be strangers to a man so favourable a testimony of the blind, must certainly be a considerable man, and with taking notice of; the Pharisees were inquisitive men, had a large correspondence and acquaintance, thought themselves the eyes of the church, and its watchmen, and yet that they should talk, as if they thought it below them to take cognizance of such a man as this, and have conversation with him, this is
a strange thing indeed. There are many who pass for learned and knowing men, who understand business, and can talk sense in other things, who yet are ignorant, to a wonder, of the doctrine of Christ, who have no concern, no, not so much as a curiosity, to acquaint themselves with that which the angels desire to look into.

2. That they should question the divine commission, that had undoubtedly wrought a divine miracle. When they said, We know not whence he is, they meant, We know not any proof that his doctrine and ministry are from heaven; Now this is strange, (saith the poor man,) that the miracle wrought upon me has not convinced you, and put the matter out of doubt; that you, whose education and studies give you advantages above others, of discerning the things of God, that you should thus shut your eyes against the light. It is a marvellous work, and a wonder, when the wisdom of the wise thus perisheth, (Isa. 29. 14.) that they deny the truth of that which they cannot gainsay the evidence of.

Note. (1.) The unbelief of those who enjoy the means of knowledge and conviction, is indeed a marvellous thing, Mark 6. 6. (2.) Those who have themselves experienced the power and grace of the Lord Jesus, and yet reject him, and, having such good thoughts of him themselves, are amazed that others have not so too. Had Christ opened the eyes of the Pharisees, they would not have doubted his being a Prophet.

Secondly, He argues strongly against them, v. 31-33. They had determined concerning Jesus, that he was not of God, (v. 16.) but was a sinner, v. 24. In answer to which the man here proves not only that he was not a sinner, (v. 31.) but that he was of God, v. 33. He argues here, 1. With great knowledge. Though he could not read a letter on the book, he was well acquainted with the scripture and the things of God; he had wanted the sense of seeing, yet had well improved that of hearing, by which faith cometh; yet that would not have served him, if he had not had an extraordinary presence of God with him, and special aids of his Spirit, upon this occasion. 2. With great zeal for the honour of Christ, whom he could not endure to hear run down, and evil spoken of. 3. With great boldness, and courage, and undauntedness, not terrified by the proudest of his adversaries. They that are ambitious of the favours of God, must not be afraid of the frowns of men. See here (saith Dr. Whitby) a blind man and unlearned, judging more righteously of a man than the learned council of the Pharisees. Whence we learn that we are not always to be led by the authority of councils, popes, or bishops; and that it is not absurd for laymen, sometimes, to vary from their opinions; these overseers being sometimes guilty of great oversights.

Now the man's argument may be reduced into form, somewhat like that of David, Ps. 66. 18, 19. That God heard my supplication in my heart, God will not hear me; here it is to the same purport. God heareth not sinners; the assumption there is, But verily God hath heard me; here it is, Verily God hath heard Jesus, he hath been honoured with the doing of that which was never done before; the conclusion there is to the honour of God, Blessed be God; here to the honour of the name of Jesus.

(1.) He lays it down for an undoubted truth, that none but good men are the favourites of heaven; (v. 31.) Now we know, you know it as well as I, that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, he heareth. Here, the assertions rightly understood, are true.

First, Be it spoken to the terror of the wicked, God heareth not sinners, such sinners as the Pharisees meant, when they said of Christ, He is a sinner, one that, under the umbrage of God's name, advanced the devil's interest. This speaks no discouragement to repenting returning sinners, but to those that go on still in their trespasses, that make their prayers not only consistent with, but subservient to, their sins, as the hypocrites do; God will not hear them, he will not give them again, nor give an answer of peace to their prayers.

Secondly, Be it spoken to the comfort of the righteous, that if any man be a worshipper of God, and does his will, him he heareth. Here is, 1. The complete character of a good man; he is one that worships God and doeth his will; he is constant in his devotions at set times, and regular in his conversation at all times. He is one that makes it his business to glorify his Creator by the solemn adorations of his name, and a sincere obedience to his will and law; both must go together. 2. The unspoken comfort of such a man; him God heareth; he hears his complaints, and relieveth him; hears his appeals, and rights him; hears his praises, and accepts them; hears his prayers, and answers them, Ps. 34. 15.

[710]The application of these truths is very pertinent to prove that he at whose word such a divine power was put forth, as cured one born blind, was not a bad man, but, having manifestly such an interest in the holy God, as that he heard him always, (ch. 11. 41, 42.) was certainly a holy one.

(2.) He magnifies the miracle which Christ had wrought, to strengthen the argument the more; (v. 32.) Since the world began, was it not heard, that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind? This is to shew either, [1.] That it was a true miracle, and above the power of nature; it was never heard that any man, by the use of natural means, had cured one that was born blind; no doubt, this man and his parents had been very inquisitive into cases of this nature, whether any such had been helped, and could hear of none, which enabled him to speak this with the more assurance. Or, [2.] That it was an extraordinary miracle, and beyond the precedents of former miracles; neither Moses nor any of the prophets, though they did great things, ever did such things as this; wherein divine power and divine goodness seem to strive which should outshine. Moses wrought miraculous plagues, but Christ wrought miraculous cures. Note, First, The wondrous works of the Lord Jesus were such, as the children of Israel had not seen, nor did they understand. It becomes those who have received mercy from God, to magnify the mercies they have received, and to speak honourably of them; not that thereby glory may redound to themselves, and they may seem to be extraordinary favourites of heaven, but that God may have so much the more glory.

(3.) He therefore concludes, If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, nothing extraordinary, nothing which Moses did not do in common with other men; and this is a strong argument against the justice of God, notwithstanding his non-conformity to your traditions in the business of the sabbath-day. Note, What Christ did on earth sufficiently demonstrated what he was in heaven; for if he had not been sent of God, he could not have wrought such miracles. It is true, the man of sin comes with lying wonders, but not with real miracles; it is likewise supposed that a false prophet shall, before the end, prophecy, and do great things, (Deut. 18. 15.) yet the case is so put, as that it would carry with it, even its own confession, for it is to enforce a temptation to serve other gods, which was to set God against himself. It is true likewise, many wicked people have, in Christ's name, done many wonderful works, which does not prove them that wrought them to be of God, but in his name they were wrought. We may
is a very dreadful thing; for what is so bound on earth, is bound in heaven; but to be cast out of a corrupt church, (which it is our duty to go out of,) and that unjustly, though cast out with an anathema, and all the bugbear ceremonies of bell, book, and candle, is what we have no reason at all to dread or be aggrieved at. The curse causeless shall not come. If they cast Christ’s followers out of their synagogues, as he foretells, (ch. 16. 2.) there is no harm done, when they are become synagogues of Satan.

35. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? 36. He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? 37. And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. 38. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

In these verses, we may observe,

1. The tender care which our Lord Jesus took of this poor man, (v. 33.) When Jesus heard that they had cast him out, (for it is likely the town rani of it, and every body cried out shame upon them for] Their love to him, when he cast him out of the church, and looking after him, that he might encourage and comfort him. 1. Because he had to the best of his knowledge, spoken so very well, so bravely, so boldly, in defence of the Lord Jesus. Note, Jesus Christ will be sure to stand by his witnesses, and own those that own him and his truth and ways. Earthly princes neither do, nor can, take cognizance of all that vindicate them and their government and authority. 2. Because the Pharisees have cast him out, and abused him. Beside the common regard which the righteous Judge of the world has to those who suffer wrongfully, (Ps. 103. 6.) there is a particular meditation taken of those that suffer in the course of Christ, and for the sake of it, out of many of a good conscience. Here was one poor man suffering for Christ, and he took care that as his afflictions abounded, his consolations should much more abound. Note, (1.) That persecutors may exclude good men from their communion, yet they cannot exclude them from communion with Christ, nor put them out of the way of his visits. He was a hiding-place for himself, and appear, to the joy of those whose brethren hated and cast out.

II. The comfortable converse Christ had with him, wherein he brings him acquainted with the consolation of Israel. He had well improved the knowledge he had before; and now he further instructs him; for he that is faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more, Matt. 13. 12.

1. Our Lord Jesus examines his faith; “Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Dost thou give credit to the promises of the Messiah? Dost thou expect his coming, and art thou ready to receive and embrace him when he is manifested to thee?” This was that faith of the Son of God which they lived by, who lived before he was manifested. Observe, (1.) The Messiah is here called the Son of God, and so the Jews had learned to call him from the prophecies, Ps. 2. 7.—89. 27. See ch. 1. 49. Then art the Son of God, that is, the true Messiah. They that expected the temporal kingdom of the Mes
siah, delighted rather in calling him the Son of Da-

vid, which gave more countenance to that expectation,
Matt. 22. 42. But Christ, that he might give us an idea of his kingdom, as purely spiritual and divine, calls himself the Son of God, and rather Son of man in general, than of David in particular. The desires and expectations of the Messiah, which the Old Testament saints had, guided by, and gratified with the prophecies, were so very strongly and gratefully interpreted and accepted is their believing on the Son of God. This faith Christ here inquires after; Dost thou believe? Note, The great thing which is now required of us, (1 John 3. 23.) and will shortly be inquired after concerning us, is, our believing on the Son of God, and by this we must stand or fall for ever. Christ, he that talketh with thee; and he was indebted to Christ for condescending to do this. He was not only favoured with a sight of Christ, but was admitted into fellowship and communion with him. Great princes are willing to be seen by those whom ye will not vouchsafe to talk with. But Christ, by his word and Spirit, talks with those whose desires are toward him, and in talking with them manifests himself to them, as he did to the two disciples, when he talked their hearts warm, Luke 24. 32. Observe, This poor man was solicitously inquiring after the Saviour, when at the same time he saw him, and was talking with him. Note, Jesus Christ is often near the souls that seek him than they themselves are aware of. Doubtless his tians are sometimes saying, Where is the Lord? and fearing that they are cast out from his sight, when at the same time it is he that talks with them, and puts strength into them. 4. The poor man readily entertains this surprising revelation, and, in a transport of joy and wonder, he says, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him. (2.) He proceeded his faith in Christ, Lord, I be lieve thee to be the Son of God. He would not dispute any thing that he said, who had shewed such mercy to him, and wrought such a miracle for him, nor doubt of the truth of a doctrine which was confirmed by such signs. Believing with the heart, he thus confesses with the mouth; and now the bruised reed was become a cedar. (3.) He wished the same faith bestowed on him. He worshipped him, not only gave him the civil respect due to a great man, and the acknowledgments owing to a kind benefactor, but herein gave him divine honour and worshipped him as the Son of God manifested in the flesh. None but God is to be worshipped; so that in worshipping Jesus, he owned him to be God. Note, True faith will shew itself in a humble adoration of the Lord Jesus. They who believe in him, will see all the reason in the world to worship him. We never read any more of this man; but, it is very likely, from henceforth he became a constant follower of Christ. 39. And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and they which see might be made blind. 40. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? 41. Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth. 42. Christ having spoken comfort to the poor man that was persecuted, here speaks conviction to his persecutors, a specimen of the distributions of trouble and rest at the great day, 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. Probably, this was not immediately after his discourse with the man, but he took the next opportunity that offered itself, to address the Pharisees. I. Here is the account Christ gives of his design in coming into the world; (v. 39.) "For judgment I am come to order and administer the great affairs of the kingdom of God among men, and am invested with a judicial power in order thereunto, to be executed in conformity to the wise counsels of God, and in pursuance of them." What Christ spoke, he spake not as a preacher in the pulpit, but as sitting upon the throne, and a judge upon the bench. His business into the world was great, he came to keep the assizes and general gaol-delivery; he came for
II. No judgment, that is, 1. To preach a doctrine and a law which would try men, and effectually discover and distinguish them, and would be completely fitted, in all respects, to be the rule of government, and of judgment shortly. 2. To put a difference between men, by revealing the thoughts of many hearts, and laying open men's true characters, by this one test, whether they were well or ill affected to him. 3. To change the face of government in his church, to abolish the Jewish ceremony, to take down that fabric, which, though erected for the time by the hand of God himself, yet by tract of time was corrupted, by the increasable corruptions of the managers of it was become rotten and dangerous, and to erect a new building by another model, to institute new ordinances and offices, to abrogate Judaism and enact Christianity: for this judgment he came into the world, and it was a great revolution.

This great truth he explains by a metaphor borrowed from the miracle he had lately wrought. That which they see not may see; and that which they which might be made blind. Such a difference of Christ's coming is often spoken of; to some his gospel is a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

(1.) This is applicable to nations and people, that the Gentiles, who had long been desitute of the light of divine revelation, might see it; and the Jews, who had come so near to it, might be turned from darkness to light. He came for judgment, that is, to set those at liberty from their dark prison, that were willing to be released, Isa. 61. 1. [2.] Eventually, and in the issue, that those who see, might be made blind; that those who have a high conceit of their own wisdom, and set up that in contradiction to divine revelation, might be sealed up in ignorance and infidelity. The preaching of the cross was foolishness to them, who by wisdom knew not God. Christ came into the world for this judgment, to administer the affairs of a spiritual kingdom seated in men's minds. Whereas in the Jewish church, the blessings and judgments of God's government were mostly temporal, now the method of administration should be changed; and as the good subjects of his kingdom should be blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly things, so as arise from a due illumination of the mind, so the rebels should be punished with spiritual plagues, not war, famine, and pestilence, as formerly, but such as arise from a judicial intimation, hardness of heart, terror of conscience, strong delusions, vile affections. In this way Christ will judge between cattle and cattle, Ezek. 34. 17.

II. Here is the Pharisees' cavil at this. They were learning blind; not gracious to learn any good from him, but to form evil against him; and they said, Are we blind also? When Christ said that they who saw, should by his coming be made blind, they apprehended that he meant them who were the seers of the people, and valued themselves on their insight and foresight. "Now," say they, "we know the common people are blind; but are we blind also? What! we—the rabbis, the doctors! the learned, who have the keys in the schools—are we blind too?" This is scandalum magnum—a libel on the great. Note, Frequently those that need reproof most, and deserve it best, though they have wit enough to discern a tact one, have not grace enough to bear a just one. These Pharisees took this reproof for a reproach, as those lawyers, (Luke 11. 45.) "Are we blind also? Darrest thou that we are blind?" For judgment, every one in him such a confirmation for, see, and values to. Now no thing fortifies men's corrupt hearts more against the convictions of the word, nor more effectually reprove them, than the good opinion, especially if it be a high opinion, which others have of them; as if all that had gained applause with men, must needs obtain acceptance with God, than which nothing is more false and deceitful, for God sees not as man sees.

III. Here is Christ's answer to this cavil, which, if it did not convince them, yet silenced them; If ye were blind, ye should have no sin. (1.) "If ye had been really ignorant, your sin had not been so deeply aggravated, nor should ye have had so much sin to answer for, as now ye have. If ye were blind, as the poor Gentiles are, and many of your own poor persons, from whom ye have taken the key of knowledge, ye should have had comparatively no sin." The times of ignorance God winked at; invincible ignorance, though it does not justify sin, excuses it, and lessens the guilt. It will be more tolerable with those that perish for lack of vision, than for those that rebel against the light. (2.) "If ye had been sensible of your own blindness, ye would not have sinned; if ye would have seen nothing else, ye could have seen the need of one to lead you, ye would soon have accepted Christ as your guide, and then ye would have had no sin, ye would have submitted to an evangelical righteousness, and have been put into a justified state." Note, Those that are convinced of their disease, are in a fair way to be cured, for there is not a greater hinderance to the salvation of souls than self-sufficiency.

But ye say, Who made us? We see; now that ye have knowledge, and are instructed out of the law, your sin is highly aggravated; and now that ye have a conceit of that knowledge, and think ye see your way better than any body can show it you, therefore your sin remains, your case is desperate, and your disease incurable. And as those are most blind, who will not see, so their blindness is most dangerous, who fancy they do see. No patients are so highly managed as those in a frenzy, who say that they are well, and nothing ails them. The sin of those who are self-conceited and self-confident, remains, for they reject the gospel of grace, and therefore the guilt of their sin remains unpardoned, and they forfeit the Spirit of grace, and therefore the power of their sin remains unbroken. Seek thou a man war in his own conceit? Hearst thou the Pharisees say, Who made us? There is more hope of a fool, of a publican, and a harlot, than of such.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, we have, I. Christ's parabolical discourse concerning his Shepherding the sheep, ver. 1—18. II. The various sentiments of people upon it, ver. 19—21. III. The dispute Christ had with the Jews in the temple at the feast of dedication, ver. 22—29. IV. His departure into the country thereupon, ver. 30—42.

1. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other
way, the same is a thief and a robber. 2. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. 4. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. 5. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. 6. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. 7. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you—Amen, Amen. This vehement asseveration speaks the certainty and weight of that he said; we find Amen doubled in the church's prayers and psalms, Ps. 41. 13.—72. 19.—52. If we would have our "Amens" accepted in heaven, let Christ's "Amens" be prevailing on earth; his repeated "Amens." In the parable we have,

1. The evidence of a thief and a robber, that comes to do mischief to the flock, and damage to the owner. v. 1. He enters not by the door; as having no lawful cause of entry, but climbs up some other way, at a window, or some breach in the wall. How industrious are wicked people to do mischief! What plots will they lay, what pains will they take, what hazards will they run, in their wicked pursuits! This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of God. 2. The character that distinguishes the rightful owner, who has a property in the sheep, and a care for them; He enters in by the door, as one having authority, (v. 2.) and he comes to do them some good office or other, to bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which is sick, Ezek. 34. 16. Sheep need man's care, and, in return for it, are serviceable to man; (1 Cor. 9. 7.) they clothe and feed those by whom they are ceded and fed. 3. The ready entrance that the shepherd finds: (v. 3.) To him the porter openeth. Anciently they had their sheep-folds within the outer gates of their houses, for the greater safety of their flocks, so that none could come to them the right way, but such as the porter opened to, or the master of the house gave the keys to. 4. The care he takes, and the provision he makes for his sheep; The sheep hear his voice, when he speaks familiarly to them, when they come into the fold, as men now do to their dogs and horses; and, which is more, he calls his own sheep by name, so exact is the notice he takes of them, the account he keeps of them; and he leads them out from the fold to the green pastures; and (v. 4, 5.) when he turns them out to graze, he does not drive them, but (such was the custom in those times) he goes before them, to prevent any mischief or danger that might meet them, and they, being used to it, follow him, and are safe. 5. The strange attendance of the sheep upon the shepherd; They know his voice, so as to discern his mind by it, and to distinguish it from that of a stranger; (for the ox knows his owner, Isa. 1. 5.) and a stranger might not follow, but, as suspecting some ill design, will flee from him, not knowing his voice, but that it is not the voice of their own shepherd. This is the parable; we have the key to it, Ezek. 34. 31. Ye my flock are men, and I am your God. Let us observe something from the parable itself. (1.) That good men are fitly compared to sheep. Men, as creatures depending on their Creator, are called his sheep. When compared to good men, as new creatures, have the good qualities of sheep, harmless and inoffensive as sheep; meek and quiet, without noise; patient as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; useful and profitable, tame and tractable, to the shepherd, and sociable one with another, and much used in sacrifices. (2.) The church of God in the world is a sheep-
fold, into which the children of God that were scattered abroad, are gathered together, (ch. 11. 52.) and into which they are fitted and incorporated; it is a good fold, Ezek. 34. 14. See Mic. 2. 12. This fold is well fortified, for God himself is as a wall of fire about it, Zech. 2. 5.

(3.) This sheep-fold lies much exposed to thieves and robbers; crafty seducers that debauch and deceive, and cruel persecutors that destroy and devour, grievous wolves, Acts 20. 29. Thieves that would steal Christ's sheep from him, to sacrifice them to the devil, and their food from them, that they might perish for lack of it. Wolves in sheep's clothing. Matt. 7. 15.

(4.) The great Shepherd of the sheep takes wonderful care of the flock and all that belong to it. God is the great Shepherd, Ps. 23. 1—80. 1. He knows them that are his, calls them by name, marks them for himself, leads them out to fat pastures, makes them both feed and rest there; speaks comfortably to them, guards them by his providence, guides them by his Spirit and word, and goes before them, to set them in the way of his steps.

(5.) The under-shepherds, who are intrusted to feed the flock of God, ought to be careful and faithful in the discharge of that trust; magistrates must defend them, and protect and advance all their secular interests; ministers must serve them in their spiritual capacities; and the people, and all the members of the flock of God faithfully opened and applied, and with gospel-ordinances duly administered, taking the oversight of them; they must enter by the door of a regular ordination, and to such the porter will open; the Spirit of Christ will set before them an open door, give them authority in the church, and assurance in their own bosoms. They must know the members of their flock by name, and watch over them; must lead in which there are unites and interstices at preside among them, be their mouth to God, and God's to them; and in their conversation must be examples to the believers.

(6.) Those who are truly the sheep of Christ, will be very observant of their Shepherd, and very cautious and shy of strangers. [1.] They follow their Shepherd, for they know his voice, having both a discerning ear, and an obedient heart. [2.] They fear his voice, and are afraid of coming nigh unto him, because they know not his voice. It is dangerous following those in whom we discern not the voice of Christ, and who would draw us from faith in him to fancies concerning him. And they who have experienced the power and efficacy of divine truths upon their souls, and have the savour and relish of them, have a strange sacragity to discover Satan's wiles, and to discern between good and evil.

II. The Jews' ignorance of the drift and meaning of this discourse; (v. 6.) Jesus spake this parable to them, this figurative, but wise, elegant, and instructive discourse, but they understood not what the words were which he spake unto them; were not aware whom he meant by the thieves and robbers, and whom by the good Shepherd. It is the sin and shame of many who hear the word of Christ, that they do not understand it, and they do not because they will not, and because they will mis-understand it. They have no acquaintance with, nor taste of, the things themselves, and therefore do not understand the parables and comparisons with which they are illustrated. The Pharisees had a great conceit of their own knowledge, and could not bear that it should be questioned, and yet they had not sense enough to understand the things that Jesus spake of; they were and is beyond their capacity. Frequently the great pretended to knowledge are most ignorant in the things of God.

III. Christ's explication of this parable, opening the particulars of it fully. Whatever difficulties there may be in the sayings of the Lord Jesus, we shall find him ready to explain himself, if we be but willing to understand him. We shall find he scrupulously explained the most obscure and the blessed Spirit interpreter to the blessed Jesus.

Christ, in the parable, had distinguished the shepherd from the robber by this, that he enters in by the door. Now, in the explanation of the parable, he makes himself to be both the door by which the shepherd enters, and the Shepherd that enters in by the door. Though it may be a similitude in the one, to make true a person to be both the door and the shepherd, it is no similitude in the other, to make Christ have his authority from himself, as he has life in himself; and himself to enter by his own blood, as the door, into the holy place.

1. Christ is the door. This he saith to them who pretended to seek for righteousness, but, like the Sodomites, wearied themselves to find the door, where it was not to be found. He saith it to the Jews, who would be thought God's only sheep, and to the Pharisees, who would be thought their only shepherds; I am the door of the sheep-fold; the door of the church. (1.) He is as a door shut, to keep out thieves and robbers, and such as are not fit to be admitted. The shutting of the door is the securing of the house; and what greater security has the church of God than the interposal of the Lord Jesus, and his wisdom, power, and goodness, between it and those who would enter? He is as a door, often, for passage and communication. [1.] By Christ, as the door, we have our first admission into the flock of God, ch. 14. 6. [2.] We go in and out in a religious conversation, assisted by him, accepted in him; walking up and down in his name, Zech. 10. 12. [3.] By him God comes to his church, visits it, and communicates himself to it. [4.] By him, the door, the ship was not last admitted into the heavenly kingdom, Matt. 25. 23, 24.

First, Christ is the door of the shepherds, so that none who come not in by him, are to be accounted pastors, but (according to the rule laid down, v. 1.) thieves and robbers; (though they pretended to be shepherds;) but the sheef did not hear them. This refers to all those that had the character of shepherds in Israel, whether magistrates or ministers, they exercised or not without any regard to the Messiah, or any other external sign, to know what were suggested by their own carnal interest.

Observe, 1. The character given of them; they are thieves and robbers; (v. 8.) all that went before him, not in time, many of them were faithful shepherds, but all that anticipated his commission, and went before he sent them, (Jer. 23. 21.) that assumed a precedence and superiority above him, as the antichrist is said to counterfeit himself, 2 Thess. 2. 10, "The Scribes, and Pharisees, and chief priests, all, even as many as have come before me, that have endeavoured to forestall my interest, and to prevent my gaining any room in the minds of people, by possessing them with prejudices against me, they are thieves and robbers, and steal those hearts which they have no title to, defrauding the right owner of his property." They condemned our Saviour as a thief and robber, because he did not come in by them as the door, nor take out a licence from them; but he shews that they ought to have received their commission from him, and to have been admitted by him, and to have come after him, which because they did not, but stepped before him, they were thieves and robbers. They would not come in as his disciples, and therefore were condemned as usurpers, and their pretended commissions vacated and superseded.

Now, Jesus Christ is the shepherds of his church, however they pretend to be, he pretend to be shepherds, not shepherds of shepherds.
them, but the sheep did not hear them. Those that had a true savour of piety, that were spiritual and heavenly, and sincerely devoted to God and godliness, could by no means approve of the traditions of the elders, nor relish their dissertations. Their Master, without any particular instructions from their Master, made no conscience of eating with unwashed hands, or plucking the ears of corn on the sabbath-day; for nothing is more opposite to true christianity than Pharisaism: is nor any thing more disrelishing to a soul truly devout than the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

3. Christ is the Door of the sheep; (v. 3.) By me (Acts through me as the door) if any man enter into the sheepfold as one of the flock, he shall be saved; shall not only be safe from thieves and robbers, but he shall be happy, he shall go in and out.

Here are, 1. Plain directions how to come into the fold; we must come in by Jesus Christ as the door. By faith in him as the great Mediator between God and man, we come into covenant and communion with God. There is no entering into God's church but by coming into Christ's church; nor are any looked upon as members of the kingdom of God among men but those that are willing to submit to the grace and government of the Redeemer. We must look for the door of faith, (Acts 14. 27.) since the door of innocency is shut against us, and that passage become unpassable, Gen. 3. 24.

2. Precious promises to those that observe this direction:

(1.) They shall be saved hereafter; that is the privilege of their home; these sheep shall be saved from being distracted and impounded by divine justice, for trespass done, satisfaction being made for the damage by their great Shepherd; saved from being a prey to the roaring lion; they shall be forever happy.

(2.) In the mean time they shall go in and out, and find pasture; that is the privilege of their way. They shall have their conversation in the world by the grace of Christ, shall be in his fold as a man at his own house, where he has free ingress, egress, and regress. True believers are at home in Christ; when they go out, they are not shut out as strangers, but have liberty to come in again; when they come in, they are not shut in as trespassers, but have liberty to go out. They go out to the field in the morning, they come in to the fold at night; and in both the Shepherd leads and keeps them, and they find pasture in the same as in their fold.

3. In the New Testament he is spoken of as the great Shepherd, (Heb. 13. 20.) the chief Shepherd, (1 Pet. 5. 4.) the Shepherd and bishop of our souls, 1 Pet. 2. 25. God, our great owner, the shepherd of their pasture we are by creation, has constituted his Son Jesus to be our Shepherd; and here again and again he owns the relation. He has all that care of the flock that is necessary. The good shepherd has of his flock; and expects all that attendance and observance from the church, and every believer, that the shepherds in those countries had from their flocks.

(1.) Christ is a Shepherd, and not as the thief, not as those that came not in by the door. Observe, 1. The mischievous design of the thief; (v. 10.) The thief cometh not with any good intent, but to steal and to kill, and to destroy. First, These who steal, whose hearts and affections they steal from Christ and his pastures, they kill and destroy spiritually; for the heretics they fiercely bring in, are damnable. Discovers of souls are murderers of souls. They then direct in their scripture by keeping it in an unknown tongue, steal away the audience by menacing them and altering the property of them, that steal away Christ's ordinances to put their own inventions in the room of them, they kill and destroy; ignorance and idolatry are destructive things. Secondly, Those whom they cannot steal, whom they can neither lead, drive, nor carry away, in this manner they can neither Christ's lambs and innocents, nor his sheep and Aaron's blood, nor his sheep and the sacrifices to kill and destroy corporally. He that will not suffer himself to be robbed, is in danger to be slain.

2. The gracious design of the Shepherd; he is come, First, To give life to the sheep. In opposition to the design of the thief, which is to kill and destroy, which was the design of the Scribes and Pharisees; Christ saith, I am come among men, 1. That they might have life. He came to put life into the flock, the church in general, which had seemed rather like a valley full of dry bones than like a pasture covered over with flocks. Christ came to vindicate divine truths, to purify divine ordinances, to redress grievances, and to revive dying zeal, to seek them of his flock, that were ready to break and to be broken, (Ezek. 34. 16.) and this to his church is as life from the dead. He came to give life to particular believers; life is inclusive of all good, and stands in opposition to the death threatened; (Gen. 2. 17.) that we might have life, as a criminal has when he is pardoned, as a sick man when he is healed, a dead man when he is raised; not that they are justly punished, but that they shall repent, and return. 2. That they might have it more abundantly, & παρεσκευασαι. As we read it, it is comparative, that they might have a life more abundant than that which was lost and forfeited by sin; more abundant than that which was promised by the law of Moses, length of days in Canaan; more abundant than could have been expected, or than we are able to ask or think. But it may be construed without a note of comparison, that they might have abundance, or, might have it abundantly. Christ came to give life and παρεσκευασαι something more, something better, life with advantage; that in Christ we might not only live, but live comfortably, live plentifully, live and rejoice; life in abundance is eternal life; life without death, or fear of death; life of the soul's content. To give his life for the sheep; and this, that he might give life to them; (v. 11.) The good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. 1. It is the property of every good shepherd to hazard and expose his life for the sheep. Jacob did so, when he would go through such a fatigue to attend them, Gen. 31. 40. So did David, when he slew the lion and the bear, and, as a shepherd of souls was St. Paul, who would gladly spend, and be spent, for their service, and counted not his life dear to him, in comparison with their salvation. But 2. It was the prerogative of the great Shepherd, to give his life to purchase his flock, (Acts 20. 28.) to satisfy for their trespass, and to shed his blood to wash and cleanse them.

(3.) Christ is a good shepherd, and not as a hireling; there were many that were not shepherds, aiming to kill and destroy the sheep, but passed for shepherds, yet were very careless in the discharge of their duty, and through their neglect the flock was greatly damaged; foolish shepherds, idle shepherds, Zech. 11. 15. In opposition to these, [1.] Christ here calls himself the good Shepherd, (v. 11.) and again, (v. 14.) I am the good Shepherd, that good Shepherd whom God had pro
mised. Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the oversight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he.

[2.] He proves himself so, in opposition to all hirelings, v. 12-14. All are otherwise.

The carelessness of the faithless shepherd described; (v. 12, 13.) he that is a hireling, that is employed as a servant, and is paid for his pains, whose own the sheep are not, who has neither profit nor loss by them, he sees the wolf coming, or some other danger threatening, and he leaves the sheep to the wolf, for in truth he car eth not for them. Here is plain reference to that of the idle shepherd, Zech. 11. 17.

Here is the description of bad shepherds, magistrates and ministers, both their bad principles and their bad practices.

1. Their bad principles, the root of their bad practices. What makes those that have the charge of souls in trying times to betray their trust, and in quiet times to mind not it? What makes them false, and dangerous men of their employment? Is it because of hirelings, and care not for the sheep? That is, (1.) The wealth of the world is the chief of their good; it is because they are hirelings. They undertook the shepherd's office, as a trade to live and grow rich by, not as an opportunity of serving Christ and doing good. It is the love of money, and of their own bellies, that carries them on in it. Not that they are hirelings, who, while they serve at the altar, live on the fat of the land, and the labourer is worthy of his meat; and a scandalous maintenance will soon make a scandalous ministry; but those are hirelings, that love the wages more than the work, and set their hearts upon that, as the hireling is said to do, Deut. 24. 15. See 1 Sam. 29. Isa. 56. 11. Mic. 3. 5, 11. (2.) The work of their place is the least of their care; they value not the sheeps, are unconcerned in the souls of others. Their business is to be their brothers' lords, not their brothers' keepers or helpers; they seek their own things, and do not, like Timothy, naturally care for the state of souls; what can be expected but that they will flee when the wolf comes? He careth not for the sheep, for he is one whose own the sheep are not; in one respect we may say of the best of the under shepherds, that the sheep are not their own, they do not live in the imitation of them; (Feed my sheep and my lambs, saith Christ;) but in respect of dearness and affection they should be their own. Paul looked upon those as his own, whom he called his dearly beloved and longed for. Those who do not cordially espouse the church's interest, and make them their own, will not long be faithful to them.

2. Their bad practices, the effect of these bad principles, v. 12. See here, (1.) How basely the hireling deserts his post; when he sees the wolf coming, though then there is most need of him, he leaves the sheep and flees. Note, Those who mind their safety more than their duty, are an easy prey to Satan's temptations. (2.) How fatal the consequences are; the hireling fancied the sheep might look to themselves, but it does not prove so, the wolf catches them, and carries them off. It leaves the flock, which will all be charged upon the treacherous shepherd. The blood of perishing souls is required at the hand of the careless watchmen. Secondly, See here the grace and tenderness of the good Shepherd, set over against the former, as it was in the prophecy, (Ezek. 34. 21, 22, &c.) I am the good Shepherd. It is matter of comfort to the church and all her friends, that, however she may be damaged and endangered by the treachery and mismanagement of her under officers, the Lord Jesus is, and will be, as he ever has been, the good Shepherd. Here are two great instances of the shepherd's goodness. 1. His acquainting himself with his flock, with all that belong, or in any wise appertain to his flock, which are of two sorts, both known to him. (v. 1.) He knows his own, (v. 14.) as the good shepherd; (v. 4, 4,) I know my sheep, and am known of mine. Note, There is a mutual acquaintance between Christ and true believers; they know one another very well, and knowledge notes affection. (1.) Christ knows his sheeps. He knows with a distinguishing eye those that in truth are his own sheep; he takes cognizance of their state, concerns himself for them, has a tender and affectionate regard to them, and is continually mindful of them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; he visits them graciously by his Spirit, and has communion with them, he knows them, he approves and accepts of them, as Ps. 1. 6. 37. 18. Exod. 33. 17. (2.) He is known of them. He observes them with an eye of favour, and they observe him with an eye of faith. Christ's knowing his sheep, is put before their knowing him, for he knew and loved us first; (1 John 4. 19.) and it is not so much our knowing him as our being known of him, that is our happiness, Gal. 4. 9. Yet it is the character of Christ's sheep, that they know him; know him from all pretenders and intruders; they know his mind, know his voice, know by experience the power of his death. Christ speaks here as if he gloried in being known by his sheep, and thought their respect an honour to him.

Upon this occasion Christ mentions (v. 15.) the mutual acquaintance between his Father and him; As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father. Now this may be considered, either, First, As the ground of the intimate acquaintance and relation which subsist between Christ and believers. The covenant of grace, which is the bond of that relation, is founded in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, which, we may be sure, stands firm; for the Father and the Son understood this covenant before the worlds were, Rev. 13. 8. Nor could it be a mistake which might leave the matter at any uncertainty, or bring it into any hazard. The Lord Jesus knows whom he hath chosen, and is sure of them; (ch. 13. 18.) and they also know whom they have trusted, and are sure of him; (2 Tim. 1. 12.) and the ground of both is the perfect knowledge which the Father and the Son had of one another's mind, when the counsel of peace was between them both. Or, Secondly, As an apt similitude, illustrating the intimacy that is between Christ and believers; it may be connected with the foregoing words, thus; I know my sheep, and am known of mine, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father; compare ch. 17. 21. 1. As the Father knew the Son, and loved him, and owned him in his sufferings, when he was hated of the world, that also he knew his sheep, and has a watchful tender eye upon them, will be with him when they are left alone, as he was with him. 2. As the Son knew the Father, loved and obeyed him, and always did those things that pleased him; and confided in him as his God, even when he seemed to forsake him, so believers know Christ with an obedient filial regard.

(2.) He is acquainted with those that are hereafter to be of his flock; (v. 16.) Other sheep I have, have a right to, and an interest in, which are not of
this fold, of the Jewish church, them also I must bring. Observe, 
[1.] The eye that Christ had to the poor Gentiles; he had sometimes intimated his special concern for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to them indeed his personal ministry was confined, but, saith he, I have other sheep. Those in whom process of time should believe in Christ, and be brought into obedience to him from among the Gentiles, are here called sheep, and he is said to have them, though as yet they knew not any Messiah on earth. Nor in this sense do I think of many of whom we hear, because they were chosen of God, and given to Christ in the councils of divine love from eternity. Christ has a right to many a soul by virtue of the Father's donation and his own purchase, which he has not yet the possession of; thus he had much people in Corinth, when as yet it lay in wickedness, Acts 18. 10. Those other sheep I have," saith Christ, "I have them on my heart, have them in my soul, as sure to have them as if I had them already." Now Christ speaks of those other sheep, First, To take off the contempt that was put upon him, as having few followers, as having but a little flock, and therefore, it a good shepherd, yet a poor shepherd; "But," saith he, "I have more sheep than you see." Secondly, To take down the pride and vain-glory of the Jews, and to show them that he, his sheep from among them. "No," saith Christ, "I have others whom I will set with the lambs of my flock, though you disdain to set them with the dogs of your flock."

[2.] The purposes and resolves of his grace concerning them; "Them also I must bring, bring home to God, bring into the church, and, in order to that, bring off from their vain conversation, bring them back to their wanderings, as that lost sheep," Luke 15. 5. But why must he bring them? What was the necessity? First, The necessity of their case required it; "I must bring, or they must be left to wander endlessly, for, like sheep, they will never come back of themselves, and no other can or will bring them." Secondly, The necessity of his own engagements required it; he must bring them, or he would not be faithful to his trust, and true to his undertaking. "They are mine, said he, and therefore I must not neglect them nor leave them to perish." He must in honour bring those whom he was intrusted with.

[3.] The happy effect and consequence of this, in two things. First, "They shall hear my voice. Not only my voice shall be heard among them; whereas they have not heard, and therefore could not believe, now the sound of the gospel shall go to the ends of the earth, it shall be heard by them; I will speak, and give to them to hear." Faith comes by hearing, and our diligent observance of the voice of Christ is both a means and an evidence of our being brought to Christ, and to God by him. Secondly, There shall be one fold and one Shepherd. As there is one Shepherd, so there shall be one fold. Both Jews and Gentiles, upon their turning to the faith of Christ, he has made them one flock, to be joint and equal sharers in the privileges of it, without distinction. Being united to Christ, they shall unite in him; two sticks shall become one in the hand of the Lord. Note, One Shepherd makes one fold; one Christ makes one church. As the church is one in its constitution, subject to one head, animated by one spirit, and guided by one rule, so the members of it are sought to be brought to one in love and affection, Eph. 4. 3-6.

2. Christ's offering himself for his sheep, is another proof of his being a good shepherd, and in this he yet more commended his love, v. 15, 17, 18. (1.) He declares his purpose of dying for his flock; (v. 15.) I lay down my life for the sheep. He not only ventured his life for them, (in such a case, the hope of saving it may balance the fear of losing it,) but he actually deposited it, and submitted to a necessity of dying for our race, whether it be for it as a pawn or pledge; as purchase-money paid down. Sheep appointed for the slaughter, ready to be sacrificed, were ransomed with the blood of the shepherd. He laid down his life, whether for the sheep, not only for the good of the sheep, but in their stead. Thousands of sheep had been offered in sacrifice for their shepherds, as sin-offerings, but here, by a sur-prising thing, he made himself a sin-offering for the sheep. When David, the shepherd of Israel, was himself guilty, and the destroying angel drew his sword against the flock for his sake, with good reason did he plead, These sheep, what evil have they done? Let thy hand be against me, 2 Sam. 24. 17. But the Son of David was sinless and spotless; and his sheep, what evil have they not done? Yet he saith, Let thine hand be against me. Christ here seeks to refer to that prophecy, Zech 13. 7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd; and though the smiting of the shepherd be for the present the scattering of the flock, it is in order to the gathering of them in.

(2.) He takes off the offence of the cross, which to many is a stone of stumbling, by four considerations.

[1.] That his laying down his life for the sheep, was the condition, the performance of which entitled him to the honours and powers of his exalted state; (v. 17.) "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life. Upon these terms I am, as Mediator, to expect my Father's acceptance and approbation, and the glory designed me—that I become a sacrifice for the chosen remnant. Not but that as the Son of God, he was beloved of his Father from eternity, but, as God-man, as Immanuel, he was therefore beloved of the Father, because he undertook to die for the sheep; therefore God's soul delighted in him as his Elect, because herein he was his faithful Servant; (Isa. 42. 1.) therefore he said, This is my beloved Son. What an instance is this of God's love to man, that he loved his Son the more for loving us! See what a value Christ puts upon his Father's love, that, to recommend himself to that, he would lay down his life for the sheep. Did he think God's love recompense sufficient for all his services and sufferings, and shall we think it too little for our's, and court the smiles of the world to make it up? Therefore doth my Father love me, that is, me, and all that by faith become one with me; me, and the mystical body, because I lay down my life. Christ sets no price upon the purchase of his Father's love both to us and us.*

[2.] That his laying down his life was in order to his resuming it; I lay down my life, that I may receive it again. First, This was the effect of his Father's love, and the first step of his exaltation, the fruit of that love. Because he was God's holy One, he must not see corruption, Ps. 16. 10. God loved him too well to leave him in the grave. Secondly, This he, in his own person, as the Surety, who was in the purpose of God in eternity, he might have an opportunity of declaring himself to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection, Rom. 1. 4. By a divine stratagem (like that before Ai, Josh. 8. 15.) he yielded to death, as if he were smitten before it, that he might the more gloriously conquer death, and triumph over the grave. He laid down a willed body, that he might resume a glorified one, fit to ascend to the world of spirits; laid down a life adapted to the world, but resumed

* This statement does not appear to be supported by the words of our Lord, or by any part of scripture; a consideration which might prompt an explicit and general disclaimer of it, especially as it supplies the adversaries of the atonement with materials for abundant and plausible declamation.—Ed.
19. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. 20. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? 21. Others said, These are not the words of him that lieth a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?

We have here an account of the people's different sentiments concerning Christ, on occasion of the foregoing discourse; there was a division, a schism, among them; they differed in their opinions, which threw them into heats and parties. Such a ferment as this they had been in before; (ch. 7. 43.—9. 16.) and where there has once been a division, a little thing will easily give it an impetus and carry it along, than made, than made up or mended. This division was occasioned by the sayings of Christ, which one would think, should rather have united them all in him as their centre; but they set them at variance, as Christ foresaw, Luke 12. 51. But it is better that men should be divided about the doctrine of Christ, than united in the service of sin, Luke 11. 21.

1. Some upon this occasion speak ill of Christ and of his sayings, either openly in the face of the assembly, for his enemies were very importunate, or privately among themselves; they said, He has a devil, and is mad, why hearken ye him?

1. They reproach him as a demoniac. The worst of characters is put upon the best of men. He is a distracted man, he raves and is delirious, and no more to be heard, than the rambles of a man in Bedlam. Thus still, if a man preaches a doctrine safely and pressingly of another world, he shall be said to talk like an enthusiast; and it is all imputed to fancy, a heated brain, and a crazed imagination.

2. They ridicule his hearers; 'Why hearken ye him? Why do you so far encourage him, as to take notice of what he says?' Note, Satan runs many, by putting them out of conceit with the word and ordinances, and representing it as a weak and sily thing to attend upon them. Men would not be thus laughed out of their necessary food, and yet suffer themselves thus to be laughed out of what is more necessary. They that hear Christ, and mix faith with what they hear, will soon be able to give a good account why they hear him.

II. Others stand up in defence of him and his discourse, and though the stream ran strong, dared to swim against it; and though perhaps they did not believe in him as the Messiah, yet they could not bear to hear him thus abused.

If they could say no more of him, this they would maintain, that he was a man in his wits, that he had not a devil, that he was neither senseless nor graceless. The absurd and most unreasonable reproaches, that have sometimes been cast upon Christ and his gospel, have excited these to appear for him and it, whether with great or no great affection to either. Two things they plead:

1. The excellency of his doctrine; 'These are not the words of him that hath a devil; they are not idle words; distracted men are not used to talk at this rate. These are not the words of one that is either violently possessed with a devil, or voluntariness in league with the devil.' Christianity, if it be the true religion, is certainly the greatest cheat that ever was put upon the world; and if so, it must be of the devil, which is the father of all lies: but it is certain that the doctrine of Christ is no doctrine of devils, for it is levelled directly against the devil's kingdom, and Satan is too subtle to be divided against himself. So much of holiness there is in the words of Christ, that we may conclude they are not the words of one that has a devil, and therefore are the words of one that was sent of God; are not from hell, and therefore from the face of Satan.
22. And it was at Jerusalem, the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. 23. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. 24. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. 25. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. 26. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. 27. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30. I and my Father are one. 31. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. 32. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? 33. The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not: but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. 34. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I, Ye are gods? 35. If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; 36. Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God? 37. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. 38. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.

We have here another encounter between Christ and the Jews in the temple, in which it is hard to say which is more strange, the gracious words that came out of his mouth, or the spiteful ones that came out of their's.

1. We have here the time when this conference was; it was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter, a feast that was annually observed with consent, in remembrance of the dedication of a new altar, and the purging of the temple, by Judas Maccabeus, after the temple had been profaned, and the altar defiled; we have the story of it large in the history of the Maccabees; (lib. 1. cap. 4.) we have the prophecy of it, Dan. 8. 13, 14. See more of the feast, 2 Mac. 1. 18. The return of their liberty was to them as life from the dead, and, in remembrance of it, they kept an annual feast on the twenty-fifth day of the month Cisbe, about the beginning of December, and seven days after. The celebrating of it was not confined to Jerusalem, as that of the divine feasts was, but every one observed it in his own place, not as a holy time, (it is only a divine institution that can sanctify a day,) but as a good time, as the days of Purim, Esth. 9. 18. Christ forecast to be now at Jerusalem, not in honour of the feast, which did not require his attendance there, but that he might improve those eight days of vacation for good purposes.

2. The place where it was; (v. 23.) Jesus walked in the temple, in Solomon's porch; so called, (Acts 3. 11.) not because built by Solomon, but because built in the same place with that which had borne his name in the first temple, and the name was kept up for the greater reputation of it. Here Christ walked, to observe the proceedings of the great Sanhedrim that sat there; (Ps. 62. 1.) he walked ready to give audience to any that should apply themselves to him, to offer them his service. He walked, as it should seem, for some time alone, as one neglected; walked pensive, in the foresight of the ruin of the temple. Those that have any thing to say to Christ, may find him in the temple, and walk with him there.

III. The conference itself, in which observe,

1. A weighty question put to him by the Jews, v. 24. They came round about him, to tease him; he was waiting for an opportunity to do them a kindness, and they took the opportunity to do him a mischief. III.-will for good-will is no rare and uncommon return. He could not enjoy himself, nor in the temple, his Father's house, without disturbance. They came about him, as it were, to lay siege to him, (v. 25.) and enquire after him and his doctrine. They came about him as if they had a joint and unanimous desire to be satisfied; came as one man, pretending an impartial and important inquiry after truth, but intending a general assault upon our Lord Jesus; and they seemed to speak the sense of their nation, as if they were the mouth of all the Jews; How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, who art thou? (1.) They quarrel with him, as if he had unfairly held them in suspense hitherto. Thou art the son of a god—How long dost thou steal away our hearts? or, take away our souls? So some read it; basely intimating that what share he had of the people's love and respect, he did not come fairly by it, but by indirect methods, as Abasalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel; and as seducers receive the hearts of the simple, and so draw away disciples after them, Rom. 16. 18. Acts 20. 30. But most interpreters understand it as we do; "How long dost thou keep us in suspense? How long are we kept debating whether thou be the Christ or no, and not able to determine the question?" Now, [1.] It was the effect of their infidelity and powerful prejudices, that after our Lord Jesus had filled himself to be the Christ, they were still in doubt concerning it; this they willingly hesitated about when they might easily have been satisfied. The struggle was between their convictions, which told them he was Christ; and their corruptions, which said No, because he was not such a Christ as they expected. Those who choose to be sceptics, may, (2.) keep the inquiry; and we will determine the question. The most cogent arguments may not weigh down the most trifling objections, but the scales may still hang even. [2.] It was an instance of their impudence and presumption, that they laid the blame of their doubting upon Christ himself, as if he made them to doubt by inconsistency with himself, whereas in truth they made themselves doubly by indulging their prejudices. It is a very common fault not in the object, they are all plain to him that understands, but in the eye. Christ would make us to believe; we make ourselves to doubt.

2.) They challenge him to give a direct and categorical answer, whether he was the Messiah or no; "If thou be the Christ, as many believe thou art, tell us plainly, not by parables, as, I am the light of the world, and the good Shepherd, and the
out totidem verbis— in so many words, either that thou art the Christ, or as John Baptist, that thou art not," ch. 1. 20. Now this pressing query of their's was seemingly good; they pretended to be desirous to know the truth, as if they were ready to embrace it; but it was really bad, and put with an ill design; for if he should tell them plainly that he was the Christ, they would have this to say presently, Thou bearest witness of thyself, as they had, ch. 8. 13.

11. Christ is not to be so understood, as

1. He justifies himself as not at all necessary to their infidelity and scepticism; referring them, (1.) To what he had said; I have told you. He had told them that he was the Son of God, the Son of man; that he had life in himself, and that he had authority to execute judgment. And is not this the Christ then? These things he had told them, and they should have believed him, and been held to believe them again, merely to gratify their curiosity? Ye believed not. They pretended that they only doubted, but Christ tells them that they did not believe. Scepticism in religion is no better than downright infidelity. It is not for us to teach God how he should teach us, nor prescribe to him how plainly he should tell us his mind, but to be thankful for divine revelation as we have it, which if we do not believe, neither would we be persuaded if it were ever so much adapted to our humour. (2.) He refers them to his works, to the example of his life, which was not only perfectly pure, but highly beneficent, and of a piece with his doctrine; and especially to his miracles, which he wrought for the confirmation of his doctrine. It was certain that no man could do those miracles except God were with him, and God would not be with him to attest a forgery.

2. He condemns them for their obstinate unbelief, notwithstanding all the most plain and powerful arguments used to convince them; Yec believed not; and again, Ye believed not. Ye still are what ye always were, obstinate in your unbelief.

But the reason he gives, is very surprising; Ye believed not, because ye are not of my sheep: ye believe not in me, because ye believe not in my Father. Ye were never dispossessed to be by many followers; not of a tractable, teachable temper, have no inclination to receive the doctrine and law of the Messiah; ye will not herd yourselves with my sheep, will not come and see, come and hear my voice. Rooted antipathies to the gospel of Christ are the bonds of impiety and infidelity.

(2.) Ye are not designed to be my followers; ye are not of the sheep which shall be given by my Father to be brought to grace and glory. Ye are not of the number of the elect; and your unbelief, if ye persist in it, will be a certain evidence that ye are not.

Note, Those to whom God never gives the grace of faith, were never designed for heaven and happiness. What Solomon saith of immorality is true of infidelity, It is a deep ditch, and he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein, Prov. 22. 14. Non esse electi, non esse oportet inaequales trium domino et causa per accidentes. Fides amem est dominum Dei et effectus predestinationis—The not being included among the elect, is not the proper cause of infidelity, but merely the accidental cause. But faith is the gift of God, and the effect of predestination. So Jansenius distinguishes well here.

3. He takes this occasion to describe both the gracious disposition and the happy state of those that are his sheep; for such there are, though they be not.

(1.) To convince them that they were not his sheep, he tells them what were the characters of his sheep.

[1.] They hear his voice, (v. 27.) for they know it to be his, (v. 4.) and he has undertaken that they shall hear it, v. 16. They discern it, It is the voice of my Master, (Ch. 2. 9.) They delight in it, in their element when they are sitting at his feet to hear his word. They do it according to it, and make his word their rule. Christ will not account those his sheep, that are deaf to his calls, deaf to his charms, Ps. 58. 5.

[2.] They follow him, they submit to his conduct by a cheerful obedience to all his commands, and a pleasant conformity to his Spirit and pattern. The word of command has always been, Follow me. We must eye him as our leader and captain, and tread in his steps, and walk as he walked; follow the prescriptions of his word, the intimations of his providence, and the directions of his Spirit; follow the lamb, the Dux gregis—the leader of the flock, whithersoever he goes. In vain do we hear his voice if we do not follow him.

[3.] He has undertaken that it was their great unhappiness and misery not to be of Christ's sheep, he here describes the blessed state and case of those that are; which would likewise serve for the support and comfort of his poor despised followers, and keep them from envying the power and grandeur of those that were not of his sheep.

[1.] Our Lord Jesus takes cognizance of his sheep; They hear my voice, and I know them. He knows what it is to know, and what it is to be known. A man is new, (2 Tim. 2. 19.) he is in a particular regard to every individual, (Ps. 34. 6.) he knows their wants and desires; knows their souls in adversity, where to find them, and what to do for them. He knows others afar off, but knows them near at hand.

[2.] He has provided a happiness for them, suited to them; I give unto them eternal life, v. 28. First, The estate settled upon them is rich and valuable; it is life, eternal life. Man has an immortal soul, therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul, therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul, therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature. Man has an immortal soul, therefore the happiness provided is life, suited to his nature.

[3.] He has undertaken for their security and preservation to this happiness. First, They shall be saved from everlasting perdition. They shall by no means perish for ever; so the words are. As there is an eternal life, so there is an eternal destruction; the soul not annihilated, but ruined; its being continued, but its comfort and happiness irrecoverably lost. All believers are saved from this; whatever cross they may come under, they shall not come into condemnation. If they fall into sin, though they fall into hell, and they shall not go down to that. Shepherds that have large flocks, often lose some of the sheep and suffer them to perish; but Christ has engaged that none of his sheep shall perish, note. Secondly, They cannot be kept from their everlasting happiness; it is in reserve, but he that gives it them will preserve them to it.

1. His own power is engaged for them; Neither
shall any man pluck them out of my hand. A mighty contest is here supposed about these sheep. The Shepherd is so careful of their welfare, that he has them not only within his fold, and under his eye, but in his hand, interested in his special love, and taken under his special protection; (all his saints are in thy hand, Deut. 33. 3.) yet their enemies are so strong, they heaps them up to pluck them out of his hand; his, whose own they are, whose care they are, but they cannot, they shall not do it. Note, Those are safe, who are in the hands of the Lord Jesus. The saints are preserved in Christ Jesus; and their salvation is not in their own keeping, but in the keeping of a Mediator. The Pharisees and rulers did all they could to frighten the disciples of Christ from promoting and defending them; but Christ saith that they shall not prevail.

2. His Father’s power is likewise engaged for their preservation, v. 29. He now appeared in weakness, and, lest his security should therefore be thought insufficient, he brings in his Father as a further security. Observe,

(1.) The power of the Father: My Father is greater than all; greater than all the other friends of the church, all the other shepherds, magistrates, or ministers, and able to do for them that which they cannot do. Those shepherds slumber and sleep, and it will be easy to pluck the sheep out of their hands; but he keeps his flock day and night. He is greater than all the enemies of the church, all the opposition given to her interests, and able to secure all the saints from all their insults; he is greater than all the combined force of hell and earth. He is greater in wisdom than the old serpent, though noted for subtlety; greater in strength than the great red dragon, though his name be legion, and his title princheities and powers. The devil and his angels have had many a push, many a pluck for the mastery, but have never yet prevailed, Rev. 12. 7, 8. The Lord on high is mightier.

(2.) The interest of the Father in the sheep, for the sake of which this power is engaged for them; “It is my Father that gave them me, and he is concerned in honour to uphold his gift.” They were given to the Son as a trust to be managed by him, and therefore God will still look after them. All the divine power is engaged for the accomplishment of his divine purposes.

(3.) The safety of the saints inferred from these two. If this be so, then none (neither man nor devil) is able to pluck them out of the Father’s hand, not able to deprive them of the grace they have, or to hinder them from the glory that is designed them; not able to put them out of God’s protection, nor get them into their own power. Christ had himself experienced the power of his Father upholding and strengthening him, and therefore puts all his followers into his hand too. He that secured the glory of the Redeemer, will secure the glory of the redeemed.

Further to corroborate the security, that the sheep of Christ may have strong consolation, he asserts the union of these two undertakers; “I and my Father are one, and have jointly and severally undertaken for the protection of this sheep, and their perfection.” This speaks more than the harmony, and consent, and good understanding, that were between the Father and the Son in the work of man’s redemption, every good man is so far one with God, as to concur with him; therefore it must be meant the oneness of the nature of Father and Son, that they are of the same in substance, and equal in power and glory.

The fathers urged this, both against the Sabellians, to prove the distinction and plurality of the persons, that the Father and the Son are two; and against the Arians, to prove the unity of the nature, that these two are one. If we should altogether hold our peace concerning this sense of the words, even the stones which the Jews took up to cast at him would speak it out, for the Jews understood him as hereby making himself God, (v. 33.) and he did not deny it. He proves that none could pluck them out of his hand, because they could not pluck them out of the Father’s hand; which had not been a convenient argument, if they had been strong, or if his name was not by the name of Christ, and the almighty power with the Father, and, consequently, been one with him in essence and operation.

III. The rage, the outrage, of the Jews against him for this discourse; The Jews took up stones again, v. 31. It is not the word that is used before, ch. 8. 59, but ἀναπτύξασθη—they carried stones, great stones, stones of that shape that were a load, such as they used in building, in casting into or standing in; these stones are cast at a man to hurt him, and under the name of throwing stones to the devil. The Jews, therefore, cast stones at him, and so behind him, as it were preparing things for his execution without any judicial process; as if he were convicted of blasphemy upon the notorious evidence of the fact, which needed no further trial. The absurdity of this insult which the Jews offered to Christ, will appear, if we consider, 1. That they had no right to demand of him not so much as a judicial trial, or a hearing. He had no cause to make his defence, and, therefore, did not think it necessary to do it, but Christ saith that they shall not prevail.

2. That which they had made the like attempt before, they are now in the midst of them; (ch. 8. 59.) yet were not then called upon the stand. Daring sinners will throw stones at heaven, though they return upon their own heads; and will strengthen themselves against the Almighty, though never any hardened themselves against him, and prospered.

IV. Christ’s tender expostulation with them upon occasion of this outrage; (v. 32.) Jesus answered, what they did, for we do not find that they said anything, unless perhaps they stirred up the crowd that they had gathered about him, to join with them, crying, Stone him, stone him, as afterwards, Crucify him, crucify him. When he could have answered them with fire from heaven, he mildly replied, Many good works have I did you from my Father.

1. For what of these works do you stone me? Words so very tender, that one would think they should have melted a heart of stone.

In dealing with his enemies he still argued from his works, men evidence what they are by what they do. His good works—exae lumque, excellent, eminent works. Opera extimia vel praecellar it; it signifies both great works and good works.

1. The divine power of his works convicted them of the most obstinate infidelity. They were works from his Father, so far above the reach and course of nature, as to prove him that did them, sent of God, and acting by commission from him. These works he shewed them, he did them openly before the people, and not in a corner; his works would bear the test, and refer themselves to the testimony of the most inquisitive and impartial spectators. He did not defend them by any of those miracles, such as they that do them only for show, but he shewed them at noon-day before the world, ch. 18. 20. See Ps. 111. 6. His works so undeniably demonstrated, that they were an incontestable demonstration of the validity of his commission.

2. The divine grace of his works convicted them of the base ingratitude of mankind. His works did many things that were not only miracles, but miracles; not only works of wonder to amaze them, but works of love and kindness to do them good, and so make them good, and endanger himself to them. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils,
which were favours, not only to the persons concerned, but to the public; these he had repeated, and multiplied: "Nee, for which of these do ye stone me? Ye cannot say that I have done you any harm, or given you any just provocation; if therefore ye will deal so with me, it must be for some good work, some good turn done you; tell me for which." Note, (1.) The horrid ingratitude that there is in our sins against God and Jesus Christ, is a great aggravation of them, and makes them appear exceeding sinful. See how God argues to this purpose, Deut. 32. 6. Jer. 2. 5. Mic. 6. 5. (2.) We must not think it strange if we meet with those who, though they have no such just cavils for our love, Ps. 35. 12.—11. 9. When he asks, For which of these do ye stone me, as he intimates the abundant satisfaction he had in his own innocence, which gives a man courage in a suffering day, so he puts his persecutors upon considering what was the true reason of their enmity, and asking, as all those should do, that create trouble to their neighbour, Why persecute we him? As Job advises his friends to do, Job 19. 28.

V. Their vindication of the attempt they made upon Christ, and the cause upon which they ground their prosecution, v. 33. What sin will want fig-leaves with which to cover itself, when even the bloody persecutors of the Son of God could find something to say for themselves?

2. They were afraid that such enemies to their country, as to persecute him for a good work; For a good work we stone thee not. For indeed they would scarcely allow any of his works to be so. His curing the impotent man, (ch. 5.) and the blind man, (ch. 9.) were so far from being acknowledged good services to the town, and meritorious, that they were put upon the score of his crimes, because done on the sabbath-day. But if he had done any good work, they would not own that they stoned him for them, though these were really the things that did most exasperate them, ch. 11. 47. Thus, though most absurd, thy could not be brought to own their absurdities.

2. They would be thought such friends to God and his glory, as to persecute him for blasphemy; Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. The Jews pretended zeal for the law. They seem mightily concerned for the honour of the divine majesty, and to be seized with a religious horror at that which they imagined to be a reproach to it. A blasphemer was to be stoned, Lev. 24. 16. This law, they thought, did not only justify, but sanctify, what they attempted, as Acts 26. 9. Note, The vilest practices are often varnished with plausible pretences. As nothing is more courageous than a well-informed conscience, so nothing is more outrageous than a mistaken one. See Isa. 66. 5. ch. 16. 2.

2. A real enmity to the gospel, on which they could not put a greater affront than by representing Christ as a blasphemer. It is no new thing for the worst of characters to be put upon the best of men, by those that resolve to give them the worst of treatment.

[1.] The crime laid to his charge is blasphemy, speaking reproachfully and desperately of God. God himself is out of the sinner's reach, and not capable of receiving any real injury; and therefore enmity to God spits its venom at his name, and so shews its ill-will.

[2.] The proof of the crime; Thou, being a man, makest thyself God. As it is God's glory, that he is God, which no fellow of him when we make him altogether such a one as ourselves, so is it his glory, that beside him there is no other, which we rob him of when we make ourselves, or any creature, altogether like him.

Now, First, Thus far they were in the right, that what Christ said of himself, amounted to this—that he was God, for he had said that he was one with the Father, and that he would give eternal life; and Christ does not deny it, which he would have done, if it had been a mistaken inference from his words. But, Secondly, They were much mistaken, when they looked upon him as a blasphemer, when he said, the godhead he claimed was a usurpation, and of his own making. They thought it absurd and impious that such a one as he, who appeared in the fashion of a poor, mean, despicable man, should profess himself the Messiah, and entitle himself to the honours confessedly due to the Son of God. Note, 1. These were the words of those people that Jesus is a mere man, and only a made God, the Son of God; they charge him with blasphemy, but do effectually prove it upon themselves. 2. He who, being a man, a sinful man, makes himself a god, as the Pope does, who claims divine powers and prerogatives, is, no question, a blasphemer, and that antichrist.

VI. Christ's reply to their accusations of him, (for such their vindication of themselves was,) and his making good those claims which they imputed to him as blasphemous; (v. 34, &c.) when he proves himself to be no blasphemer, by two arguments.

1. By an argument taken from God's word. He appeals to what was written in their face, that is, in the Old Testament; whoever opposes Christ, he is sure to have the scripture on his side. It is written, Ps. 22. 6. 6. 16. Christ, not being desirous of the worship of men, to be made thus a minora ad majus—from the less to the greater. If they were gods, much more am I. Observe,

(1.) How he explains the text; (v. 35.) He called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. The word of God's commission came to them, appointing them to their offices, as judges, and their fore they are called gods, Exod. 22. 28. To some the word of God came immediately, as to Moses; to others in the way of an instituted ordinance. Magistracy is a divine institution; and magistrates are God's delegates, and therefore the scripture calleth them gods; and we are sure that the scripture cannot be broken, or broken in upon, or found fault with. Every word of God is right, the very style and language of scripture are unquestionable, and not to be corrected, Matt. 5. 18.

(2.) How he applies it. Thus much in general is easily inferred, that they were very rash and unreasonable, who condemned Christ as a blasphemer, only for calling himself the Son of God, when yet they themselves called their rulers so, and therein the scripture warranted them. But the argument goes further; (v. 36.) If magistrates were called gods, because they were commissioned to administer justice in the nation, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest? We have here two things concerning the Lord Jesus.

[1.] The honour done him by the Father, which he justly glories in; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world. Magistrates were called the sons of God, though the word of God only came to them, and the spirit of government came upon them by measure, as upon Saul: but our Lord Jesus was himself the Word, and had the Spirit without measure; they were constituted for a particular country, city, or nation, but he was sent into the world, vested with a universal authority, as Lord of all; they were sent to, as persons at a distance, he was sent forth; his having been from eternity with God. The Father sanctified him, that is, designed him, and set him apart to the office of Mediator, and qualified and fitted him for that office. Sanctifying him is the same with sealing him, ch. 6. 27. Note, Whom the Father sends, he sanctifies; whom he
designs for holy purposes, he prepares with holy principles and discipline. The holy God will reward, when he employs, none but such as he finds or makes holy. The Father's sanctifying and sending him is here vouchsafed as a sufficient warrant for his calling himself the Son of God; for because he was a holy thing he called the Son of God, Luke 1. 35. See Rom. 1. 4. [2.] The dishonour done him by the Jews, which he justly endureth—that they impiously said of him, whom the Father had thus dignified, that he was a blasphemer, because he called himself the Son of God; "Say ye of him so and so? Dare ye say so? Dare ye thus set your mouths against the heavens? Have ye bow and brass enough to tell the God of truth that he lies, or to condemn him that is most just? Look me in the face, and say it if you can, what say I of the Son or of a blasphemer?" If devils had said so of him, whom he came to condemn, it had not been so strange; but that men should say so of him, whom he came to teach and save, be astonished, Oh heavens, at this! See what is the language of an obstinate unbeliever; it does, in effect, call the holy Jesus a blasphemer. It is hard to say which is more to be wondered at, the argument made in God's cause, or the weak such things, or that men who have spoken such things, should still be suffered to breathe in God's air. The wickedness of man, and the patience of God, as it were, contend which shall be most wonderful.

2. By an argument taken from his own works, v. 37, 38. In the former he only answered the charge of blasphemy by an argument ad hominem—turning a man's own arguments against himself; but he here makes out his own claims, and proves that he and the Father are one; (v. 37, 38.) If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. Though he might justly have abandoned such blaspemous wretches as insensible, yet he vouchsafes to reason with them.

Observe, (1.) From what he argues—from his works, which he had often vouchsafed as his credentials, and the proofs of his mission. As he proved himself sent of God by the divinity of his works, so we must prove ourselves allied to Christ by the christianity of our's. [1.] The argument is very cogent; for the works he did, were the works of his Father, which the Father only could do, and which could not be done in the ordinary course of nature, but by a power from God. The miracles which the apostles wrought in Jesus' name, by his power, and for the confirmation of his doctrine, corroborated this argument, and continued the evidence of it when he was gone. [2.] It is proposed as fairly as can be desired, and put to a short issue.

First, If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. He does not demand a blind and implicit faith, nor an assent to his divine mission further than his works prove. He claims himself a friend to the affections of people, nor wheedle them by sly insinuations, nor impose upon their credulity by bold assertions, but with the greatest fairness imaginable quitted all demands of their faith, further than he produced warrants for these demands. Christ is no hard master, who expects to reap in assents, where he has not sown in arguments. None shall perish for the disbelief of that which was not imposed to them with sufficient motives of credibility, Infinite Wisdom itself being judge.

Secondly, But if I do the works of my Father, if I work undeniable miracles for the confirmation of a holy doctrine, though you believe not me, though you are so scrupulous as not to take my word, yet believe the works: believe your own eyes, your own reason, the thing speaks itself plainly enough. As the invisible things of the Creator are clearly seen by his works of creation and common providence, (Rom. 1. 20.) so in the works of the Father, these were seen by his miracles, and by all his works, both of power and mercy; so that they who were not convinced by these works, were without excuse. (2.) For what he argues—that ye may know and believe, may believe it intelligently, and with an entire satisfaction, that the Father is in me, and I in him with whom he is the same with what he had said, v. 30. I and my Father are one. The Father was so in the Son, as that in him devell all the fulness of the Godhead, and it was by a divine power that he wrought his miracles; the Son was so in the Father, as that he was perfectly acquainted with the whole of his mind, not by communication, but by consciousness, having lain in his bosom. This we must know; and in this, and in this we are equal (for we should search it out to perfection,) but know and believe it; acknowledging and adoring the depth when we cannot find the bottom.

39. Therefore they sought again to take him; but he escaped out of their hand, 40. And went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. 41. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. 42. And many believed on him there.

We have here the issue of the conference with the Jews. One would have thought it should have convinced and melted them, but their hearts were hardened. Here we are told, I. How they attacked him by force. Therefore they sought again to take him, v. 39. Therefore, 1. Because he had fully answered their charge of blasphemy, and wiped off that imputation, so that they could not for shame go on with their attempt to stone him, therefore they continued to entice him, and proceed so as to make him an offender against the state. When they were constrained to drop their attempt by a popular tumult, they would try what they could do under colour of a legal process. See Rev. 12, 13. Or, 2. Because he persevered in the same testimony concerning himself, they persisted in their malice against him. What he had said before, he did in effect say again, for the faithful witness never runs from what he once said; and therefore, having the same provocation, they express the same sentiments, and justify their attempt to stone him by another attempt to take him. Such is the temper of a persecuting spirit, and such its politics, male facta, male factae tegere ne perfluriant—to cover one set of bad deeds with another, lest the former should fall through.

5. How he avoided them by flight; not an inglorious retreat, in which there was any thing of human infirmity, but a glorious retirement, in which there was much of a divine power. He escaped out of their hands, not by the interposul of any friend that helped him, but by his own wisdom he got clear of them; he either drew a veil over himself, or cast a mist before these events, so that the hands of those whose hearts he did not turn. Note, no weapon formed against our Lord Jesus shall prosper, Ps. 2. 5. He escaped, not because he was afraid to suffer
but because his hour was not come. And he who knew how to deliver himself, no doubt knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to make a way for them to escape.

III. How he disposed of himself in his retirement; he went away again beyond Jordan, v. 40. The Bishop of our souls came not to be fixed in one set, but to go about from place to place, doing good. This great Benefactor was never out of his way, for where there was work to be done. Though Jerusalem was the royal city, yet he made many a kind visit to the country, not only to his own country Galilee, but to other parts, even those that lay most remote beyond Jordan. Now observe,

1. What shelter he found there. He went into a private part of the country, and there he abode; there he found some rest and quietness, when in Jerusalem he could find none. Note, Though persecutors may drive Christ and his gospel out of their own city or country, they cannot drive him or it out of the world. Though Jerusalem was not gathered, nor would be, yet Christ was glorious, and would be. Christ's going now beyond Jordan, was a figure of the taking of the kingdom of God from the Jews, and bringing it to the Gentiles. Christ and his gospel have often found better entertainment among the heathens than among the wise, the mighty, the noble, 1 Cor. 1. 27.

2. What success he found there. He did not go thither merely for his own security, but to do good there; and therefore he chose to go thither where John at first baptized, (ch. 1. 28.) because there could not but remain some impressions of John's ministry and baptism threabout, which would dispose them to receive Christ and his doctrine; for it was now likely that some might have been baptized there who was himself baptized here at Bethabara. Christ came hither now to see what fruit there was of all the pains John Baptist had taken among them, and what they retained of the things they then heard and received. The event in some measure answered expectation; for we are told,

(1.) That they flocked after him; (v. 41.) Many returned to him. The return of the means of grace to a place, after they have been foreborne, commonly occasions a great stirring of affections. Some think Christ chose to abide at Bethabara, the house of passage, where the ferry-boats lay, by which they crossed the river Jordan, that the confluence of people thither might give an opportunity of teaching many who would come to hear him when it lay in their way, but who would scarcely go a step out of the road for an opportunity of attending on his word.

(2.) That they reasoned in his favour, and sought arguments to induce them to close with him, as much as they at Jerusalem sought objections against him. They said very judiciously, John did no miracle, but all things that John saith of this Man were true. Two things they considered, upon recollecting what they had seen and heard from John, and comparing what Christ did, and the manner of his miracles.

[1.] That Christ far excelled John Baptist's power, for John did no miracle, but Jesus does many; whence it is easy to infer, that Jesus is greater than John. And if John were so great a prophet, how great then is this Jesus! Christ is best known and acknowledged by such a comparison with others as sets him superlatively above others. Though John came in the spirit and power of Elias, yet he did not work miracles, as Elias did, lest the minds of people should be made to hesitate between him and Jesus; therefore the honour of working miracles was reserved for Jesus, as a flower of his crown, that there might be a sensible demonstration, and an undeniable one, that, though he came after John, yet he was preferred far before him.

[2.] That Christ exactly answered John Baptist's testimony. John not only did no miracle to deceive people from Christ, but he said a great deal to direct them to Christ, and to turn them over as apprentices to him, and that came to their minds now; all things that John said of this Man were true, that he should be the Lamb of God, should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Great things John had said of him, which raised their expectations; and that, though they had not yet seen him, yet, when he came into their s, and brought his gospel to their doors, they acknowledged him as great as John had said he would be. When we get acquainted with Christ, and come to know him experimentally, we find all things that the scripture saith of him, to be true; nay, and that the reality exceeds the report, 1 Kings 18. 27. 37. 41. 42. They were forewarned by what they had heard formerly, and by comparing what they heard them with: what they saw now, they gained a double advantage; for, First, They were confirmed in their belief that John was a prophet, who foretold such things, and spake of the eminency to which this Jesus would arrive, though his beginning was so small. Secondly, They were prepared to believe that Jesus, in his coming, would accomplish they things accomplished, which John foretold. By this we see that the success and efficacy of the word preached, are not confined to the life of the preacher, nor do they expire with his breath, but that which seemed as water spilt upon the ground, may afterward be gathered up again. See Zech. 1. 5, 6.

(3.) That many believed on him there. Believing that he who wrought such miracles, and in whom John's predictions were fulfilled by them, it was not strange that they declared himself to be, the Son of God, they gave up themselves to him as his disciples, v. 42. An emphasis is here to be laid, [1.] Upon the persons that believed on him; they were many. While they that received and embraced his doctrine at Jerusalem, were but as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, they that believed on him in the country beyond Jordan, were a full harvest gathered in to him. [2.] Upon the place where this was; it was there where John had been preaching and baptizing, and had had great success, there many believed on the Lord Jesus. Where the preaching of the doctrine of repentance has had success, as elsewhere, there the preaching of the doctrine of reconciliation and gospel-grace is most likely to be prosperous. Where John has been acceptable, Jesus will not be unacceptable. The jubilee of God's grace sounds sweetest to those who in the day of atonement have afflicted their souls for sin.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, we have the history of that illustrious miracle which Christ wrought a little before his death—the raising of Lazarus to life; which is recorded only by this evangelist; for the other three confine themselves to what Christ did in Galilee. He relates it first because he had carried their history into Jerusalem till the passion-week; whereas John's memoirs relate chiefly to what passed at Jerusalem; this passage therefore was reserved for his pen. Some suggest that, when the other evangelists wrote, Lazarus was alive, and it would not well agree, either with his safety or with his humility, to have it recorded till now, when it is supposed he was dead. It is more largely recorded than any of Christ's miracles, and the circumstances of it are so many, and there are so many circumstances of it as so very instructive, and the miracle of itself so great a proof of Christ's mission, but because it was an earnest of that which was to be the crowning work of Christ, he reserved it for himself. So,

1. The tidings sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, and his entertainment of those tidings, v. 1. 18.

11. The visit he made to Lazarus's relations when he had heard of his death, and their entertainment of the visit, v. 17. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 57. 

The effect wrought by this miracle upon others, v. 45. 51.
1. **Now** a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2. (It was **that** Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4. When Jesus heard **that**, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6. When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. 7. Then after that saith he to his disciples, let us go into Judea again. 8. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? 9. Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. 10. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. 11. These things said he; and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. 12. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. 13. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. 14. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. 15. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. 16. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

We have, in these verses, 1. A particular account of the parties principally concerned in this story, v. 1, 2, 4. They lived at Bethany, a village not far from Jerusalem, where Christ usually lodged when he came up to the feasts. It is here called the town of Mary and Martha, that is, the town where they dwelt, as Bethsaida is called the city of Andrew and Peter, ch. 1. 44. For I see no reason to think, as some do, that Martha and Mary were owners of the town, and the rest were their tenants. 2. Here was a brother named Lazarus; his Hebrew name, probably, was Eleazars, and to a Greek translation put to it, is made Lazarus. Perhaps, in prospect of this history, our Saviour made use of the name of Lazarus in that parable wherein he designed to set forth the blessedness of the righteous in the bosom of Abraham immediately after death, Luke 16. 22. 3. Here were two sisters, Martha and Mary, to whom he had been a housekeeper, and to have managed the affairs of the family, while perhaps Lazarus lived a retired life, and gave himself to study and contemplation. Here was a decent, happy, well-ordered family, and a family that Christ was very much conversant in, where yet there was neither husband nor wife, (for aught that appears,) but the house kept by a brother, and his sisters dwelling together in unity. 4. One of the sisters is particularly described to be that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, v. 2. Some think she was that woman that we read of, Luke 7. 37, 38. who had been a sinner, a bad woman. I rather think it refers to that anointing of Christ, which this evangelist relates; (ch. 12. 3.) for the evangelists do never refer one to another, but John frequently refers in one place of his gospel to another. Extraordinary acts of piety and devotion, that come from an honest principle of love to Christ, will not only find acceptance with him, but gain reputation in the church, Matt. 26. 13. This was she whose brother Lazarus was sick; and the sickness of those we love is our affliction. The more friends we have, the more frequently we are thus afflicted by sympathy; and the dearer they are, the more grievous it is. The multiplying of our comforts is but the multiplying of our cares and crosses. 11. The tidings that were sent to our Lord Jesus of the sickness of Lazarus, v. 5. His sisters knew where Jesus was, a great way off beyond Jordan, and therefore sent him, to beseech him, to send special messengers to him with the affliction of their family. In which they manifest, 1. The affection and concern they had for their brother. Though, it is likely, his estate would come to them after his death, yet they earnestly desired his life, as they ought to have done. They shewed their love to him now that he was sick, for a brother is born for adversity, and so he is. 2. We must weep with our friends when they weep, as well as rejoice with them when they rejoice. 3. The regard they had to the Lord Jesus; whom they were willing to make acquainted with all their concerns, and, like Jephthah, to utter all their words before him. Though God knows all our wants, and griefs, and cares, he will know them from us, and is honoured by our laying them before him. The message they sent, was very short, not pettioning, much less prescribing or pressing, but barely relating the case with the tender insinuation of a powerful plea, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick. They do not say, He whom we love, but, He whom thou dost love. Our greatest encouragements in prayer are fetched from God himself, and from his word. They do not say, He whom we love, but, He whom thou dost love; for herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us. Our love to him is not worth speaking of, but his to us can never be enough spoken of. Note, (1.) There are some of the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus, whom he hath a special kindness for above others. Among the twelve there was one whom Jesus loved. (2.) It is no new thing for those whom Christ loves, to be sick; all things come alike to all; bodily distempers correct the corruption, and try the graces, of God's people. (3.) It is a great comfort to us when we are sick, to have these about us that will pray for us. (4.) We have great encouragement in our prayers for those who are sick, if we have ground to hope that they are as such as whom Jesus loved. It is not to love and pray for those whom we have reason to think Christ loves and cares for.

III. An account how Christ entertained the tidings brought him of the illness of his friend. 1. He prognosticated the event and issue of the sickness, and probably sent it as a message to the sisters of Lazarus by the express, to support them while he was laid to come to them. Two things he prognosticates: (1.) This sickness is not unto death; it was mortal, proved fatal, and no doubt but Lazarus was truly dead for four days. But, (1.) That was not
the errand upon which this sickness was sent; it came not, as in a common case, to be a summons to the grave, but there was a further intention in it. Had it been sent on that errand, his rising from the dead would have defeated it. [2.] That was not the final effect of this sickness. He died, and yet it might be said he did not die, for Jn. 11:11, 12. Is not this true of every sickness of this world? It is not unto death. The grave was not his house of eternity. Thus Christ said of the maid whom he proposed to restore to life, she is not dead. The angel said to Peter, it is not so. [2.] The sickness was never, is not unto death, for it is not unto eternal death. The body's death to this world is the soul's birth into another world; when we or our friends are sick, we make it our principal support, that there is hope of a recovery, but in that we may be disappointed; therefore it is our wisdom to build upon that in which we cannot be disappointed; if they belong to Christ, let the worst come to the worst, for it is not unto the second death, and then not much hurt of the first.

(2.) But it is for the glory of God, that an opportunity may be given for the manifesting of God's glorious power. The afflictions of the saints are designed for the glory of God, that he may have opportunity of shewing them favour; for the sweetest mercies, and the most affecting, are those which are bestowed upon the poorest, and in the darkest dispensations of Providence, they are all for the glory of God, this sickness, this loss, this disappointment, are so; and if God be glorified, we ought to be satisfied, Lev. 10. 3. It was for the glory of God, for it was that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, as it gave him occasion to work that glorious miracle, the raising of him from the dead. As before the man was born blind, that Christ might have the honour of curing him (Jn. 9. 3.) so Lazarus must be sick and die, that Christ may be glorified as the Lord of life. Let this comfort those whom Christ loves under all their grievances, that the design of them all, is, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby, his wisdom, power, and goodness, glorified in supporting and relieving them; see 5 Cor. 12. 9, 10.

III. The consequence of this (v. 5. 6.) They had pleaded, Lord, it is to whom thou art, and the plea is allowed; (v. 5.) Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus: Thus the claims of faith are ratified in the court of heaven. Now one would think it should follow, When he heard therefore that he was sick, he made all the haste that he could to him; if he loved them, now was a time to shew it by hastening to them, for he knew they impatiently expected him. But he took the contrary way to shew his love: it is not said, He loved them, and yet he lingered; but he loved them, and therefore he lingered; when he heard his friend was sick, instead of coming post to him, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. [1.] He loved them, that is, he had a great opinion of Martha and Mary, of their wisdom and grace, of their faith and good-works, and he was content to wait; but yet he deferred coming to them, that he might try them, that their trial might at last be found to praise and honour. [2.] He loved them, that is, he designed to do something great and extraordinary for them, to work such a miracle for their relief as he had not wrought for any of his friends; and therefore he delayed coming to them, that Lazarus might be dead and buried before he came. If Christ had come presently, and cured the sickness of Lazarus, he had done no more than he did for many; if he had raised him to life when newly dead, no more than he had done for some. But, deferring his relief so long, he had an opportunity of doing more for him than for any. Note, God hath gracious in tempers even in seeming delays, Is. 54. 7, 8. — 49. 14, &c.

IV. The discourse he had with his disciples, when he was about to go visit his friends at Bethany, v. 7—16. The conference is so very free and familiar, as to make out what Christ said, I have called you friends. Two things he discourses about—his own danger, and Lazarus's death.

1. His own danger in going into Judea, v. 7—10. (1.) Here is the notice which Christ gave his disciples of his purpose to go into Judea toward Jerusalem. His disciples were the men of his counsel, and to them he saith, (v. 7.) "Let us go into Judea again, though they there are unworthy of such a favour, I will again go." He concludes the discourse about his mercy to those that have often rejected them. Now this may be considered, [1.] As a purpose of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whose affliction, and all the aggravating circumstances of it, he knew very well, though no more express words were sent to him; for he was present in spirit, though absent in body. When he knew they were brought to the last extremity, his brother and sister have given and taken a final farewell: "Now," saith he, "Let us go to Judea," Christ will arise in favour of his people, when the time to favour them, yeu, the set time, is come; and the worst time is commonly the set time. When our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts, then they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened the graves, Ezek. 37. 11, 13. In the depths of affliction, let your minds keep out of the mouths of despair: that man's extremity is God's opportunity; Jehovah-jireh. Or, [2.] As a trial of the courage of the disciples, whether they would venture to follow him thither, where they had so lately been frightened by an attempt upon their Master's life, which they looked upon as an attempt upon their own. To go to Judea, which was so lately made too hot for them, was a trying that forced them to try their strength and courage. He knew the excellency of his disciples, and how it was with them, and of Christ, and that his mind was full of that, and with all the minds of his disciples, and his mind was full of that, and he would have them to know he would go, and they might as well go with him as remain. Their advice was, Let us go with him. They are not so much afraid of the danger as they are afraid of the advantage of being with him. Let us go, Note, Christ never brings his people into any peril, but he accompanies them in it; and is with them, even then when they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

(2.) Their objection against this journey; (v. 8.) Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and dread thou thither again? Here, [1.] They remind him of the danger he has been in there not long since. Christ's disciples are apt to make a greater matter of sufferings than their Master does, and to remember injuries longer. He had put up the affair, it was over and gone, and forgotten, but his disciples could not forget it; of late, now, as if it were this very day, they sought to stone thee. Though it was at least two months ago, the remembrance of this fresh in their minds. [2.] They marvel that he will go thither again. "Wilt thou favour those with thy presence, that have expelled thee out of their coasts?" Christ's ways in passing by offences are above our ways. "Wilt thou expose thyself among a people that are so desperately enraged against thee? Great thou thyself again, where thou hast been so ill used?" Here they shewed great care for their Master's safety. Peter did, when he said, Master, sparest thou? had Christ been minded to shift off suffering, he did not want friends to persuade him to it; but he had
opened his mouth to the Lord, and he would not, he could not, go back. Yet while the disciples shew a considerable degree of prudence, they made a mistake, and were led by time, First, A distrust of his power; as if he could not secure both himself and them now in Judea as well as he had done formerly. Is his arm waxen short? When we are solicitous for the interests of Christ's church and kingdom in the world, we must yet rest satisfied in the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus, who knows how to secure a flock of sheep, and the life of a friend in a necessity. A secret fear of suffering themselves; for they count upon that if he suffer. When our own private interests happen to run in the same channel with the public, we are apt to think ourselves zealous for the Lord of hosts, when really we are only zealous for our own wealth, credit, ease, and safety, and seek our own things, under colour of seeking the things of Christ; we have therefore need nicely to distinguish upon our principles.

(5.) Christ's answer to this objection; (v. 9, 10.) Are there not twelve hours in the day? The Jews divided every day into twelve hours, and made their hours longer or shorter, according as the days were, so that an hour with them was the twelfth part of the time between sun and sun; so some. Or, they lay between twelve hours, and three of their days contained thirty-six hours, or nearer twelve hours long than ours. The Divine Providence has given us day-light to work by, and lengths it out to a competent time; and reckoning the year round, every country has just as much daylight as night, and so much more as the twilights amount to. Man's life is a day, this day is divided into divers ages, states, and opportunities, as into hours shorter or longer, as God has appointed; the consideration of this should make us not only very busy, as to the work of life, (if there were twelve hours in the day, each of them ought to be filled up with duty, and none of them trifled away,) but also very easy as to the perils of life; our day shall be lengthened out till our work be done, and our testimony finished. This Christ applies to his case, and shews why he must go to Judea, because he had a clear call to go. For the opening of this,

First, He shews the comfort and satisfaction which a man has in his own mind while he keeps in the way of his duty, as it is in general prescribed by the word of God, and particularly determined by the providence of God; if any man walk in the day, he stumbles not; that is, if a man keep close to his charge, and sets the fear of God as his rule, with an impartial respect to all God's commandments, he does not hesitate in his own mind, but, walking uprightly, walks surely, and with a holy confidence. As he that walks in the day, stumbles not, but goes on steadily and cheerfully in his way, because he sees the light of this world, and by it sees his way before him; so a good man, without any collateral security or sinister aim, relies upon the word of God as his rule, and regards the glory of God as his end, because he sees these two great lights, and keeps his eye upon them; thus he is furnished with a faithful guide in all his doubts, and a powerful guard in all his dangers, Gal. 6. 4. Ps. 119. 6. Christ, wherever he went, walked in the day, and so shall we, if we follow his steps.

Secondly, He shews that the prayer of the psalm is, in. Who walks not according to this rule? (v. 10.) If a man walk in the night, he stumbles; that is, if a man walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and according to the course of this world, if he consult his own carnal reasonings more than the will and glory of God, he falls into temptations and snares, is liable to great uneasiness and frightful apprehensions; trembles at the shaking of a leaf, and flees when none pursues: while an upright man laughs at the shaking of the spear, and stands undaunted when ten thousand invade. See Isa. 33. 14—16. He stumbles, because there is no light in him. The Jews say, The eye is that to our moral actions, which light about us is to our natural actions. He has not a good principle within; he is not sincere; his eye is evil. Thus Christ not only justifies his purpose of going into Judea, but encourages his disciples to go along with him, and fear no evil.

2. The death of Lazzars is here discussed of between Christ and his disciples, v. 11—16. Where what?

(1.) The notice Christ gave his disciples of the death of Lazarus, and an intimation that his business into Judea was to look after him, v. 11. After he had prepared his disciples for this dangerous march into an enemy's country, he then gives them,

[1.] Plain intelligence of the death of Lazarus, though he had received no advice of it; Our friend sleepeth. See here how Christ calls a believer, and a believer's death. First, He calls a believer his friend; our friend Lazarus. Note, 1. There is a covenant of friendship between Christ and believers, and a friendly affection and communion pursuant to it, which our Lord Jesus will own and not be ashamed of. His secret is with the righteous. 2. Those whom Christ is pleased to own as his friends, all other are called friends, and no other enjoy the call of his friend, even of Lazarus their common friend; Our friend d. 3. Death itself does not break the bond of friendship between Christ and a believer. Lazarus is dead, and yet he is still our friend. Secondly, he calls the death of a believer a sleep; he sleepeth. It is good to call death by such names and titles as will help to make it more familiar and less formidable to us. The death of Lazarus was in a peculiar sense a sleep, as that of Jairus's daughter, because they were to be raised again speedily; and since we are sure to rise again at last, why should that make any great difference? And why should not the believing hope of that resurrection to eternal life, make it as easy to us to put off the body and die, as it is to put off our clothes and go to sleep? A good Christian, when he dies, does but sleep; he rests from the labours of the day past, and is refreshing himself for the next morning. Nay, herein death has the advantage of sleep, that sleep is only the parenthesis, but death is the period, of our cares and toils. The soul does not sleep, but becomes more active; but the body sleeps without any toil, without any terror; not discomposed nor disturbed. The soul is to be raised from death to life, as the shackles of a criminal reserved for execution; but to the godly it is a bed, and all its bands as the soft and downy fettors of an easy quiet sleep. Though the body corrupts, it will rise in the morning as if it had never seen corruption; it is but putting off our clothes to be mended and trimmed up for the marriage-day, the coronation-day, to which we must rise. See Isa. 37. 36. 31. 1 Thes. 4. 14. The Greeks called their burying-places, dormitories—κομαίνωνα.

[2.] Particular intimations of his favourable intentions concerning Lazarus; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. He could have done it, and yet have said where he was; he that recovered at a distance one dying, (ch. 4. 50.) could have raised which we must rise. See Isa. 37. 36. 31. 1 Thes. 4. 14. Then shall thou call. Christ had no sooner said, Our friend sleepeth, but presently he adds, I go, that I may awake him. When Christ tells his people at any time how bad the cause is, he lets them know in the same breath how easily, how quickly,
he can mend. Christ's telling his disciples that this was his business to Judæa, might help to take off their fear of going with him thither; he did not go upon a public errand to the temple, but a private visit, which would not so much expose him and them; and besides, it was to do a kindness to a family they were all obliged to.

(2.) Their mistake of the meaning of this notice, and the blunder they made about it; (v. 12, 13.) They said, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. This speaks.

[1.] Some concern they had for their friend Lazarus; they hoped he would recover; 

Ver. 9. He shall be saved from dying at this time. Probably, the first notice of his illness, and the news of his illness, that one of the most threatening symptoms he was under, was, that he was restless, and could not get sleep; and now that they heard he slept, they concluded the fever was gone off, and the worst was past. Sleep is often nature's physic, and reviving to its weak and weary powers. This is true of the sleep of death; if a good Christian so slept, he shall do well, better than he did here,

[2.] Thomas, and the one that is called Didymus, speaks, ver. 21, and 22. He said to his fellow-disciples, who, probably, looked with fear and concern upon one another, when Christ had said so positively, let us go to him; he said very courageously, Let us also go, that we may die with him. With him; that is,

[1.] With Lazarus, who was now dead; so take it. Lazarus was a dear and loving friend both to Christ and his disciples, and perhaps the nearer and particular intimacy with him. Now if he be dead, saith he, let us even go and die with him. For, First, If we survive, we know not how to live without him. Probably, Lazarus had done them many good offices, sheltered them, and provided for them, and been to them instead of eyes, and now that he was gone, they had no man like minded, and "Therefore," saith he, we had as good die for him. Secondly, We have been some time with him, our lives bound up in the lives of some that were dear to us: but God will teach us to live, and to live comfortably, upon himself, when these are gone, whom we thought we could not have lived without. But that is not all. Secondly, If we die, we hope to be happy with him. Such a firm belief he has of a happiness on the other side death, and such good hope through grace of God in that he is willing they should all go and die with him. It is better to die, and go along with our Christian friends to that world which is enriched by their removal to it, than stay behind in a world that is impoverished by their departure out of it.

The more of our friends are translated hence, the fewer cords we have to bind us to this earth, and the more to draw our hearts heavenward. Peaceably draw the good things of this life, as if it were but unwinding and going to bed.

[2.] Let us go and die with our Master, who is now exposing himself to death by venturing into Judæa; and so I rather think it is meant. If he will go into danger, let us also go and take our part with him, according to the command we received, Follow me. Thomas knew so much of the malice of the Jews against him, and the counsel of God only turned him to this conclusion, that it was no foreign supposition that he was now going to die. And now Thomas discovers, First, A gracious readiness to die with Christ himself, flowing from strong affections to him, though his faith was weak, as appeared afterward, ch. 14. 5.-20. Where thou art I will also. Ruth 1. 17. Secondly, A zealot desire to help his fellow-disciples into the same frame: Let us go, too and all, and die with him; if they stone us, let him stand us, who would desire to survive such a Master? Thus,
in difficult times, Christians should animate one another. We may each of us say, "Let us die with him." Note, The consideration of the dying of the Lord Jesus should make us willing to die whenever God calls for us.

17. Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. 18. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off: 19. And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. 20. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. 23. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believe thou this? 27. She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28. And when she had so said, she went out, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. 29. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

The matter being determined, that Christ will go to Judea, and his disciples with him, they address themselves to their journey; in this journey some passages happened, which the other evangelists record, and as the healing of a blind man at Jericho, and the conversion of Zaccheus. We must not reckon ourselves out of our way, while we are in the way of doing good; nor be so intent upon one good office as to neglect another.

[At length, he comes near to Bethany, which is said to be about fifteen furlongs off from Jerusalem, about two measured miles. v. 18. Notice is taken of this, that this miracle was in effect wrought in Jerusalem, and so was put to her score. Christ's miracles in Galilee were more numerous, but those in or near Jerusalem were more illustrious; there he raised one that had been diseased thirty-eight years, another that had been blind from his birth, and raised one that had been dead four days. To Bethany Christ came, and observe, 1. What purpose he had there for his friends there in. When he had been last with them, it is probable that he left them well, in health and joy; but when we part from our friends, (though Christ knows,) we know not what changes may affect us or them before we meet again. 2. He found his friend Lazarus in the grave, v. 17. When he came near the town, probably the burying-place of Lazarus, it is likely he was told by the neighbours, or some he met, that Lazarus had been four days buried. Some think that Lazarus died the same day that the messenger came to Jesus with the tidings of his sickness, and so reckon two days for his abode in the same place, and two days for his journey. I rather think that Lazarus died at the very instant that Jesus said, "Our friend eth is now newly fallen asleep;" and that the time between his death and burial, (which among the Jews was but short,) with the four days of his lying in the grave, was taken up in this journey; for Christ travelled publicly, as appears by his passing through Jericho, and his abode at Zacchaeus's house took up some time. Promised salvations, though they always come surely, yet they often come slowly. He was then, with his friends, in Bethany, and Martha and Mary were almost swallowed up with sorrow for the death of their brother, which is intimated where it is said, that many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them. Note, (1.) Ordinarily, where death is, there are mourners especially when those that were agreeable and amiable to their relations, and serviceable to their generation, are taken away. The house where death is, is called the house of mourning, Eccl. 7. 2. When man goes to his long home, the mourners go about the streets, (Eccl. 12. 5.) or rather sit alone, and keep silence. Here was Martha's house, a house where the fear of God was, and on which his blessing rested; yet made a house of mourning. Grace will keep sorrow from the heart, (ch. 14. 1.) not from the house. (2.) Where there are mourners, there ought to be comforters. It is a duty we owe to those that are in sorrow, to mourn with them, and to comfort them; and our mourning with them will be some comfort to them. When we are under the present impressions of grief, we are apt to forget those things which would minister comfort to us, and therefore have need of remembrancers. It is a mercy when we have such, and to our duty to be such to them who are in sorrow. The Jewish doctors laid great stress upon this, obliging their disciples to make conscience of comforting the mourners after the burial of the dead. They comforted them concerning their brother, by speaking to them of him, not only of the good name he left behind, but of the happy state he was gone to. When godly relations and friends are taken from us, we must either be affected concerning ourselves, who are left behind, and miss them, we have reason to be comforted concerning them who are gone before us to a happiness where they have no miss of us. This visit which the Jews made to Martha and Mary, is an evidence that they were persons of distinction, and made a figure; as also that they behavied obligingly to all; so that many of the disciples; of Christ, yet those who had no respect for him, were civil to them. There was also a providence in it, that so many Jews, Jewish ladies, it is probable, should come together, just at this time, to comfort the mourners, that they might be excepcionable witnesses of the miracle, and see what miserable comforters they were, in comparison with Christ. Christ did not usually send for witnesses to
Here is fully related the discourse between Christ and Martha.

1. Martha's address to Christ, v. 21, 22.

First, She complains of Christ's long absence and delay. She said it, not only with grief for the death of her brother, but some resentment of the seeming unkindness of Christ. Let us suppose that thou hast been here, my brother had not died. Here is, 1. Some evidence of faith. She believed Christ's power, that, though her brother's sickness was very grievous, yet he could have cured it, and so have prevented his death; she believed his promise, that, if he had but seen Lazarus in his extreme illness, and his dear relations all in tears about him, he would have had compassion upon him, and prevented his death for his compassions fell not. But, 2. Here are sad instances of unbelief. Her faith was true, but weak as a bruised reed, for she limits the power of Christ, in saying, if thou hadst been here; whereas she ought to have known that Christ could cure at a distance, and that his gracious operations were not limited to his bodily presence. She reflects likewise upon the wisdom and kindness of Christ, that he did not hasten to them when they sent for him, as if he had not timed his business well, and now might as well have staid away, and not have come at all, as to come too late; and as for any help now, she can scarcely entertain the thought of it.

Secondly, Yet she corrects and comforts herself with the thoughts of the prevailing interest Christ had in heaven, and the blessedness of her being the servant and friend of her Master, and for suggesting that he comes too late; for I know that even now, desperate as the case is, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Observe, 1. How willing her hope was. Though she has not courage to ask of Jesus that he should raise him to life again, there having been no precedent as yet of any one raised to life, that had died so long dead, yet, like a modest petitioner, she humbly recommends the case to the wise and compassionate consideration of the Lord Jesus. When we know not what in particular to ask or expect, let us in general refer ourselves to God, let him do as seemeth him good. Judicis tui est, non presevationis nunc—I leave it to thy judgment, not to my prescience. Aug. in locum. When we know not what to pray for, it is one comfort to us, that the petitioner knows we are turning to the Maidonat. in locum. Others think that she did hear that Christ was coming, but was overwhelmed with sorrow, that she did not care for stirring, choosing rather to indulge her sorrow, and to sit poring upon her affliction, and saying, I do well to mourn. Comparing this story with that, Luke 10. 38. 39. &c. we may observe the different temperaments of these two sisters, and the temperaments and advantages of each. Martha's natural temper was active and busy, she loved to be here and there and at the end of every thing; and this had been a snare to her, when by it she was not only careful and cumbered about many things, but hindered from the exercises of devotion; but now in a day of affliction this active temper did her a kindness, kept the grief from her heart, and made her industrious to meet Christ; and so she received comfort from him the sooner. On the other hand, Mary's natural temper was contemplative and reserved; this had been formerly an advantage to her, when it set her at Christ's feet, to hear his word, and enabled her there to attend upon him without those distractions which Martha was cumbered with: but now in the day of affliction that same temper proved a snare to her, and made her heart full of grief, and disposed her to melancholy; but Mary sat still in the house. See here how much it will he our wisdom carefully to watch against the temptations, and improve the advantages, of our natural temper.

First, This was true of Lazarus in a sense pecu-
First, She accounted it a faithful saying, that she shall rise again at the last day. Though the doctrine of the resurrection was to have its full proof from Christ's resurrection, yet, as it was already revealed, she firmly believed it, Acts 24. 15. That there shall be a last day, with which all the days of time shall close, and from that day the resurrection of all shall be a general resurrection at that day, when the earth and sea shall give up their dead. 3. That there shall be a particular resurrection of each one. "I know that I shall rise again, and this and the other relation that was dear to me." As bone shall return to his bone in that day, so friend to his friend. 25. Secondly, Yet she seems to think this saying so well worth the all she received as really it was. "I know he shall rise again at the last day; but what are we the better for that now?" As if the comforts of the resurrection to eternal life were not worth speaking of, or yielded not satisfaction sufficient to balance her affliction. See our weakness and folly, that we suffer present sensible things to make a deeper impression upon us, both of grief and joy, than those things which are the objects of faith. I know that he shall rise again at the last day; and is not that enough? She seems not to think it is. Thus, by our discontent under present crosses, we greatly undervalue our future hopes, and put a slight upon them, as if not worth regarding. 26. The further instruction and encouragement which Jesus Christ gave her; for he will not quench the fire of his love, nor break the crack of his promise, said to her, I am the Resurrection and the Life; ver. 25, 26. Two things Christ possesses her with the belief of, in reference to the present distress; and they are the things which our faith should fasten upon in the like cases. First, The power of Christ, his sovereign power; I am the Resurrection, and the Life, the Fountain of life, and the Head and Author of the resurrection. 22. Martha believed that at his prayer God would give any thing, but he would have her know that by his word he could work any thing. Martha believed a resurrection at the last day, Christ tells her that he had that power lodged in his own hand, that the dead were to hear his voice, ch. 5. 25. whence it was easy to infer, He that could raise a world of men that had died, must raise the particular one that had been dead but four days. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all good Christians, that Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life, and will be so to them. Resurrection is a return to life, Christ is the author of that return, and of that life to which it is a return. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, and Christ is both, the author and principle of both, and the ground of our hope of both. 24. Secondly, The promises of the new covenant, which give us further ground of hope that we shall live. Observe,

1. To whom these promises are made—to them that believe in Jesus Christ, to them that consent to, and confide in, Jesus Christ, as the only Mediator of reconciliation and communion between God and man; that receive the record God has given in his word concerning his Son, sincerely comply with it, and answer all the great intentions of it. The condition of the latter promise is thus expressed, Whoever liveth, and believeth in me; which may be understood either, (1.) Of natural life; Whosoever lives in this world, whether he be Jew or Gentile, wherever he lives, if he believes in Christ, he shall live by him. Yet it limits the time, Whoever, during life, while he is here in this state of probation, believes in me, shall be happy in me, but after death it will be too late. Whoever lives and believes, lives by faith, (Gal. 2. 20.) he is not a concealed word, it is an expression of the great principle of our conversation. Or, (2.) Of spiritual life: He that lives and believes, is he that by faith is born again to a heavenly and divine life, to whom to live is Christ—that makes Christ the life of his soul. 2. What the promises are; (v. 23.) Though he die, yet shall he live, (v. 26.) he shall never die. Man consists of body and soul, and provision is made for both. (1.) For the body, here is the promise of a blessed resurrection. Though the body he died because of sin, (there is no remedy but it will die,) yet it shall live again, though he were dead. All the difficulties that attend the state of the dead, are here overlooked, and made nothing of. Though the sentence of death was just, though the effects of death be dismal, though the bar of condemnation be open; yet it is said that he shall be dead and buried, and putrefied, though the scattered dust be so mixed with common dust, that no art of man can distinguish, much less separate them, yet the case as strongly as you will, on that side, yet we are sure that he shall live again; the body shall be raised a glorious body. (2.) For the soul, here is the promise of a blessed immortal life. He that liveth and believeth, who, being united to Christ by faith, lives spiritually by virtue of that union, he shall never die. That spiritual life shall never be extinguished, but perfected in eternal life. As the soul, being in its nature spiritual, is therefore immortal; so if by faith it live a spiritual life, consonant to its nature, its felicity shall be immortal too. It shall never die, shall never be cut off from the life of the Spirit, even life eternal. He that believeareth in me shall not be confounded. That is, he shall not by any intermission or interruption of its life, as there is of the life of the body. The mortality of the body shall at length be swallowed up of life; but the life of the soul, the believing soul, shall be immediately at death swallowed up of mortality. He shall not die; it is no more, for ever—Non morietur in aeternum; so Cyprian quotes it. The body shall not be for ever dead in the grave; it dies (like the two witnesses) but for a time, times, and the dividing of time; and when time shall be no more, and all the divisions of it shall be numbered and finished, a spirit of life from God shall enter into it. But that is not all: the soul shall not die that death which is for ever, shall not die eternally. Blessed and holy, that is, Blessed and happy, is he, that by faith has got possession of this eternal life. And this is the promise of that sacrament which is the sign of that Resurrection; for on such the second death, which is a death for ever, shall have no power; see ch. 6. 40.

Christ asks her, "Believeth thou this? Canst thou assent to it with application? Canst thou make my word for it?" Nay, When we have read or heard the word of Christ concerning the great things of the other world, we should seriously put it to our selves, Do we believe this? this truth in particular, this which is attended with so many difficulties, this which is suited to my case? Does my obieft of it realize it to me, and give my soul an assurance of it,
so that I can say, not only this I believe, but thus I believe it." Martha was dwelling upon her brother's being called away to life in this world; before Christ gave her hopes of that, he directed her thoughts to another life, another world: "Nothing matter for that, but believest thou this that I tell thee concerning the future state?" The crosses and comforts of this present time would not make that impression upon us that they do, if we did but believe the things of eternity as we ought.

Secondly, The ground of her faith, and that is, the word of Christ; without any alteration, exception, or proviso, she takes it entire as Christ had said it, Yea, Lord; whereby she not only testifies true confidence, but a promise, in his own sense; Even so. Faith is an echo to divine revelation, returns the same words, and resolves to abide by them; Yea Lord. As the word did make it, so I believe and take it, said queen Elizabeth.

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own pain, and to say, *We do well to be passionate in our grief, even unto death*; we are apt to fasten upon those things that aggravate the affliction, and what good does it do us, when it is our duty to reconcile ourselves to the will of God in it? Why should the mourners go to the grave, to weep there, when they sorrow not as those that have no hope? Affliction of itself is grievous; and it is likely to become better so to us, as it is the wisdom and duty of comforters; and that is, to prevent as much as may be, in those who grieve inordinately, the revival of the sorrow, and to divert it. Those Jews that followed Mary, were thereby led to Christ, and became the witnesses of one of his most glorious miracles. It is good cleaving to Christ's friends in their sorrows, for they have known how to keep a better balance.

(4.) Mary's address to our Lord Jesus (Luke 10. 39.) she came attended with her train of comforters, and fell down at his feet, as one overwhelmed with a passionate sorrow, and said with many tears, (as appears, v. 33.) *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died*, as Martha said before, for they had often said it to one another. Now, here,

[1.] Her posture is very humble and submissive; *She fell down at his feet,* when she was more than Martha did, who had a greater command of her passions. She fell down as a sinking mourner, but fell down at his feet as a humble petitioner. This Mary had sitten at Christ's feet to hear his word, and here we find her there on another errand. Note, Those that in a day of peace set themselves at Christ's feet, to receive instruction from him with content and confidence, are in a day of trouble cast themselves at his feet, with hope to find favour with him. *She fell at his feet,* as one submitting to his will in what was done, and referring herself to his good will in what was now to be done. When we are in affliction, we must cast ourselves at Christ's feet in a penitent sorrow and self-abasement for sin, and a patient resignation of ourselves to the divine conduct. Mary's casting herself at Christ's feet, was in token of the profound respect and veneration she had for him. Thus they were wont to give honour to their kings and princes; but our Lord Jesus not appearing in secular glory as an earthly prince, they who by this posture of adoration gave honour to him, certainly looked upon him as more than man, and intended hereby to give him divine honour. Mary hereby made profession of her trust in him; and Christ did, as Mary did, and in effect said, *I believe that thou art the Christ; bowing the knee to Christ, and confessing him with the tongue,* are put together as equivalent, Rom. 14. 11. Phil. 2. 10. 11. This she did in presence of the Jews that attended her, who, though friends to her and her family, yet were bitter enemies to Christ; yet in their sight she fell at Christ's feet, as one that was neither ashamed to own the veneration she had for Christ, nor afraid of disabling her friends and neighbours by it. Let them resent it as they pleased, she fails at his feet; and if this be to be vile, she will be yet more vile; see Cant. 8. 1. We serve a Master whom we have no reason to be ashamed of, and whose acceptance of our services is sufficient to balance the reproach of men and all their revenge.

[2.] Her address is very pathetical; *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* Christ's delay was designed for the best, and proved so; yet both the sisters very indecently *cast the same in his teeth,* and in effect charge him with the death of their brother. This repeated challenge he might justly have rejected; might have told them he had something else to do than to look their back, and to attend them; he must come when his business would permit him; but not a word of this; he considered the circumstances of their affliction, and that losers think they may have leave to speak; and, therefore overlooked the rudeness of this welcome, and gave us an example of mildness and meekness in such cases. Mary added no more, as Martha did; but it appears by what follows, that what she felt short in words, she made up in tears; she said less than Martha, but wept more; and tears of devout affection have more weight and prevail, than any voice, in the ears of Christ, no rhetoric like that.

33. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, 34. And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35. Jesus wept. 36. Then saith the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37. And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? 38. Jesus therefore again groaning in himself came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time it stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. 40. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? 41. Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

Here we have,

I. Christ's tender sympathy with his afflicted friends, and the share he took in their sorrows, which appeared three ways.

1. By the inward groans and troubles of his spirit, v. 33. Jesus saw Mary weeping for the loss of a loving brother, and the Jews that came with her, weeping for the loss of a good neighbour and friend; when he saw what a place of weepers, a Bochim, this was, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. See here,

(1.) The griefs of the sons of men represented in the tears of Mary and her friends. What an eminence is the sense of our griefs, and the height of this woe, by which they are represented! *Nature itself teaches us to weep over our dear relations, when they are removed by death; Providence thereby calls to weeping and mourning. It is probable that Lazarus's estate devolved upon his sisters, and was a considerable addition to their fortunes; and in such a case, people say now-a-days, though they cannot wish their relations dead, (that is, they do not say they do,) yet, if they were dead, they would not wish them alive again; but these sisters, whatever they got by their brother's death, heartily wished him alive again.* Religious teachers
notice where they are laid, and will look after them; there is not only a covenant with the dust, but a guard upon it.

3. It appeared by his tears. These about him did not tell him where the body was buried, but desired him to come and see, and led him directly to the grave, that his eye might yet more affect his heart with the care he took for him in the grave, as if he had been following the corpse thither, Jesus wept, v. 35. A very short verse, but it affords many useful instructions. (1.) That Jesus Christ was really and truly Man, and partook with the children, not only of flesh and blood, but of a human soul susceptible of the impressions of joy, and grief, and other affections. Christ gave this proof of his humanity, in both senses of the word; that, He is a man, he could weep; and, as a merciful man, he would weep, before he gave this proof of his divinity. (2.) That he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, as was foretold, Isa. 53. 2. We never read that he laughed, but more than once we have him in tears. Thus he shews not only that a mournful state will consist with the love of God, but who they sow to the Spirit, must sow in tears. (3.) He is the great Shepherd, and make them most to resemble Christ. It is a relief to those who are in sorrow, to have their friends sympathize with them, especially such a friend as the Lord Jesus.

Different constructions were put upon his weeping.

[1.] Some made a kind and candid interpretation of it, and what was very natural; (v. 36.) Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! They seem to wonder that he should have so strong an affection for one whom he was not related to, and whom he had not had any long acquaintance with, for Christ spent most of his time in Galilee, a great way from Lazarus. It becomes us, according to this example of Christ, to shew our love to our friends, both living and dying. We must sorrow for our brethren that sleep in Jesus, as those that are full of love, though not void of hope; as the devout men that buried Stephen, Acts 8. 2. Though our tears profit not the dead, they embalm their memory. These tears were indications of his particular love to Lazarus, but he has given proofs no less evident of his love to all the saints, in that he died for them. When he only dropped a tear over Lazarus, they said, See how he loved him! Much more reason have we to weep for those whom we had laid down our life; See how he loved us. Greater love has no man than this.

[2.] Others made a peevish unfair reflection upon it, as if these tears bespoke his inability to help his friend; (v. 37.) Could not this Man, that opened the eyes of the blind, have prevented the death of Lazarus? Here it is sily insinuated, First, That the death of Lazarus being, (as it seemed by his tears,) a great grief to him, if he could have prevented it he would, and as therefore because he did not, they incline to think that he could not, as when he was dying, they concluded that he could not, because he did not, save himself, and come down from the cross; not considering that divine power is always directed in its operations by divine wisdom, not merely according to his will, but according to the counsel of his will, wherein it becomes us to acquiesce. If Christ's friends, whom he loved, were then such, whom he did not, he was his friend, and did; when he was casting out devils, he did not, because he did not think it his place to do it. He would afterwards be acquainted with an address of condolence, to mingle a few fruitless insignificant tears with your's; no, I have other work to do; come, let us adjourn to the grave, and go about our business there.
Christ soon convinced these whisperers, by raising Lazarus from the dead, which was the greater work, that he could have prevented his death, but therefore did not, because he would glorify himself the more.

II. Christ's approach to the grave, and the preparation that was made for working this miracle.

1. Christ repeats his groans, upon his coming near the grave; (ver. 38.) Again groaning in himself, he came to the garden of Talitha-cum; but this was not to excite the unbeliefs of those, who spake doubtfully of his power, and blamed him for not preventing the death of Lazarus; he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts. He never groaned so much for his own pains and sufferings as for the sins and follies of men, particularly Jerusalem's. Matt. 23. 37. (2.) Being affected with the fresh lamentations, which, it is likely the mourning sisters made, when they came near the grave, more passionately and pathetically than before, his tender spirit was sensibly touched with their wailings. (3.) Some think that he groaned in spirit, because, to gratify the desire of his friends, he was to bring Lazarus again into this sinful troublesome world, from that rest into which he was newly entered; it would be a kindness to Martha and Mary, but it would be to him like thrusting one out into a stormy sea again, when he had newly got into a safe and quiet harbour. If Lazarus had been left alone, Christ would quickly have gone to him into the other world; but, being restored to life, Christ quickly left him behind in this world. (4.) Christ groaned as one that would affect himself with the calamitous state of the human nature, as subject to death, from which he was now about to redeem Lazarus. Thus he stirred up himself to take hold on God in the prayer he was to make, that he might offer it up with strong crying, Heb. 5. 7. Ministers, when they are sent by the preaching of the gospel to raise dead souls, should be much affected with the deplorable condition of those they preach to, and pray for, and groan in themselves to think of it.

2. The grave is here described, wherein Lazarus lay; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. The graves of the common people, probably, were digged as our's are; but persons of distinction were, as with us, interred in vaults; so Lazarus was, and such was the sepulchre in which Christ was buried. Probably, this fashion was kept up among the Jews, in imitation of the patriarchs, who buried their dead in the vale of Machpelah, Gen. 23. This care taken of the dead bodies of their friends, may be observed in their expectation of their resurrection; they reckoned the solemnity of the funeral ended, when the stone was rolled to the grave, or, as here, laid upon it, like that on the mouth of the den into which Daniel was cast, (Dan. 6. 17.) that the purpose might not be changed; intimating that the dead are separated from the living, and gone the way where the soul of the righteous, Ps. 116. 10. This is a Roman grave-stone, with an inscription upon it, which the Greeks called μνημειον— a memorandum, because it is both a memorial of the dead, and a memento to the living, putting them in remembrance of that we are all concerned to remember. It is called by the Latin, Monumentum, a monument, because it gives warning.

3. The stone is given to remove the stone, (ver. 39.) Take ye away the stone. He would have this stone removed, that all the standers-by might see the body lie dead in the sepulchre, and that way might be made for its coming out, and it might appear to be a true body, and not a ghost or spectre. He would have some of the servants to remove it, that they might be witnesses, by the smell, of the putrefaction of the body, and that therefore it was truly dead. It is a good step toward the raising of a soul to spiritual life when the stone is taken away, when prepossessions are removed and got over, and way made for the word to the heart, that it may do its work there, and say what it knows.

4. An objection made by Martha against the opening of the grave, Lord, by this time he stinketh, or, is become noisome, for he has been dead four days, ἐναντιάσατε; καὶ ἐκατέρωθεν; he is four days old in the other world; a citizen and inhabitant of that world. If Lazarus was dead so long, so much must have happened to him, both before and after his body was, as probably, Martha perceived the body to smell, as they were removing the stone, and therefore cried out thus.

(1.) It is easy from hence to observe the nature of human bodies; four days is but a little while, yet what a great change will that make with the body of man, if it be but so long without food, much more if so long without life! Dead bodies, (saith Dr. Hammond,) after a revolution of the humours, which is completed in seventy-two hours, naturally tend to putrefaction; and the Jews say, that by the fourth day after death, the body is so altered, that one cannot be sure it is such a person, so Maimonides in Lightfoot. Therefore Christ rose the third day, because he was not to see corruption.

(2.) It is not so easy to say what was Martha's design in saying this. [1.] Some think that she said it with a tenderness, a solicitude, to prevent Jesus from going to the dead body: now that it began to putrefy, she did not care it should be thus publicly shewn, and made a spectacle of. [2.] Others think that she said it out of a concern for Christ, lest the smell of the dead body should be offensive to him. That which is very noisome, is compared to an open sepulchre, Ps. 5. 9. If there were any thing noisome, she would not have her Master near it; but he was none of those tender and delicate ones, that cannot bear an ill smell; if he had, he would not have visited the world of mankind, which sin had made a perfect dunghill, altogether noisome, Ps. 14. 3. [3.] It should seem by Christ's answer, that it was the language of her unbelief and distrust; "Lord, it is too late now to attempt any kindness to him, his body begins to rot, and it is impossible that this putrid carcasse should live." She gives up his case as helpless and hopeless, there having been no in stances, either of late or formerly, of any raised to life after they had begun to see corruption. When our bones are dried, we are ready to say, Our hope is lost. Yet this distrustful word of her's, served to make the miracle both the more evident and the more illustrious, by this appearance, that he could raise one that was truly dead. Yet it was not without a note; though the posture of a dead body might be counterfeited, the smell could not. Her suggesting that it could not be done, puts the more honour upon him that did it.

5. The gentle reproof Christ gave to Martha for the weakness of her faith; (ver. 40.) Said I unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God? This word of his to her was not in the sense of the words, but in a different sense; it is like the words, when he had said, (ver. 27.) Lord, I believe; and it is enough that it is recorded here, where it is repeated. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus has given us all the assurances imaginable, that a sure faith shall at length be crowned with a blessed vision; "If thou believe, thou shalt see God's glorious appearances for thee in this world, and to thee in the other world. If we were without Martha's, or any other saint's faith, we must needs fall short of the glory of God, and be happy in the sight." (2.) We have need to be often reminded of these sure mercies with which our Lord Jesus hath encouraged us. Christ does not give a direct answer to what Martha had said, nor any particular promise of what he would do, but orders her to keep hold of the general assurances he had already given; Only believe. We are apt to forget what Christ has spoken, and need him to put
us in mind of it by his Spirit; "Said I not unto thee so and so? And dost thou think that he will ever say it?"

6. The opening of the grave in obedience to Christ's order, notwithstanding Martha's objection; (v. 41.) Then they took away the stone. Then, when Martha was satisfied, and had waved her objection, then they proceeded. If we will see the grace of God, we must take Christ his own way, and not prescribe, but subscribe, to him. They took away the stone, and that was all they could do, Christ only could give life. What man can do is but to prepare the way of the Lord, to fill the valleys, and level the hills, and, as here, to take away the stone.

7. The miracle itself wrought. The spectators invited by the rolling away of the stone, gathered about the grave, not to commit dust to dust, earth to earth, but to receive dust from the dust, and earth from the earth again; and their expectations being raised, our Lord Jesus addresses himself to his work. 1. He applies himself to his living Father in heaven, so he had called him, (ch. 6. 57.) and so eyes him here; his gesture he used was very significant: He lifted up his eyes, an outward expression of the elevation of his mind; and to shew them who stood by from whence he derived his power; also to set an example; this outward sign is hereby recommended to our practice; see ch. 17. 1. Look how they will answer it, who profanely ridicule it; but that which is especially charged upon us hereby, is, to lift up our hearts to God in the heavenliness of prayer, the more, but the assent of the soul to God, and the directing of its affections and motions heavenward. He lifted up his eyes, as looking above, looking beyond the grave where Lazarus lay, and over looking all the difficulties that arose from thence, that he might have his eyes fixed upon the divine omnipotence; to teach us to do as Abraham, who considered not his own body now dead, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, never took those into his thoughts, and so gained such a degree of faith, as not to stagger at the promis. Rom. 4. 20.

2. His address to God was with great assurance, and such a confidence as became him; Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. He has here taught us, by his own example, [1.] In prayer to call God Father, and to draw near to him as children to a father, out of a heart of acceptance, and not of rebellion, but with a holy boldness. [2.] In our prayers to praise him, and when we come to beg for further mercy, thankfully to acknowledge former favours. Thankings, which speak God's glory, not our own, like the Pharisee's God, I thank thee, are decent forms into which to put our supplications. But our Saviour's thanksgiving here was intended to express the unshaken assurance he had of the event of this miracle, which he had in his own power to do in concurrence with his Father; "Father, I thank thee, that my will and thine are in this matter, as always, the same." Elijah and Elisha raised the dead, as servants, by entreaty; but Christ, as a Son, by authority, having life in himself, and power to quicken whom he would; and he speaks of this as his own act; (v. 11.) I go, that I may obtain the resurrection for thee, when he had obtained by prayer, for his Father heard him; probably, he put up the prayer for it when he groaned in spirit, once and again, (v. 33, 38.) in a mental prayer, with groanings which could not he uttered. Now Christ speaks of this miracle as an answer to prayer. First, Because he would thus humble himself; though he were a Son, yet learned he this obedience; to ask and receive. His mediatorial crown was grated upon him, though it is of right, Ps. 2. 8. and ch. 17. 5. He prays for the glory he had before the world, though, having never forfeited it, he might have demanded it. Secondly, Because he was pleased thus to honour prayer, making it the key whereby even he unlocked the treasures of divine power and grace. Thus he would teach us in prayer, by the lively exercise of faith, to enter into the holiest.

Now Christ being assured that his prayer was answered,

1. He professes his thankful acceptance of this answer, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. Though the miracle was not yet wrought, yet the prayer was answered, and he triumphs before the victory. No other can pretend to such an assurance as Christ had; yet we may by faith in the promise have a complete assurance of it; and we have the same: we may rejoice in that prospect, and give God thanks for it. In David's devotions, the same Psalm which begins with prayer for a mercy, closes with thank-givings for it.

Note, (1.) Mercies, in answer to prayer, ought in a special manner to be acknowledged with thankfulness. Beside the grant of the mercy itself, we are to value it as a great favor, as a sign that our prayers take a divine notice.

(2.) We ought to meet the first appearances of the return of prayer with early thank-givings. As God answers us with mercy, even before we call, and hears us while we are yet speaking, so we should answer him with praise, even before he grants, and give him thanks while he is yet speaking good words and comfortable words.

2. He professes his cheerful assurance of a ready answer at any time, (v. 42.) And I knew that thou heardest me always. Let no one think that this was some uncommon favor granted him now, such as he never had before, nor should ever have again; no, he had the same divine power going along with him in his whole undertaking, and undertook nothing but what he knew to be agreeable to the counsel of God's will. I gave thanks! (saith he) for being heard in this, because I am sure to be heard in every thing. See here, (1.) The interest our Lord Jesus had in heaven, the Father heard him always, he had access to the Father upon every occasion, and success with him in every errand. And we may be sure that his interest is not the less for his going to heaven, which may encourage us to depend upon his intercession, and put all our petitions into his hand, for we are sure that him the Father hears always. (2.) The confidence he had of that interest; I knew it. He did not in the least hesitate or doubt concerning it, but had an entire satisfaction in his own mind of the Father's complacency in him, and concurrence with him in every thing. We cannot have such a particular assurance as he had; but this we know, that whatever we ask according to his will, he heareth us, 1 John 5. 14, 15.

But why should Christ give this public intimation of his obtaining this miracle by prayer? He adds, It is because of the people which stand by, that they may believe that thou hast sent me; for prayer may preach. [18] It was to obviate the objections of his enemies, and their reflections. It was blasphemously suggested by the Pharisees, and their creatures, that not by his own power, but in union with the devil; to evacuate the contrary, he openly made his address to God, using prayers, and not charms, not teaching and muttering, as they did, that used familiar spirits, (Isa. 8. 19.) but with elevated eyes and voice professing his communication with Heaven, and dependence on Heaven.

[19] It was to corroborate the faith of those that were well inclined to him, that they may believe that thou hast sent me, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Moses, to shew that God sent him, made the earth open and swallowed men up; (Numb. 16
39, 30.) Elijah, to shew that God sent him, made fire come from heaven, and devour men; for the two was a dispensation of terror and death: but Christ proves his mission by raising to life one that was dead. Some give this sense; had Christ declared his doing it freely by his own power, some of his weak disciples, who as yet understood not his divine nature, would have thought that he took too much upon him, and have been stumped at it; these babes could not hear that strong meat, therefore he chooses to speak of his power as received and derived; he speaks self-denyingly of himself, that he might speak the more plainly to us. Non tis respect ad suam dignitatem, sed nostram salutem—in what he said, he consulted as much his dignity as our salvation. Jansenius.

2. He now applies himself to his dead friend in the earth. He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. He could have raised Lazarus by a silent exerting of his power and will, and the indiscernible operations of the Spirit of life; but he did it by a call, a loud call.

(1.) To be significant of the power then put forth for the raising of Lazarus, how he created this new thing; he spake, and it was done. He cried aloud, to signify the greatness of the work, and of the power employed in it, and to excite himself as it were to this attack upon the gates of death, as soldiers engage with a shout. Speaking to Lazarus, it was proper to use a loud voice, for, [1.] The soul of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was asleep, and at a distance, not hovering about the grave, as the Jews fancied, but removed to Hades, the world of spirits; now it is natural to speak loud when we call to those at a distance. [2.] The body of Lazarus, which was to be called up, was asleep, and we usually speak loud, when we would awake any out of sleep. He cried with a loud voice, that the scripture might be fulfilled, (Isa. 26.) 19.] I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth.

(2.) To be typical of other works of wonder, and particularly other resurrections, which the power of Christ was to effect. This loud call was a figure,

[1.] Of the gospel-call, by which dead souls were to be brought out of the grave of sin, which resurrection Christ had formerly spoken of, (Ch. 5, 25.) and which was the means of it; (ch. 6, 63.) and now he gives a specimen of it. By his word, he saith to souls, Live, yea, he saith to them, Live, Ezek., 16. 6. Arise from the dead, Eph. 5, 14. The spirit of life from God entered into those that had been dead and dry bones, when Ezekiel prophesied over them, Ezek. 37. 10. They who infer from the commands of the word, to turn and live, that man has a power of his own to convert and regenerate himself, might as well infer from this call to Lazarus, that he had a power to raise himself to life.

[2.] Of the sound of the archangel's trumpet at the last day, with which they that sleep in the dust, shall be awakened, and summoned before the great tribunal. When Christ shall descend with a shout, a call, or command, like this here, Come forth. See 1 Thess. 4. 16. This loud call here was but short, yet mighty through God to the battering down of the strongholds of the grave.

First, He calls him by name, Lazarus, as we call those by their names, whom we would awake out of a fast sleep. God said to Moses, as a mark of his favour, I know thee by name. The naming of him intimates that the same individual person that died, shall rise again at the last day. He that calls the stars by their names, can distinguish by name his stars that are in the dust of the earth, and will lose none of them.

Secondly, He calls him out of the grave, speaking to him as if he were already alive, and had nothing to do but to come out of his grave. He does not say unto him, Live, for he himself must give life, but he saith to him, Arise, for when by the grace of Christ we live spiritually, we must stir up ourselves to move; this is as to sin and this world, no place for those whom Christ has quickened, and therefore they must come forth.

Thirdly, The event was according to the intension; he that was dead came forth, v. 44. Power went along with the word of Christ, to reunite the soul and body of Lazarus, and then he came forth. The miracle is described, not by its invisible springs to satisfy the curiosity of any but believers, but to confirm our faith. Do any ask where the soul of Lazarus was during the four days of its separation? We are not told, but have reason to think it was in Paradise, in joy and felicity; but you will say, Was it not then really an unkindness to it, to return it into the prison of the body? And if it were, yet, being for the honour of Christ, and the serving of the interests of his kingdom, it was no more an injury to him than it was to St. Paul to continue in the flesh, when he knew that to depart to Christ, was so much better. If any ask whether Lazarus after he was raised, could give an account or description of his soul's removal out of the body or return to it, or what he saw in the other world? I suppose, both those changes were so unaccountable to himself, that he must have been more concerned to return to the body of the body, I cannot tell; and of what he saw and heard, that it was not lawful, or possible, to express it. In a world of sense we cannot frame to ourselves, much less communicate to others, any adequate ideas of the world of spirits, and the affairs of that world; let us not covet to be wise above what is written, and this is all that is written concerning the resurrection of that Lazarus, and the manner how he came forth.

Some have observed, that though we read of many who were raised from the dead, who, no doubt, conversed familiarly with men afterward, yet the scripture has not recorded one word spoken by any of them, except by our Lord Jesus only. This miracle was wrought, 1. Speedily. Nothing intervenes between the command. Come forth, and the effect; that word is, as it were, spoken and said than done; let there be life, and there was life. Thus the change in the resurrection will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1 Cor. 15. 52. The almighty power that can do it, can do it in an instant, Then shalt thou call, and I will answer, will come at the call, as Lazarus, Here am I. 2. Perfectly. He was so thoroughly revived that he got up out of his grave, as strongly as ever he got up out of his bed; and returned not only to life, but health He was not raised to serve a present turn, but to live as other men. 3. With this additional miracle, (as some reckon it,) that he came out of his grave, though he was fettered with his grave-clothes, with which he was bound hand and foot, and his face bound about with a napkin; but the Jews were not unbinding him, would handle him, and see him, that it was he himself, and so be witnesses of the miracle. Now see here, (1.) How little we carry away with us, when we leave the world—only a winding-sheet and a coffin; there is no change of raiment in the grave, nothing but a single suit of grave clothes. (2.) What condition we
shall be in, in the grave. What wisdom or device can there be, where the eyes are hood-winked, or what working, where the hands and feet are fettered? And so it will be in the grave, whither we are going. Lazarus being come forth, hampered and embarrassed with his grave-clothes, we may still imagine that those about the grave were exceedingly surprised and frightened at it; we should be so if we should see a dead body rise; but Christ, to make the thing familiar, sets them to work; ‘Loose him, shaken his grave-clothes, that they may serve for day-clothes till he comes to his house, and then he will go himself so clad, without guide or supporter to his own house.’ As in the Old Testament, the translations of Enoch and Elias were sensible demonstrations of an invisible and future state, the one about the middle of the patriarchal age, the other of the Mosaical economy; so the resurrection of Lazarus was in the New Testament designed for the confirmation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

45. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? For this man doeth many miracles. 48. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49. And one of them, named Caiphas, being the High-Priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all. 50. Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51. And this spake he not of himself: but being High-Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation: 52. And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. 55. And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56. Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57. Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he was, he should shew it, that they might take him.

We have here an account of the consequences of this glorious miracle, which were as usual; to some it was a savor of life unto life, to others of death unto death.

I. Some were invited by it, and induced to believe. Many of the Jews, when they saw the things that Jesus did, believed on him, and well they might, for it was an incontrovertible proof of his divine mission. They had often heard of his miracles, and yet evaded the conviction of them, by calling in question the matter of fact; but now that they had themselves seen this done, their infidelity was conquered, and they yielded at last. But blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. The more we see of Christ, the more cause we shall see to love him, and to make him our model in all our ways of life — to think of the blessing and comfort his visit brought to the friends of himself and his doctrine. We who are doing good offices to others, we put ourselves in the way of receiving favours from God, and have opportunities of getting good when we are doing good.

II. Others were irritated by it, and hardened in their infidelity.

1. The informers were so; (v. 46.) Some of them, who were eye-witnesses of the miracle, were so far from being convinced, that they went to the Pharisees, whom they knew to be his implacable enemies, and told them what things Jesus had done; not merely as a matter of news worthy their notice, much less as an inducement to them to think more favourably of Christ, but with a sinful design to excite those who needed no spur, the more vigorously to prosecute him. Here is a strange instance, (1.) Of a most obdurate infidelity, refusing to yield to the most powerful arguments which might be used to make us imagine how they could evade the force of this evidence, but that the god of this world had blinded their minds. (2.) Of a most inexcusable envy. If they would not be satisfied that he was to be believed in as the Christ, yet one would think they should have been mollified, and persuaded not to persecute him; but if the water be not sufficient to quench the fire, it will inflame it. They told what Jesus had done, and said more than what was true; but their malice gave a tincture of diabolism to their information equal to that of lying; perverting what is true is as bad as forging what is false. Deceiv is called a false, lying, and deceitful tongue. (Ps. 120. 2, 3. — 52. 2—4.) though what he said was true.

2. The judges, the leaders, the blind leaders, of the people were no less exasperated by the report made to them, and heard what they did. (v. 47.) A special council is called and held.

47. Then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, as was foretold, (Ps. 2. 2.) The rulers take counsel together against the Lord. Consults of the Sanhedrim were intended for the public good, but here, under colour of that, the greatest injury and mischief are done to the people. The things that belong to the nation's peace, were hid from the eyes of those that were intrusted with its councils. This was called counsel, not only for joint advice, but for mutual irritation; that, as iron sharpens iron, and as coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire, so they might exasperate and inflame one another with enmity and rage against Christ and his doctrine.

(2.) The case is proposed, and shewed to be weighty, and of mighty consequence.

[1.] The matter to be debated, was, what course the Jews should take with the Jesus, to whom the interest of his honor was so much connected. What do we? For this Man doth many miracles. The information given about the raising of Lazarus, was produced, and the men, brethren, and fathers are called in to help as solicitously as if a formidable enemy had been with an army in the bowels of their country. First, They own the truth of Christ's miracles, and that he had wrought many of them; they are therefore witnesses against themselves, for they acknowledged his credentials, and yet denied his commission. Secondly
They consider what was to be done, and chide themselves that they had not done something sooner, effectually to crush him. They do not take it at all into consideration, whether they should not receive him, and own him as the Messiah, though they professed to expect him, and Jesus gave pregnant proofs of his being so; but they take it for granted that he is an enemy, and as such is to be run down. "What do we? Have we no care to support our church? Is it nothing to us that a doctrine, so destructive to our interest, spreads thus? Shall we talk of the numbers that have got to the opposition of the people? Shall we see our authority brought into contempt, and the craft by which we get our living ruined, and not bestrid ourselves? What have we been doing all this while? And what are we now thinking of? Shall we be always talking, and bringing nothing to pass?"

[2.] That which made this matter weighty, was that still they apprehended their church and nation to be in from the Romans, (v. 48.) "If we do not silence him, and take him off, all men will believe on him; and this being the setting up of a new king, the Romans will take umbrage at it, and will come with an army, and take away our place and nation, and therefore it is no time to trifle." See what an opinion they have,

First, Of their own power. They speak as if they thought Christ's progress and success in his work depended upon their connivance, as if he could not go on to work miracles, and make disciples, unless they let him alone; as if it were in their power to conquer him who had conquered death, or as if they could fight against God, and prosper. But he that sits in heaven, laughs at the fond conceit which important malice has of its own omnipotence.

Secondly, Of their own politics. They fancy themselves to be men of mighty insight and foresight, and great sagacity in their moral prognostications.

1. They take on them to prophesy that, in a little time, if he have liberty to go on, all men will believe on him; hereby owning, when it was to serve their purpose, that his doctrine and miracles had a very convincing power in them, such as could not be resisted, but that all men would become his proselytes and votaries; thus do they now make his interest formidable, though, to serve another turn, these same men strove to make it contemptible; (ch. 7. 48.) Have any of the rulers believed on him? This was the thing they were afraid of, that men would believe on him, and then all their measures were braked. Note, The shamelessness of the gospel is the dread of its adversaries; if souls be saved, they are undone.

2. They foretold that if the generality of the nation be drawn after him, the rage of the Romans will be drawn upon them. They will come and take away our place; the country in general, especially Jerusalem, or the temple, the holy place, and their privileges; what a passage and荣es they have in the temple, their places of power and trust.

Now it was true that the Romans had a very jealous eye upon them, and knew they wanted nothing but power and opportunity to shake off your yoke. It was likewise true that if the Romans should pour an army in upon them, it would be very hard for them to make any head against it; yet here appeared a contradiction, and was so very strange for the priests of the Lord, if they had not by their wickedness forfeited their interest in God and all good men. Had they kept their integrity, they needed not to have feared the Romans; but they speak like a dispirited people, as the men of Judah, when they basely said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us? Judg. 15. 11. When men lose their mighty, they lose their courage.

But, (1.) It was false that there was any danger of the Romans being irritated against their nation by the progress of Christ's gospel, for it was no way unserviceable to them, but highly beneficial. The Romans had no jealousy at all of his growing interest, for he taught men to give tribute to Cesar, and not to resist evil, but take up the cross. The Roman governor, at his trial, could find no fault in him. There was more danger of the Romans being incensed against the Jewish nation by the priests than by Christ. Note, Pretended fears are often the colour of discontent. (2.) Had there really been some danger of displeasing the Romans by tolerating Christ's preaching, yet that would not justify their hating and persecuting a good man. Note, [1.] The enemies of Christ and his gospel have often coloured their enmity with a seeming care for the public good and the common safety, and, in order to that, have branded their prophets and ministers as troubleurs of Israel, and men that turn the world upside down. [2.] Carnal policy commonly sets up reasons of state, in opposition to rules of justice. When men are concerned for their own wealth and safety more than for truth and duty, it is wisdom from beneath, which is earthly, sensual, and devilish. But see what was the issue; they pretended to be afraid that their tolerating of Christ's gospel would bring desolation upon them by the Romans, and therefore, right or wrong, set themselves against it; but it proved that their persecuting of the gospel, brought upon them that which they feared, filled up the measure of their iniquity, and the Romans came and took away their place and nation, and their place knows them no more. Note, That calamity which we seek to escape by sin, we take the most effectual course to bring upon our own heads; and they who think by opposing Christ's kingdom to secure or advance their own secular interest, will find Jerusalem a more burthensome stone than they think it is, Zech. 12. 3. The fear of the wicked it shall come upon them.

(3.) Caiaphas makes the most malicious but mystical speech in the council, upon this occasion.

[1.] The malice of it appears evident at first view, v. 49, 50. He, being the High-Priest, and so, president of the council, took upon him to decide the matter before it was debated: "You know nothing at all, your hesitating betrays your ignorance, for it is not a thing that will bear a dispute, it is soon determined, if you consider that received maxim, That it is expedient for us that one man should die for the justification of the nation."

First, The counsellor was Caiaphas, who was High-Priest that same year. The high-priesthood was by the divine appointment settled upon the heir male of the house of Aaron, for and during the term of his natural life, and then to his heir male, but in those degenerate times it was become, though not an annual office, like the common, yet was, and could make an interest with the Roman powers. Now it happened that this year Caiaphas wore the mitre.

Secondly, The drift of the advice was, in short, this, That some way or other must be found out to put Jesus to death. We have reason to think that they strongly suspected him to be indeed the Messiah; but his doctrine was so contrary to their expectations of the Messianic and secular interest, and his design did so thwart their notions of the Messiah's kingdom, that they resolve, be he who he will, he must be put to death. Caiaphas does not say, Let him be silenced, imprisoned, banished, though that is sufficient for the restraint of one they thought dangerous; but die he must. Note, Those that have set themselves against christianity, have commonly desired of themselves of humanity, and been infamous for cruelty.
Thirldy, This is plausibly insinuated, with all the subtlety as well as malice of the old serpent.  

1. He suggests his own sagacity, which we must suppose him as High-Priest to exel in, though the Urin and Thummim were long since lost. How scornfully does he say, "I know nothing, whoare but men" (Isa. 1. 29). Mutiny and jarring are often run down with a high hand. Truth is fallen in the streets, and, when it is down, down, and equity cannot enter, and, when it is out, out with it, Isa. 59. 14.  

2. He insists upon a maxim in politics, That the welfare of communities is to be preferred before that of particular persons. It is expedient for us as priests, whose all lies at stake, that one man die for the people. Thus far it holds true, that it is expedient, and more than so, it is truly honourable, for a man to hazard his life in the service of his country; (Phil. 2. 17. 1 John 3. 16.) but to put an innocent man to death under colour of consulting the public safety, is the devil's politics. Caiaphas craftily insinuates that the greatest and best man, though majesty and greatness be greater than our individual, is minor university, that the elected mass, and ought to think his life well spent, may well lost, to save his country from ruin. But what is this to the murdering of one that was evidently a great blessing, under pretence of preventing an imaginary mischief to the country? The case ought to have been put thus, Was it expedient for them to bring upon themselves and upon the nation the guilt of blood, a prophet's blood, for the securing of their civil interests from a danger which they had no just reason to be afraid of? Was it expedient for them to drive God and their glory from them, rather than venture the Romans' displeasure, who could do them no harm if they had God on their side? Note, Carnal policy, which steers only by secular considerations, while it thinks to save all by sin, ruins all at last.  

22. This is the counsel of Caiaphas, which does not appear at first view, but the evangelist leads us into it: (v. 51, 52.) This shake he not of himself, it was not only the language of his own enmity and policy, but in these words he prophesied, though he himself was not aware of it, That Jesus should die for that nation. Here is a precious comment upon a pernicise text; the counsel of cursed Caiaphas so construed as to fall in with the counsels of the blessed God. Charity teaches us to put the most favourable construction upon men's words and actions that they will bear; but piety teaches us to make a good improvement of them, even contrary to that which they were intended for. If wicked men in what they do against us, are God's hand to humble and reform us, why may they not in what they say against us be God's mouth to instruct and edify us? Perhaps, by expressing in such a memorable sentence as this, he might express some foresight that what he had uttered there was written in the book of the prophet, while the people were singing, Ps. 109. 16, 17.  

3. The matter of his prophecy, was, that Jesus should die for that nation, the very thing to which all the prophets have witness, who testified before-hand the sufferings of Christ; (1 Pet. 1. 11.) That the death of Christ must be the life and salvation of Israel; he meant by that nation, those in it that obstantly adhered to Judaism; but God meant these in it that would receive the doctrine of Christ, and become followers of him, all believers be spiritual Israel. From the event of this counsel in fact, it appears that it was no vain conjecture to Caiaphas was now projecting, proved the ruin of that interest in the nation, which he intended should be the security and establishment of it, for it brought wrath upon them to the uttermost; but it proved
the advancement of that interest which he hoped it would have been the ruin of, for Christ, being lifted up from the earth, drew all men unto him. It is a great thing that is here prophesied; That Jesus should die, die for others, not only for their good, but in their stead; die for that nation, for they had the first offer made of them of salvation by his death. If the whole nation of the Jews had unanimously believed in Christ, and received his gospel, they had been saved, and themselves died as a nation, and the remnant from their grievances. The fountain was first opened to the house of David, Zech. 13. 1. He so died for that nation, as that the whole nation should not perish, but that a remnant should be saved, Rom. 11. 3.

Secondly, The evangelist enlarges upon this word of Caphas (v. 52.) not for that nation only, but for the nation of the Jews only, (it would have been comparatively but a little thing for the Son of God to go through so vast an undertaking, only to restore the preserved of Jacob, and of the children of Israel,) no, he must die to the ends of the earth, Isa. 49. 6. He must die for the children of God that were scattered abroad. (1.) Some understand it of the children of God that were then in being, scattered abroad in the Gentile world, devout men of every nation, (Acts 2. 5.) that feared God, (Acts 10. 2.) and worshipped him, (Acts 17. 4.) proselytes of the gate, who served the God of Abraham, but submitted not to the ceremonial law of Moses; persons that had a savour of natural religion, but were dispersed in the nations, had no solemn assemblies of their own, nor any peculiar profession to unite in, or distinguish themselves by. Now Christ died, to incorporate these in one great society, to be denominated from him, and governed by him; and this was the setting up of a standard, to which all that had a regard to God and a concern for their souls, might have recourse, and under which they might callist themselves. (2.) Others take in with these all that belong to the election of grace, who are called the children of God, though not yet born, because they are predestinated to the adoption of children, Eph. 1. 5. 3. Now these are scattered abroad in several places of the earth, out of all kindreds and tongues, (Rev. 7. 9.) and in some ages scattered till to the end of time; they are those that fear him throughout all generations, to all those he had an eye in the appointment he made by his blood; as he prayed, so he died, for all that should believe on him.

2. The purpose and intention of his death concerning those persons; he died to gather them in, who wandered; and to gather them together in one, who were scattered; to tend them to him, who were at a distance from him, and to unite them in him, who were at a distance from each other. Christ's dying is,

(1.) The great attractive of our hearts; for this end he is lifted up, to draw men to him. The conversion of souls is the gathering of them in to Christ as their ruler and refuge, as the doves to their window. The sower scattered; to tend them to him, who chased them to himself, and the gift of the Holy Ghost for them; his love in dying for us is the great loadstone of our love.

(2.) The great centre of our unity. He gathers them together in one, Eph. 1. 10. They are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other, in him. All the saints in all places and ages meet in Christ, as all the members in the head, and all the branches in the root. Christ by the merit of his death recommended all the saints in one to the grace and favour of God; (Heb. 2. 11-12.) and by the motive of his death recommends them all severally to the love and affection of each other, ch. 13. 34.

4. The result of this debate is a resolve of the council to put Jesus to death; (v. 53.) From that day they took counsel together, to put him to death. They now understand one another's minds, and so each was fixed in his own, that Jesus must die; and, it should seem, a committee was appointed to sit, to deliberate and to determine in this matter, and to come forward with the greater assurance. Ill men confirm and encourage themselves and one another in ill practices, by comparing notes; men of corrupt minds bend themselves, when they find others of the same mind: then the wickedness which before seemed impracticable, appears not only possible, but easy to be effected, via unita furtior—forces, when united, may be more effectual. If men had been hindered, but that they wished done, but they wanted a colour for, now they are furnished with a plausible pretence to justify themselves in, which will serve, if not to take off the guilt, (that is the least of their care,) yet to take off the odium, and so satisfy, if not the personal, yet the political conscience, as some subtly distinguish.

Many will go on very securely in doing an ill thing, (as long as they have but something to say in excuse for it,) now, this resolution of their's, so put him to death, right or wrong, shews that all the formality of a trial, which they afterwards brought him upon, was but show and grimace, they were before determined what to do.

5. (Christ hereupon abscended, knowing very well what was the vote of their close cabal, v. 54.)

[1.] He suspended his public appearances; he walked no more openly among the Jews, among the inhabitants of Judea, who were properly called Jews, especially those at Jerusalem: οἱ πιστεύοντες—he did not walk up and down among them, did not go from place to place, preaching and working miracles with the freedom and openness that he had done, but while he staid in Judea, he was there incognito. Thus the chief priests put the Light of Israel under a bush.

[2.] He withdrew into an obscure part of the country, so obscure, that the name of the town he retired to, is scarcely met with any where else. He went to a country near the wilderness, as if he were driven out from among men, or rather wishing, with Jeremiah, that he might have in the wilderness a lodging-place of sojourning men, Jer. 9. 2. He enters into the village of Ephraim, or Ephrem, mentioned 2 Chron. 13. 19. Thither his disciples went with him; neither would they leave him in solitude, nor would he leave them in danger. There he continued, Afterwards, there he conversed, he knew how to improve this time, while he was in his own country; when he had not an opportunity of preaching publicly. He conversed with his disciples, which were his family, when he was forced from the temple, and his subjects, or discourses there, no doubt, were very edifying. We must do the good we can, when we cannot do the good we would.
They rejected him and his gospel, justly therefore did he remove himself and his gospel from them. The Prince of teachers was now removed into a corner, (Isa. 30. 20.) there was no open vision of his doctrine; when David was fled to Gath, Saul was after him, and of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation. Secondly, To render the cruelty of his enemies against him the more inexensible. If that which was grievous to them, and thought dangerous to the public, was, his public appearance, he would try whether their anger would be turned away by his retiring into privacy; when David was fled to Gath, Saul was after him, and of that thick darkness which was shortly to come upon Jerusalem, because she knew not the day of her visitation. Thirdly, His hour was not yet come, and therefore he declined danger, and did it in a way common to men, both to warrant and encourage the flight of his servants in time of persecution, and to comfort those who are forced from their usefulness, and buried all that served him, and all his men, (Jer. 39. 11.) of that truth the more, the greater the more manifest. This swelled the acclamations of joy with which his well-wishers welcomed him at his next public appearance, when he rode triumphantly into the city.

(6.) The strict inquiry made for him during his residence, v. 55—57.

[1.] The occasion of it was the approach of the passover, at which they expected his presence, according to custom; (v. 55.) The Jews' passover was high at hand, a festival which shone bright in their calendar, and which there was great expectation of for some time before; this was Christ's fourth and last passover, since he entered upon his public ministry, and it might truly be said, (as, 2 Chron. 35. 18.) There never was such a passover in Israel, for in it Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. Now the passover being at hand, many went out of all parts of the country to Jerusalem, to purify themselves. This was either, First, A necessary purification of those who had contracted any ceremonial pollution: they came to be sprinkled with the water of purification, and to perform the other rites of cleansing. If they had been shut up in Jerusalem, they might not have eaten the passover in their meekness, Num. 9. 6. Thus before our gospel-passover we must renew our repentance, and by faith wash in the blood of Christ, and compass God's altar. Or, Secondly, A voluntary purification, or self-sequestration, by fasting and prayer, and other religious exercises, which many that were more devout than their neighbours, spent some time in before the passover, and chose to do it at Jerusalem, because of the advantage of the temple-service. Thus must we by solemn preparation set bounds about the mount on which we expect to meet with God.

[2.] The inquiry was very solicitous: They said, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? v. 56.

First, Some think that this was said by those who wished well to him, and expected his coming, that they might receive him, and see his miracles. They who came early out of the country, that they might purify themselves, were very desirous to meet with Christ, and perhaps came up the sooner with that expectation, and therefore as they stood in the temple, the place of their purification, they inquired what news of Christ? Could any body give them hopes of seeing him? If there were those, and those of the most devout people, and best affected to religion, who showed it was respect to Christ, it was a check to the vanity of the chief priests, and a witness against them.

Secondly, It should rather seem that they were his enemies, who made this inquiry after him, who wished for an opportunity to lay hands on him. They, seeing the town begin to fill with devout. Jews, even from all parts of the country, wondered they did not find him among them; when they should have been assisting them that came to purify themselves, according to the duty of their place, they were plotting against Christ. How miserably degenerate was the Jewish church, when the priests of the Lord were become like the priests of the calves, a snare on Mitzpeh, and a net spread upon Tabor, and were profuse to make slaughter, (Hos. 5. 1, 2.) when, instead of killing their lawful sacrifice, they were themselves seized with the least possible worst malice. Their asking, What think ye? Will he not come up to the feast? implies, 1. An invidious reflection upon Christ, as if he would omit his attendance on the feast of the Lord, for fear of exposing himself. If others, through irreligion, he absent, they are not unnerved upon; but if Christ be absent, his own preservation, (for God will be with him, and deliver him,) not suffer his reproach, as it was to David's, that his seat was empty at the feast, though Saul wanted him, only that he might have an opportunity of insulting him to the face with his javelin, 1 Sam. 20. 26, 27, c. It is sad to see holy ordinances prostituted to such unholy purposes. 2. A fearful apprehension that they had of missing their game; Will he not come up to the feast? If he do not, our measures are broken, and we are all undone; for there is an unending journey of a pursueant into the country, to fetch him up.

[3.] The orders issued out by the government for the apprehending of him were very strict, v. 57. The great Sanhedrim issued out a proclamation, strictly charging and requiring, that if any person in city or country knew where he was, (pretending that he was a criminal, and had fled from justice,) they should shew it, that he might be taken, probably promising a reward to any that would discover him, and imposing a penalty on such as harboured him. So that hereby he was represented to the people as an obnoxious, dangerous man, an outlaw, whom any one may have a blow at. Saul issued out such a proclamation for apprehending of David, and Ahab of Elijah. See, First, How intent they were upon this complexion, and how indefatigably they laboured in it; now at this very time, when the day of religion and the duty of their function, they would have found themselves something else to do. Secondly, How willing they were to involve others in the guilt with them; if any man were capable of betraying Christ, they would have him think himself bound to do it. Thus was the interest they had in the people abused to the worst purposes. Note, It is an aggravation of the sins of wicked rulers, that they commonly make those that are under their service instruments of their unrighteousness. But, notwithstanding this proclamation, though doubtless many knew where he was, yet such was his interest in the affections of some, and such God's hold of the consciences of others, that he continued undiscovered, for the Lord hid him.

CHAP. XII.

It was a melancholy account which we had in the close of the foregoing chapter, of the defection and sins of the people of Is- sus, when the Scribes and Pharisees proclaimed him a traitor to their church, and put upon him all the marks of ignominy they could; but the story of this chapter balances that, by giving us an account of the public acts of Christ's Redeemer, notwithstanding all that cruelly and unjustly thrown upon him. Thus the one was set over against the other. Let us see what honours were heaped on the Lord Jesus, even in the depths of his humiliation. I. Mary did lui
1. THEN Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3. Then Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. 4. Then satith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him. 5. Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6. This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always. 9. Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10. But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death: 11. Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

In these verses, we have
1. The kind visit our Lord Jesus made to his friends at Bethany, v. 1. He came up out of the country, six days before the passover, and took up at Bethany, a town that, according to the computation of our metropolis, lay so near Jerusalem, as to be within the bills of mortality. He lodged here with his friend Lazarus, whom he had lately raised from the dead. His coming to Bethany now, may be considered
1. As a preface to the passover he intended to celebrate, to which relation is had in the date of the time: six days before the passover. Devout men set time apart before, to prepare themselves for that solemnity; and thus it became our Lord Jesus to fulfil all righteousness. And thus he has set us an example of solemn self-separation, before the solemnities of the gospel-passover; let us hear the voice crying, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. 2. As a voluntary exposing of himself to the fury of his enemies; now that his hour was at hand, he came within their reach, and freely offered himself to them, though he knew they knew how easily he could evade all their snares. Note, (1.) Our Lord Jesus was voluntary in his sufferings; his life was not forced from him, but resigned; (2.) As the strength of his persecutors could not overpower him, so their sublity could not surprise him, but he died, because he would. (2.) As there is a time when we are allowed to suffer for righteousness, so there is a time when we are called to jeopard our lives in the cause of God, as St. Paul, when he went bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem.
3. As an instance of his kindness to his friends at Bethany, whom he loved, and from whom he was shortly to be taken away. This was a farewell visit; he came to take leave of them, and to leave them as a comfort of a coming resurrection, so that was approaching. Note, Though Christ departed for a part from his people, he will give them intimations that he parts in love, and not in anger. Bethany is here described to be the town where Lazarus was, whom he raised from the dead. That miracle, wrought here, put a new honour upon the place, and made it remarkable. Christ came hither to observe what improvement was made of that miracle; for where Christ works wonders, and shews signal favours, he looks after them, to see whether the intention of them be answered. Where he has sown plentifully, he observes whether it comes up again.

II. The kind entertainment which his friends there gave him: they made him a supper, (vv. 2.) a great supper, v. 7. It is queried whether this was the same with that which is recorded, Matt. 26. 6, &c. in the house of Simon; most think that they were; for the substance of the story and many of the circumstances agree; but that comes in after what was said two days before the passover, whereas this was done six days before; nor is it likely that Martha should serve in any house but her own; and therefore I incline with Dr. Lightfoot to think them different. This is in Memory, she spent no money of that which she spent but a pound of it, (v. 3.) she used that second time, when she poured it all out, Mark 14. 3. Let us see the account of this entertainment.
1. They made him a supper; for with them, or ordinarily, supper was the best meal. This they did in token of their respect and gratitude, for a feast is made for friendship; and that they might have an opportunity of free and pleasant conversation with him, for a feast is made for fellowship. Perhaps in allusion to this and the like entertainments given to Christ in the days of his flesh, it is that he promises to such as open the doors of their hearts to him, that he will sup with them, Rev. 3. 20.
2. Martha served; she herself waited at table, in token of her great respect to the Master; though a person of some quality, she did not think it beneath her to serve, when Christ sat at meat; nor should we think it a dishonour or disparagement to us, to stoop to any service whereby Christ may be honoured.
3. Christ had formerly reproved Martha for being troubled with much serving. But she did not therefore leave off serving, as some, who, when they are reproved for one extreme, peevishly run into another; but still she continued in the work of that she was wont to do, but a pound of it, (v. 3.) she used that second time, when she poured it all out, Mark 14. 3. Like a waiter at Christ's table, than a guest at the table of a prince.
proved the truth of his resurrection, as it did of Christ's; that there were those who did eat and drink with him, Acts 10. 41. Lazarus did not retire into a wilderness after his resurrection, as if, when he had made a visit to the other world, he must ever after be a heathen in this; no, he conversed familiarly with people, as others did. He sat at meat, as a monument of the miracle Christ had wrought. Those whom Christ has raised up to a spiritual life, are made to sit together with him. See Eph. 2. 3, 6.

11. The particular respect which Mary showed him, above the rest, in anointing his feet with sweet ointment, shows a sense of his infinite value, and a comprehension of his infinite love, must be to avoid it. If she had any thing more valuable than another, that must be bought out for the honour of Christ. Note, Those who love Christ truly, love him so much better than this world, as to be willing to lay out the best they have for him.

2. A condescending love; she not only bestowed her ointment upon Christ, but poured it upon him with her own hands, which she might have ordered one of her servants to have done; nay, she did not, as usual, anoint his head with it, but his feet. True love, as it does not spare charge, so it does not spare pains in honouring Christ. Considering what Christ has done and suffered for us, we are very ungrateful, if we think any service too hard to do, or too mean to stoop to, whereby he may really be glorified.

3. A loving love; there was faith working by this love, faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed, who, being both Priest and King, was anointed as Aaron and David were. Note, God's Anointed should be our Anointed. Has God poured on him the oil of gladness above his fellows? Let us pour on him the ointment of our best affections above all competitors. By consenting to Christ as our King, we must comply with God's designs, appointing him our Head, whom he has appointed, Hos. 11. 11.

The filling of the house with the pleasant odour of the ointment may intimate to us, (1.) That those who entertain Christ in their hearts and houses, bring a sweet ointment into them; Christ's presence brings with it an ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. (2.) Honours done to Christ are comforts to all his friends and followers; they are to God and good, and a refreshing of a soul in a dry season.

IV. Judas's dislike of Mary's compliment, or taken of her respect to Christ, v. 4, 5. where observe,

1. The person that carp'd at it, was Judas, one of his disciples; not one of their nature, but only one of their number. It is possible for the worst of men to hurl under the disguise of the best profession; and there are many who pretend to stand in relation to Christ, who really have no kindness for him. Judas was an apostle, a preacher of the gospel, and yet one that discouraged and checked this instance of pious affection and devotion. Note, It is sad to see the life of religion and holy zeal fronted upon and discontentedness of such as are obliged by their office to assise; and encourage it. But this was he that should betray Christ. Note, Concessions of love to Christ, and a secret contempt of so sacred a person, when they act in professors of religion, are no small arguments of a fall apostacy. Hypocrisies, by lesser instances of worldliness, discover themselves to be ready for a closure with greater temptations.

2. The pretence with which he covered his dislike; (v. 5.) "Why was not this ointment, since it was designed for a pious use, sold for three hundred pence," (which is st. 16. of our money,) "and given to the poor?" Here is, (1.) A foul imputation cast on Mary and others, that were ignorant and plausible pretences, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. (2.) Here is worldly wisdom passing censure upon pious zeal, as guilty of impudence and mismanagement. Those who value themselves upon their secular policy, and undervalue others for their serious piety, have more in them of the spirit of Judas than they would be thought to have. (3.) Here is charity to the poor made a colour for opposing a piece of pious affection to Christ, and secretly made a cloak for covetousness. Many excuse themselves from laying out in charity, under pretence of buying up for charity; whereas if the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves. Judas asked, Why was it not given to the poor? To which it is easy to answer, Because it was better bestowed upon the Lord Jesus. Note, We must not conclude that those do more serve the interest of Christ, who are the more zealous to contribute to our way, and just as we would have them; as if every thing must be adjudged imprudent and unfit, which does not take its measures from us and our sentiments. Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them.

3. The detection and discovery of Judas's hypocrisy herein, v. 6. Here is the evangelist's remark upon it, and the direction of him who observed it. It was, This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag.

(1.) It did not come from a principle of charity: not that he cared for the poor. He had no compassion toward them, no concern for them; what were the poor to him any further than he might serve his own ends, be they what they were, for the purse. This was warm some occasion for the poore of the church, as others for its purity, when perhaps it may be said, Not that they care for the church; it is all one to them whether its true interest sink or swim, but, under the pretence of this, they are advancing themselves. Simeon and Levi pretended zeal for circumcision, not that they cared for the seal of the covenant, any more than Judas for the Lord of hosts, when he said, Come, see my zeal.

(2.) It did come from a principle of covetousness. The truth of the matter was, this imputation being designed for his Master, he would rather have had it in money, to be put in the common stock which he was entrusted with, and then he knew what to do with it. Observe,

(1.) Judas was treasurer of Christ's household, whence since some think he was called heart, the bag-bearer.

[1.] See what estate Jesus and his disciples had to live upon; it was but little; they had neither farms, nor merchandise, neither barns nor storehouses, only a bag; or, as some think, the word signifies a box, or coffer, wherein they kept just enough for their subsistence, giving the overplus, if any were, to the poor; this they carried about with them, wherever they went, and did not conceal or hoard away, at the expense of my property about me. This bag was supplied by the contributions of good people, and the Master and his disciples had all in common; let this lessen our esteem of worldly wealth, and deaden us to the
punctilios of state and ceremony, and reconcile us to a mean and despicable way of living, if that be our lot; that it was our Master's lot; for our sake he became poor.

[2.] See who was the steward of the little they had? for Judas, he was purse-bearer. It was his office to receive and pay, and we do not find that he gave any account what markets he made. He was appointed to this office, either, First, Because he was the least and lowest of all the disciples; it was not Peter or John that was made steward, (though it was a place of trust and profit,) but Judas, the meanest of them. Note, Secular employments, as these, are disdained, so they are a diminution, to a minister of the gospel; see 1 Cor. 4. 4. The prime-ministers of state in Christ's kingdom refused to be concerned in the revenue, Acts 6. 2. Secondly, Because he was despicable of the place. He loved in his heart to be fingering money, and therefore had the money-bag committed to him, either, 1. As a kindness, to please him, and thereby oblige him to be true to his Master. Subjects are sometimes disaffected to the government, because disapprobation of their preferment; but Judas has no cause to complain of that; the bag he chose, and the bag he had. Or, 2. In judgment upon him, to punish him for his secret wickedness; that was put into his hands, which would be a snare and trap to him. Note, Strong inclinations to sin within, are often justly punished with strong temptations to sin without. We must take heed of being beguiled by a false fear of it, for at the best we are but stewards of it; and it was Judas, one of an ill character, and born to be hanged, (pardon the expression,) that was steward of the bag; the prosperity of fools destroys them.

(2.) Being trusted with the bag, he was a thief; he had a thievish disposition. The reigning love of money is detestable, so much as anger and revenge are heart-murder. Or, perhaps, he had been really guilty of embezzling his Master's stores, and converting that to his own use, which was given to the public stock. And some conjecture, that he was now contriving to fill his pockets, and then run away and leave his Master, having heard him speak so much of troubles approaching, which he could by no means reconcile himself to. Note, They to whom large trust and dispensation of public money is committed, have need to be governmentally sworn, and by principles of justice and honesty, that no blot cleave to their hands; for though some make a jest of cheating the government, or the church, or the country, if cheating be thriving, and communities being more considerable than particular persons, if robbing of them be the greater sin, the guilt of theft and the portion of thieves will be found no jesting matter. Judas, who had betrayed his trust, soon after betrayed his Master.

V. Christ's justification of what Mary did; (v. 7, 8.) Let her alone. Hereby he intimated, 1. His acceptance of her kindness. Though he was perfectly mortified to all the delights of sense, yet, as it was a token of her goodwill, he signified himself well-pleased with it. 2. His care that she should not be deterred from it; Pardon her, so it may be read; or, "excuse her this, nor let it be an error, it is an error of her love." Note, Christ would not have them censured or discouraged, who sincerely design to please him, though in their honest endeavors there be not all the discretion that may be, Rom. 14. 3. Though we would not do as they do, yet let them alone. For Mary's justification,

(1.) Christ puts a favorable construction upon what he did, which it would perhaps be thought it were not aware of; Against the day of my burying she has kept this. Or, She has reserved this for the day of my embalming; so Dr. Hammond. "You do not grudge the sentiment used for the embalming of your dear friends; nor say that it should be sold, and given to the poor. Now this anointing either was so intended, or at least may be so interpreted; for the day of my burying is now at hand, and she has anointed a body that is already as good as dead." Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus thought much and dear of his own death and burial; it would be good for us to do so also. 2. Providence does often so open a door of opportunity to good Christians, and the Spirit of grace does so open their hearts, that the expressions of their pious zeal prove to be more reasonable, and more beautiful, than any foresight of their own and others' judgment. 3. The grace of Christ puts kind comments upon the gifts of his followers, of good people, and not only makes the best of what is amiss, but makes the most of what is good.

(3.) He gives a sufficient answer to Judas's objection, v. 8. [1.] It is so ordered in the kingdom of Providence, that the poor we have always with us, some or other that are proper objects of charity; (Deut. 15. 11.) such there will be as long as there are in this lapsed state of mankind so much folly and so much affliction. [2.] It is so ordered in the kingdom of grace, that the church should not always have the bodily presence of Jesus Christ; "Ah ye have not always, but only now for a little time." Note, We need wisdom when but two duties come in competition, to know which to give the preference to, which must be determined by the circumstances. Consider, Shortcomings of earthly things may be improved, and these opportunities first and most, it is likely to be of the shortest continuance, and which we see most speedily hastening away. That good duty which may be done at any time, ought to give way to that which cannot be done but just now.

VI. The public notice which was taken of our Lord Jesus here at this supper in Bethany; (v. 9.) Much people of the Jews knew that he was there, for he was the talk of the town, and they came thither; more because he had lately absconded, and now broke out as the sun from behind a dark cloud.

1. They came to see Jesus, whose name was very much greatness, and made considerable by the late miracle he had wrought in raising Lazarus. They came, not to hear him, but to gratify their curiosity with a sight of him here at Bethany, fearing he could not long be concealed in that country. They came, not to seize him, or inform against him, though the government had prosecuted him to an outlawry, but to see him, and shew him respect. Note, There are some in whose affections Christ will have an interest in spite of all the attempts of his enemies to misrepresent him. It being known where Christ was, multitudes came to him. Note, Where the king is, there is the court; where Christ is, there will the gathering of the people be, Luke 17. 37.

2. They came to see Lazarus and Christ together, which was a very inviting sight. Some came for the confirmation of their faith in Christ, to have the story perhaps from Lazarus's own mouth. Others came only for the gratifying of their curiosity, that they might say they had seen a man who had been dead, and was alive again. Note, Lazarus served for a show, these holy days, to those, who, like the Athenians, spent their time in telling and hearing new things. Perhaps some came to put curious questions to Lazarus about the state of the dead, to ask what news from the other world; we ourselves have sometimes said, it may be, We would have gone one great way for one hour's discourse with Lazarus. Note, It is improbable that Lazarus was silent, and gave them no account of his voyage; however, the scripture is silent, and gives us no account of it; and we must not covet
to be wise above what is written. But our Lord Jesus was present, who was a much fitter person for them to apply to than Lazarus; for if we hear the Master's doctrine, we need not what they tell us concerning another world, neither should we be persuaded though Lazarus rose from the dead. We have a more sure word of prophecy.

VII. The indignation of the chief priests at the growing interest of our Lord Jesus, and their plot to crush it; (v. 10, 11.) They consulted (or decreed) how they might put Lazarus also to death, because that a sign of the resurrection of the dead he had done, him, not of any thing he said or did,) many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus. Here observe, 1. How vain and unsuccessful their attempts against Christ had hitherto been. They had done all they could to alienate the people from him, and exasperate them against him, and yet many of the Jews, their neighbours, their creatures, their admirers, were so overcome by the convincing evidence of Christ's miracles, that they went away from the interest and party of the priests; went off from obedience to their tyranny, and believed on Jesus. And it was by reason of Lazarus; his resurrection put life into their faith, and convinced them that this Jesus was undoubtedly the Messiah, and had life in himself, and power to give life. This miracle confirmed them in the belief of his other miracles of which they had heard he wrought in Galilee; what was impossible to him that could raise the dead? 2. How absurd and unreasonable this day's vote was—that Lazarus must be put to death. This is an instance of the most brutish rage that could be; they were like a wild bull in a net, full of fury, and laying about them without any consideration. It was a sign that they neither feared God, nor regarded his word. For, 1. (1.) If they had feared God, they would not have done such an act of defiance to him. God will have Lazarus to live by miracle, and they will have him to die by malice. Theycry, Away with such a fellow, it is not fit he should live; when God had so lately sent him back to the earth, declaring it highly fit he should live; what was this but walking contrary to God? They would put Lazarus to death, and that in the presence of him at whose command he could raise of them, if they could contend with God, and try titles with the King of kings. Who has the keys of death and the grave, he or they? O ceva malitia! Christus qui suscitare potuit mortuum, non possit occidum—Blind malice, to suppose that Christ, who could raise one that had died a natural death, could not raise one that had been slain! Aug. in loc. Lazarus is singled out to be the object of their special hatred, because God has distinguished him by the tokens of his peculiar love, as if they had made a league offensive and defensive with death and hell, and resolved to be severe upon all deserters. One would think that they should rather have consulted how they might have joined in friendship with Lazarus and his family, and by their mediation have reconciled themselves to this Jesus whom they had persecuted; but the God of this world had blinded their minds. (2.) If they had regarded man, they would not have done such an act of injustice to Lazarus, an innocent man, to whose charge they could not pretend to lay any crime. What bands are strong enough to hold those who can so easily break through the most sacred ties of common justice, and violate the maxims which even nature itself teaches? But the support of their own tyranny and superstition was thought sufficient, as in the church of Rome, not only to justify, but to consecrate the greatest villanies, and make them meritorious.

12. On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13. Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried. Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. 14. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15. Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16. These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him. 17. The people therefore that was with him, when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle. 19. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing! Behold, the world is gone after him. This story of Christ's riding in triumph to Jerusalem is recorded by all the evangelists, as worthy of special remark; and in it we may observe, 1. The respects that were paid to our Lord Jesus by the common people, v. 12, 13, when we are told, (1.) Who they were that paid him these respects; much people, &c. &c. a great crowd of them that came up to the feast: not the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the country people that came from remote parts to worship at the feast; the nearer the temple of the Lord, the farther from the Lord of the temple. They were such as came up to the feast. (2.) Perhaps they had been Christ's hearers in the country, and great admirers of him there, and therefore were forward to testify their respects to him at Jerusalem, where they knew he had many enemies. Note, Those that have a true value and veneration for Christ will neither be ashamed nor afraid to own him before men, in any instance whereby they may do him honour. (2.) Perhaps they were these more devout Jews that came up to the feast some time before, to purify themselves, that were more inclined to religion than their neighbours, and those were they that were so forward to honour Christ. Note. The more regard men have to God and religion in general, the better disposed they will be to entertain Christ and his religion, which is not destructive, but profitable of all previous discoveries and institutions. They were not the rulers, or the great men, that went out to meet Christ, but the commonalty; some would have called them a mob, a rabble; but Christ has chosen, the weak and foolish things, (1 Cor. 1. 27.) and is honoured more by the multitude, than by the magnificence of his followers; for he values men by their souls, not by their titles and honours. 2. On what occasion they did it; They heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. They had inquired for him, (ch. 11. 53, 56.) Will he not come up to the feast? And now they hear he is coming; for none that seek Christ, seek in vain. Now when they heard he was coming, they beseeched themselves to give him an agreeable reception. Note. The approach of the approach of Christ and his kingdom should awaken us to consider what is the work of the day,
that it may be done in the day. Israel must prepare to meet their God, (Amos 4. 12.) and the virgins to meet the bridegroom.

3. In what way they expressed their respects; they had not the keys of the city to present him, nor the sword or bow to carry before him, but the music of the city to compliment him with, but such as they had gave him; and even this despicable crowd was a faint resemblance of that glorious company which John saw, before the throne, and before the Lamb, Rev. 7. 9, 10. Though these were not before the throne, they were before the Lamb, the paschal Lamb, who now, according to the usual ceremony, four days before the feast, was set apart to be sacrificed for us. There it is said of that celestial choir,

1. That they had palms in their hands, and so, had these branches of palm-trees. The palm-tree has ever been an emblem of victory and triumph; Cicero calls one that had won many prizes plurarium palmarum hostis—A man of many palms. Christ was now by his death to conquer principalities and powers, and therefore it was fit that he should have the victor’s palm borne before him; though he was but girding on the harness, yet he could boast as though he had put it off. But this was not all; the carrying of palm-branches was part of the ceremony of the feast of tabernacles, (Lev. 23. 40. Nehem. 8. 15.) and these using of this custom in his dirge was a clear intimation that all the feasts pointed at his gospel, had their accomplishment in it, and particularly that of the feast of tabernacles, Zech. 14. 16.

2. That they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God; (Rev. 7. 10.) so did these here, they shouted before him, as is usual in popular welcomes. Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord: and Hosanna signifies salvation. It is fetched from Ps. 118. 25, 26. See how well acquainted these common people were with the scripture, and how pertinently they apply it to the Messiah. High thoughts of Christ will be best expressed in scripture words. Now in their acclamations,

1. They acknowledge our Lord Jesus to be the King of Israel, that comes in the name of the Lord. Though he went now in poverty and disgrace, yet, contrary to the notions their scruples had given them of the Messiah, they own him to be a King, which speaks both his dignity and honour, which we must adore; and his dominion and power, which we must submit to. They own him to be, First, A rightful King, coming in the name of the Lord, (Ps. 68.) sent of God, not only as a prophet, but as a king. Secondly, The promised and long-expected King, Messiah, the Prince, for he is King of Israel. According to the light they had, they proclaimed him King of Israel in the streets of Jerusalem; and they themselves being Israelites, hereby they avouched him for their King.

2. They joyfully wish well to his kingdom, that is the coming of Hosanna; let the King of Israel prosper. as when Solomon was crowned, they cried, God save King Solomon, 1 Kings 1. 39. In crying Hosanna they prayed for three things. First, That his kingdom might come, in the light and knowledge of it, and in the power and efficacy of it. God speed the gospel-proclamation. Secondly, That it might conquer, and subdue all opposition, Rev. 6. 2. Thirdly, That it might flourish; Hosanna. Let the King live for ever; though his kingdom may be disturbed, let it never be destroyed, Ps. 72. 17.

3. They bid him welcome into Jerusalem; "Welcome is he that cometh; we are heartily glad to see him; come in, thou blessed of the Lord; and well may we attend him with our blessings, who meets us with his." This welcome is like that, (Ps. 24. 7.)

9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Thus we must every one of us bid Christ welcome into our hearts, that is, we must praise him, and be well pleased in him. As we should be highly pleased with the being and attributes of God, and his relation to us, so we must be with the person and offices of the Lord Jesus, and his institution between us and God. Faith saith, Blessed is he that cometh.

II. The posture Christ put himself into for the receiving of the respect’s that were paid him; (v. 14.) When he had found or procured, a young ass, he sat thereon; it was but a poor sort of figure he made, he alone upon an ass, and a crowd of people around him. Now he was set apart to be sacrificed for us. There is nothing more of state than he used to take, he used to travel on foot, but now was mounted. Though his followers should be willing to take up with mean things, and not affect any thing that looks like grandeur, yet it is allowed them to use the service of the inferior creatures, according as God in his providence gives particular possession of that which, by his covenant with Noah and his sons, he has given to a general dominion.

2. Yet it was much less of state than the great ones of the world usually take. If he would have made a public entry, according to the state of a man of high degree, he should have rode in a chariot like that of Solomon’s (Cant. 3. 9, 10.) with pillars of silver, the bottom of gold, and the covering of fine linen; and what he did for our King Jesus, to be the Saviour of the world, this to be introduced thus was rather a disparagement than any honour to the King of Israel, for it seemed as if he would look great, and knew not how. His kingdom was not of this world, and therefore came not with outward pomp. He was now humbling himself, but in his exalted state John sees him in a vision on a white horse, with a bow and a crown.

III. The fulfilling of the scripture in this, As it is written, Fear not, daughter of Zion. v. 15. This is quoted from Zech. 9. 9. To him bare all the prophets witness, and particularly to this concerning him.

1. It was foretold that Zion’s King should come, should come thus, sitting on an ass’s colt; even this minute circumstance was foretold, and Christ took care it should be actually fulfilled. Christ, (1.) is the King of Zion; the holy hill of Zion was old destined to be the metropolis or royal city of the Messiah. (2.) Zion’s King does and will look after her, and come to her; though for a short time she retreats, in due time he returns. (3.) Though he comes but slowly, (an ass is slow-paced;) yet he comes surely, and with such expressions of humility and condescension as greatly encourage and address any of his legal subjects. Humble suppliants may reach to speak with him. If this be a disparagement to Zion, that her King appears in no greater state or strength, let her know that though he comes to her, riding on an ass’s colt, yet he goes forth against her enemies, riding on the heavens for her help, (Ps. 110.)

The son of man is therefore called up to behold her King, to take notice of him and his approaches; behold, and wonder, for he comes with observation, though not with outward show, Cant. 3. 11. Fear not. In the prophecy, Zion is bid to rejoice greatly, and to shout, but here it is rendered, Fear not. Unbecoming fears are enemies to spiritual joys; if they be cured, if they be conquered, joy will come; but these fears will continue to harass his people, to silence their fears. If the case be so, that we cannot reach to the exultations of joy, yet we should labour to get firm under the oppressions of fear. Rejoice greatly, at least, fear not.

IV. The remark made by the evangelist upon the disciples’ understanding of this; (v. 16.) They understood not at first why Christ did this, and how
the scripture was fulfilled; but when Jesus was glorified, and thereupon the Spirit poured out, then they remembered that these things were written of him in the Old Testament, and that they and others had, by perswasion thereof, done the same. Sec. 4. See lest the imperfections of the disciples now in their infant state; even they understood not these things at first; did not consider, when they fetched him the ass, and set him thereon, that they were performing the ceremony of the inauguration of Zion's King. Now observe, (1.) The scripture is often fulfilled by the agency of those who have not themselves access to the scripture, in what they do. Isa. 44. 4. (2.) They did so, for the Spirit was written in the word and providence of God, which the disciples themselves do not at first understand; not at their first acquaintance with the things of God, while they see men as trees walking; not at the first proposal of the things to their view and consideration. That which afterward is clear, at first was dark and doubtful. (3.) It well becomes the disciples of Christ, when they are grown up to maturity in knowledge, frequently to reflect upon the follies and weakness of their first beginning, that free grace may have the glory of their providence, and they may have compassion on the ignorant. When I was a child, I spake as a child. 2. See here the improvement of the disciples in their adult state. Though they had been children, they were not always so, but went on to perfection. Observe, (1.) When they understood it; when Jesus was glorified; for, [1.] Till then they did not rightly apprehend the nature of his kingdom, but expected it to appear in external pomp and power, and therefore knew not how to apply the scriptures which spake of it to so mean an appearance. Note, The right understanding of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, of its powers, glories, and victories, would prevent our misinterpreting and misapplying of the scriptures that speak of it. [2.] Till then the Spirit was not poured out, who was to lead them into all truth. Note, the disciples of Christ are enabled to understand the scriptures by the same Spirit that indited the scriptures. The Spirit of revelation is to all the saints a Spirit of wisdom, Eph. 1. 17, 18. (2.) They understood it; they compared that prosperity with the event, and put them together; that they might mutually receive light from each other, and so they came to understand both. Then remembered they that these things were written of him by the prophets, consant to which they were done to him. Note, Such an admirable harmony there is between the word and works of God, that the remembrance of what is written, will enable us to understand what is done; and the observation of what is done, will help us to understand what is written. As we have heard, so have we seen. The scripture is every day in the fulfilling. V. The reason which induced the people to pay this respect to our Lord Jesus upon his coming into Jerusalem, though the government was so much set against him. It was because of that illustrious miracle he wrought in raising Lazarus. See here what a stronger evidence they had of this miracle; no doubt, the city rang of it, the report of it was in all people's mouths. But they who considered it as a proof of Christ's mission, and a ground of their faith in him, that they might be well satisfied of the matter of fact, traced the report to those who were eye-witnesses of it, that they might know the certainty of it by the utmost evidence the thing was capable of. The proof therefore that stood by when he called Lazarus out of his grave, being found out and examined, bare record, v. 17. They unanimously averred the thing to be true, beyond dispute or contradiction, and were ready, if called to it, to depose it upon oath, for so much is implied in the word ἔστω ἔστω. Note, The truth of Christ's miracles was evidenced by incontestable proofs. It is probable that those who had seen this miracle, did not only assert it to those about them, but published it in such wise, that this might add to the triumphs of this solemn day, and Christ's coming in now from Bethany, where it was done, would put them in mind of it. Note, They who wish well to Christ's kingdom, should be forward to proclaim what they know, that may rebound to his honour. 2. What improvement they made of it, and what influence it had on them. v. 18. For this cause, as much as any other, the people went out. (1.) Some, out of curiosity, were desirous to see one that had done such a wonderful work. Many a good sermon he had preached in Jerusalem, which drew not such crowds after him as this one miracle did. But, (2.) Others, out of conscience, studied to do him honour, as one sent of God. This miracle was reserved for one of the last, that it might confirm those which went before, and might gain him this honour just before his sufferings; Christ's works were all not only well done (Mark 7. 37.) but well timed. VI. The indignation of the Pharisees at all this; some of them, probably, saw, and they all soon heard of, Christ's public entry. The committee, appointed to find out expedients to crush him, as they thought he and his men were there to be retired into privacy, and that he would soon be forgotten in Jerusalem, but they now rage and fret when they see they imagined but a vain thing. 1. They own that they had got no ground against him; it was plainly to be perceived that they prevailed nothing. They could not, with all their insinuations, alienate the people's affections from him, nor with their menaces restrain them from showing their affection to him. Note, The power of Christ, and fight against his kingdom, will be made to perceiue that they prevail nothing. God will accomplish his own purposes, in spite of them, and the little efforts of their impotent malice. Ye prevail nothing, or σέρανε· we prevail nothing. Note, There is nothing got by opposing Christ. 2. They own that he had got ground; The world is gone after him; there is a vast crowd oppressed attending him, a world of people; an hyperbole common in most languages. Yet here, like Caipheus, ere they were aware, they prophesied that the world would go after him; some of all sorts, some from all parts; nations shall he dispossess. But to what in tent was this said? (1.) Thus they express their own vexation at the growth of his interest; their envy makes them fret. If the horn of the righteous be exalted with honour, the wicked are in abasement, and are grieved, (Ps. 112. 9, 10.) Considering how great these Pharisees were, and what abundance of respect was paid them, one would think they needed not grudge Christ so considerable a piece of honour as was now done him; but proud men would monopolize honour, and have none share with them, like Haman. (2.) Thus they exult themselves, and one another, to encourage one another in opposition against Christ. As if they should say, "Dallying and delaying thus will never do. We must take some other and more effectual course, to put a stop to this infection; it is time to try our utmost skill and force before the grievance grows past redress." Thus the enemies of religion are made more resolute and active by being baffled; and shall its friends be disinherited with every disappointment, who know its cause is righteous, and will at last be victorious? 20. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at
the feast: 21. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. 23. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, when the Son of man should be glorified. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will I make my Father honour.

Honour is here done to Christ by certain Greeks that inquired for him with respect. We are not told what day of Christ's last week this was, probably not the same day he rode into Jerusalem, (for that day was taken up in public work,) but a day or two after. 1. We are told who they were that did this honour to our Lord Jesus; certain Greeks among the people, who came up to worship at the feast, v. 20. Some think they were Jews of the dispersion, some of the twelve tribes that were scattered among the Gentiles, and were called Greeks, Hellenist Jews; but others think they were Gentiles, those whom they called proselytes of the gate, such as the eunuch and Cornelius. Pure natural religion met with the best assistance among the Jews, and therefore those among the Gentiles, who were piously inclined, joined with them in their solemn meetings, as far as was allowed them. There were devout worshippers of the true God, even among them that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel. It was in the latter ages of the Jewish church, that there was this flocking of the Gentiles to the temple at Jerusalem; a happy presage of the taking down of the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles. The forbidding of their desire of acquaintance, and their being forbidden to come to the city, where Christ was, and give his name a hearing, must have been a serious grievance to those poor Gentiles. None the less, they would not give up this opportunity; they had been forewarned, De Bello Jud. lib. 2. cap. 30. Though these Greeks, if uncircumcised, were not admitted to eat the passover, yet they came to worship at the feast. We must thankfully use the privileges we have, though there may be others from which we are shut out. 2. What was the honour they did him; they desired to be acquainted with him, v. 21. Being come to worship at the feast, they desired to make the best use they could of their time, and therefore applied themselves to Philip, desiring that he would put them in a way to get some personal converse with the Lord Jesus. 2. They made their application to Philip, one of his disciples. Some think that they had acquaintance with him formerly, and that they lived near Bethsaida in Galilee of the Gentiles; and then it teaches us that we should improve our acquaintance with good people, for our increase in the knowledge of Christ. It is good to know those who know the Lord. But if these Greeks had been near Galilee, it is probable that they would have attended Christ there where he mostly resided; therefore I think that they applied themselves to him, only because they saw him a close follower of Christ, and he was the first they could get to speak with. It was an instance of the general desire there was for Christ: they made an interest with one of his disciples for an opportunity to converse with him; a sign that they looked upon him as some great one, though he appeared mean. Those that would see Jesus by faith now that he is in heaven, must apply themselves to his ministers, whom he has appointed for this purpose, to guide poor souls in their inquiries after him. Pass. may be of the Gentiles, Acts x. 35. The bringing of these Greeks to the knowledge of Christ by the means of Philip, signified the agency of the apostles, and the use made of their ministry in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith, and the disciplining of the nations. 3. Their address to Philip was in short this, Sir, we would see Jesus. They gave him a title of respect, as a worthy object of honour, because he was in relation to Christ. Their business is, they would see Jesus; not only see his face, that they might be able to say, when they came home, that they had seen one that was so much talked of; it is probable that they had seen him when he appeared publicly; but they would have some free conversation with him, and be taught by him, which it was no easy thing to find him at leisure for, his hands were so full of public work. Now that they were come to worship at the feast, they would see Jesus. Note, In our attendances upon holy ordinances, and particularly the gospel-passover, the great desire of our souls should be to see Jesus; to have our acquaintance with him increased, our dependence on him encouraged, our conformity to him carried on; to see him as his, to keep up communion with him, and derive communications of grace from him: we miss of our end in coming, if we do not see Jesus. 4. Here is the report which Philip made of this to his Master, v. 22. He tells Andrew, who was of Bethsaida likewise; and was a senior fellow in the college of the apostles, contemporary with Peter, and consults him what was to be done; whether he thought the motion would be acceptable or no, before Christ should go to Jerusalem. And then the manner of their proceeding, that they should go to the house of Israel. They agree that it must be made; but then he would have Andrew go along with him, remembering the favourable acceptance Christ had promised them, in case two of them should agree touching any thing they should ask, Matt. 18. 19. Note, Christ's ministers should be helpful to one another, and concour in helping one another. We should see each other's business as our own. 3. Christ's acceptance of this honour done him, signified by what he said to the people hereupon, (v. 23, &c.) where he foretells both the honour which his people shall have, and the manner of it, v. 23. 24. And the honour which they should have that followed him, v. 25, 26. This was intended for the direction and encouragement of these Greeks, and all others that desired acquaintance with him. 1. He foresees that plentiful harvest in the conversion of the Gentiles, which this was as it were the first-fruits of, v. 23. Christ said to those two disciples, who spake a good word for those Greeks, but doubted whether they should speed or no, The hour is come, when the Son of man shall be glorified, by the accession of the Gentiles to the church, and
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in order that he must be rejected of the Jews. Observe,
(1.) The end designed hereby, and that is the glorifying of the Redeemer; "And it is so!" Do the Gentiles begin to inquire after me? Does the morning star appear to them? and first blazed day-string, which knows its place and time too, does that begin to take hold of the ends of the earth? Then the hour is come for the glorifying of the Son of man." This was no surprise to Christ, but a paradox to those about him. Note, [1.] The calling, the effectual calling, of the Gentiles into the church of God, greatly redounded to the glory of the Son of man. The first mention of the redeemed, was the magnifying of the Redeemer. [2.] There was a time, a set time, an hour, a certain hour, for the glorifying of the Son of man, which did come at last, when the days of his humiliation were numbered and finished, and he speaks of the approach of it with exultation and triumph; "The hour is come.

(2.) The strange way in which this hour was to be attained, and that was by the death of Christ, intimated in that similitude; (v. 24.) "Terribly, verily, I say unto you, you to whom I have spoken of my death and sufferings, that except a corn of (wheat) fall, not only to, but into, the ground, and die, and be buried and lost, it abideth alone, and you never see any more of it; but if it die according to the course of nature, (otherwise it would be a miracle,) it bringeth forth much fruit; God giving to every seed of its soul unto death, else it cannot divide a portion with the great, Isa. 53. 12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood, to purchase them and purify them, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise, as a qualification for that glory, which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he had not been made a propitiation for the sins of the world, and the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

(1.) The necessity of Christ's humiliation intimated. He had never been the living quickening Head and Root of the church, if he had not descended from heaven to this accursed earth, and ascended from earth to the accursed tree, and so accomplished our redemption. He must pour out his soul unto death, else he cannot divide a portion with the great, Isa. 53. 12. He shall have a seed given him, but he must shed his blood, to purchase them and purify them, must win them and wear them. It was necessary likewise, as a qualification for that glory, which he was to have by the accession of multitudes to his church; for if he had not by his sufferings made satisfaction for sin, and so brought in an everlasting righteousness, he had not been made a propitiation for the sins of the world, and the most valuable and useful grain. Now here is,

(2.) The advantage of Christ's humiliation illustrated. He fell to the ground in his incarnation, seemed to be buried alive in this earth, so much was his glory veiled; but that was not all, he died, this immortal Seed submitted to the laws of mortality, he lay in the grave like seed under the clods; but as the seed comes up again green, and fresh, and flourishing, and with a great increase, so one dying Christ gathered to himself thousands of living Christians, and he became their Root. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is all owing to the dying of this Corn of wheat. Hereby the Father and Son are glorified, the church is built up, the mystic body kept up, and will at length be completed; and when he came shall come, more, the Captain of our salvation, bringing many sons to glory by the virtue of his death, and being so made perfect by sufferings, shall be celebrated for ever with the admiring praises of saints and angels, Heb. 2. 10—13.

2. He foretells and promises an abundant recompense to them who should cordially embrace him and his gospel and interest, and should make it appear that they do so, by their faithfulness in suffering for him, or in serving him.

(1.) In suffering for him, (v. 23.) He that loves his life better than Christ, shall lose it; but he that

hates his life in this world, and prefers the favour of God and an interest in Christ before it, shall keep it unto life eternal. This doctrine Christ much insisted on, it being the great design of his religion to wean us from this world, by setting before us another world.

[1.] See here the fatal consequence of an inordinate love of life; many a man has given himself to death, and loses his life by over-loving it. He that so loves his animal life, as to indulge his appetite, and make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, shall thereby shorten his days, shall lose the life he is so fond of, and another infinitely better. He that is so much in the life of the body, and of the ornaments and delights of it, as for fear of exposing it or them, to deny Christ, he shall lose it, lose a real happiness in the other world, while he thinks to secure an imaginary one in this. Skin for skin a man may give for his life, and make a good bargain, but he that gives his soul, his God, his heaven for it, buys life too dear, and is guilty of his folly who sold a birthright for a mess of pottage.

[2.] See also the blessed recompense of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body, as to venture that for the preserving of the life of his soul, shall find both, with unspotted advantage, in eternal life. Note, First, It is required of the disciples of Christ, that they hate their life in this world; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hatred when it is loved more than the other. Duty in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ, Acts 20. 24.—21. 15. Rev. 12. 11. See here much of the power of godliness; and that conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the mystery of godliness—that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives. Secondly, Those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. He that hates his life, shall keep it; and he puts it into the hands of the Lord; and though he loses it, yet he is enriched with such an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.

(2.) In serving him; (v. 26.) If any man profess to serve me, let him follow me, as a servant his master; and where I am, there shall my servant be; so some read it, as part of the duty. There let him be, to attend upon me; we read it as part of the promise, There shall he be in happiness with me. And lest this should seem a small matter, he adds, If any man serve me, him will my Father honour; and that is enough, more than enough. The Greeks desired to see Jesus; (v. 21.) but Christ lets them know that it was not enough to see him, they must serve him. He did not come into the world, to be a show for us to gaze at, but a King to be ruled by. And he says this for the encouragement of those who inquired after him, to become his servants. In taking servants, it is usual to fix both the work and the wages; Christ does both here.

[1.] Here is the work which Christ expects from his servants; and it is very easy and reasonable, and such as becomes them. First, Let them attend on their Master's motions; If any man serve me, let him follow me. Christians must follow Christ, follow his methods and prescriptions, do the things that he saith; follow his example and pattern, walk as he also walked; follow his conduct, by his providence and Spirit. We must go whither he leads us, and in the way he
leads us; must follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes before us. "If any man serve me, if he put himself into that relation to me, let him apply himself to the business of my service, and be always ready at my call." Or, "If any man do indeed serve me, let him make an open and public profession of his relation to me, by following me, as the servant owns his master by following him in the streets."

Secondly, Let them attend their master's repose; Where I am, there let my servant be, to wait upon me. Christ is where his church is, in the assemblies of his saints, where his ordinances are administered; and there let his servants be, to present themselves however unobtrusive in this way is, as they are to me, "Where I am to be in heaven, whither I am now going, there let the thoughts and affections of my servants be, there let their conversation be, where Christ sitteth," Col. 3. 1, 2.

[2.] Here are the wages which Christ promises to his servants; and they are very rich and noble. First, They shall be happy with him; Where I am, there shall also my servant be. To be with him, when he was in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, he means being with him in paradise, sitting with him at his table above, on his throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there, ch. 17. 24. Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if he were already in it, Where I am; because he was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still upon his heart, and in his eye, and his glance, and glory, which he thought recompense enough for all his services and sufferings, are proposed to his servants as the recompense of their. They that follow him in the way, shall be with him in the end. Secondly, They shall be honoured by his Father; he will make them accessions for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive. The Rewarded is God himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said, (Prov. 27. 18.) He that waiteth on his master, (humbly and diligently,) shall be honoured. Those that wait on Christ, God will put honour upon, such as becomes a full reward of all that he has under a veil. They that serve Christ, must humble themselves, and are commonly viliified by the world, in recompence of both which they shall be exalted in due time. Thus far Christ's discourse has reference to those Greeks who desired to see him, encouraging them to serve him; what became of those Greeks, we are not told, but are willing to hope that they who thus asked the way to heaven, with their faces thitherward, found it, and walked in it.

27. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 23. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. 29. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. 31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33. This he said, signifying what death he should die. 34. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man? 35. Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

Honour is here done to Christ by his Father, in a voice from heaven, occasioned by the following part of his discourse, and which gave occasion to a further conference with the people. In these verses, we have,

1. Christ's address to his Father, upon occasion of the trouble which seized his spirit at this time; (v. 27.) Now is my soul troubled. A strange word to come from Christ's mouth, and at this time surpring, for he comes in the midst of divers pleasing prospects, in which, one would think, he should have said, Now is my soul pleased. Note, Trouble of soul sometimes follows after great enlargements of spirit. In this world of mixture and change we must expect damps upon our joy, and the highest degree of comfort to be the next degree to trouble. When Paul had been in the third heaven, he had a thing not yet revealed. Observe,

2. Christ's dread of the approaching sufferings; Now is my soul troubled. Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first thrones of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul began to be exceeding sorrowful. Note, (1.) The sin of our souls was the trouble of Christ's soul, when he undertook to redeem and save us, and to make his soul an offering for our sin. (2.) The trouble of his soul was designed to ease the trouble of ours; for, after this, he said to his disciples, (ch. 14. 1.) "Let not your hearts be troubled; why should your's be troubled and mine too?" Our Lord Jesus went cheerfully in his work, in prospect of the joy set before him, and yet submitted to a trouble of soul. Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy, and the way to eternal joy. Christ was now troubled, now in sorrow, now in fear, now for a season; but it would not be so always, it would not be so long. The same is the comfort of christians in their troubles. They are but for a moment, and will be turned into joy.

2. The strain he seems to be in, hereupon, intimated in those words, And what shall I say? This does not speak him consulting with any other, as if he needed advice, but considering with himself what was fit to be said now. When men are troubled, we must take heed of speaking unadvisedly, but debate with ourselves what we shall say. Christ speaks like one at a loss, as if what he should choose he wot not. There was a struggle between the work he had taken upon him, which required sufferings, and the nature he had taken upon him, which dreaded them; between these two he here pauses with, What shall I say? He looked, and there was none to help, which put him to a stand. Calvin observes this as a great instance of Christ's humiliation, that he should speak thus like one at a plunge. Quo se magis examinavit gloria Dominus, so incipientibus habemus erga nos aurora specimen.—The more en-
tirely the Lord of glory emptied himself, the brighter is the proof of the love he bare us. Thus he was in all points tempted like as we are, to encourage us, when we know not what to do, to have our eyes to him. 3. His prayer to God in this strain; Father, save me from this hour, is πη της των θεον—out of this hour: praying not so much that it might not come, as that he might be brought through it. Save me from this hour; this was the language of innocent nature, and its feelings poured forth in prayer. Note, It is the duty and interest of troubled souls to have recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and in his will and providence, to carry the matter up to him in his divine sufferings, and yet prayed to be saved from them. Note, Prayer against a trouble may very well consist with patience under it, and submission to the will of God in it. Observe, He calls his suffering, This hour, meaning the expected events of the time now at hand; hereby he intimates that the time of his suffering was, (1.) A set time, set to an hour, and he knew it. It was said twice before, that his hour was not yet come, but it was now so near that he might say it was come. (2.) A short time; an hour is soon over, so were Christ's sufferings, he could see through them to the joy set before him. 4. His acquiescence in his Father's will, notwithstanding. He presently corrects himself, and, as it were, recals what he had said; But for this cause, and thus he checked himself, he did not silence himself with this, that he could not avoid it, the devil said so; but heendeared himself with this, that he would not avoid it, for it was pursuant to his own voluntary engagement, and was to be the crown of his whole undertaking; should he now fly off, it would frustrate all that had been done hitherto. Reference is here had to the divine counsels concerning his sufferings, by virtue of which, thus it behoveth him to submit and suffer. Note, This should reconcile us to the darkest hours of our life, this we were all along designed for them; see 1 Thess. 3. 3. 

5. His regard to his Father's honour herein. Upon the withdrawing of his former petition, he presents another, which he will abide by; Father, glorify thy name; to the same purport with, Father, thy will be done, for God's will is for his own glory. This speaks more than barely a submission to the will of God, it is a consecration of his sufferings to the glory of God. It was a mediatorial word, and was spoken by him as our Saviour, who had undertaken to satisfy divine justice for our sin. The wrong which by sin we have done to God, is in his glory, his declarative glory; for in nothing else are we capable of doing him injury. We were never able to make him satisfy for this wrong done him, nor any creature for us; nothing therefore remained, but that God should get his glory from us; and it was to be done by our sufferings to our Saviour. We are our Lord Jesus' instruments, and must satisfy God's injured honour, and he did it by his humiliation; he denied himself in, and divested himself of, the honours due to the Son of God incarnate, and submitted to the greatest reproach. Now here he makes a tender of this satisfaction as an equivalent; "Father, glorify thy name; let thy justice be honoured upon the Sacrifice, not upon the sinner; let this, which makes me a sinner, be the means of it; and this principal is not," thus he restored that which he took not away. II. The Father's answer to this address; for he heard him always, and does still. Observe, 1. How this answer was given—by a voice from heaven. The Jews speak much of a Fiath-kîl—the daughter of a voice, as one of those diverse manners by which God in time past spoke to the prophets; but we do not mention any instance of his speaking thus to any but to our Lord Jesus; it was an expressly observed for him; (Matt. 3. 17—17. 5) and here, probably, this audible voice was introduced by some visible appearance, either of light or darkness, for both have been used as vehicles of the divine glory. 2. What the answer was—it was an express return to that petition, Father, glorify thy name. I glory it already, and I will glorify it yet again. When the request was made; and not, Our Father, hallowed be thy name, this is a comfort to us, that it is an answered prayer; answered to Christ here, and in him, to all true believers. (1.) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness. (2.) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ; his wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered, the affront done to God's government satisfied for, and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for the glorifying of his own name, is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further. He that has dealt with his own glory will dwell.
the year of my redeemed is come, and the time pre-
fixed for the breaking of the serpent's head, and
giving a total rent to the powers of darkness; now
for that glorious achievement the world, and all that
work is to be done, which has been so long thought
of it the divine counsels, so long talked of in the
written word, which has been so much the hope of
saints, and the dread of devils." The matter of the

threshing, is now upon the turning point, this is the critical day,
upon which the trembling scale will turn for life or
death, to all mankind; all that are not recovered by
this, will be left helpless and hopeless. Or, rather,
itis a law term, as we take it; "Now judgment is
entered, in order to the taking out of execution
against the prince of this world." Note, The death
of Christ was the judgment of this world. First, It
is a judgment of discovery and distinction—judicium
discretions; so Austin. Now is the trial of this
world, for men shall have their character according
to the cross of Christ is to them; to some it is fool-
sworth and a stumbling-block, to others it is the wis-
dom and power of God; of which there was a figure
in the two thieves that were crucified with him. By
this, and by the judgment of this world, God judged
men; and the judgment of the world, that is, the
judgment of Christ. Secondly, It is a judgment of favour and
absolution to the chosen ones that are in the world.
Christ upon the cross interposed between a righteous
God and a guilty world as a Sacrifice for sin and a
Surety for sinners, so that when he was judged, and
iniquity laid upon him, and he was wounded for our
transgressions, it was as it were the judgment of
this world, for an everlasting righteousness was
thereby brought in, not for Jews only, but the whole
world, 1 John 2.1, 2. Dan. 9.24. Thirdly, It is a
judgment of condemnation given against the powers
of darkness; see ch. 16.11. Judgment is put for
vindication and deliverance, the asserting of an
invaded right. At the death of Christ there was a
famous trial between Christ and Satan, the serpent and
the promised seed; the trial was for the world,
and the lordship of it; the devil had long borne
sway among the children of men, time out of mind;
he now pleads prescription, grounding his claim
also upon the forfeiture incurred by sin. We find
him willing to have come to a composition; (Luke
4.6, 7.) he would have given the kingdoms of this
world to Christ, provided he would hold them by,
force, and power, him: but Christ would try it out
with him; by dying he takes off the fornicity to di-
vine justice, and then fairly disputes the title, and
recovereth it in the court of heaven. Satan's dominion
is declared to be an usurpation, and the world ad-
judged to the Lord Jesus as his right, Ps. 2.6, 8.
The judgment of this world is, that it belongs to
Christ, and not to Satan; to Christ therefore let us
all turn tenants.

2.] That now is the prince of this world cast out.
First, It is the devil that is here called the prince
of this world, because he rules over the men of
the world by the things of the world; he is the ruler
of the darkness of this world, that is, of this dark
world, of those in it that walk in darkness, 2 Cor. 4, 4. Eph.
6.13.
Secondly, He is said to be cast out, to be now cast
out, for, whatever had been done his to terrify
weakening of the devil's kingdom, was done in the
virtue of a Christ to come, and therefore is said to
be done now. Christ reconciling the world to God
by the merit of his death, broke the power of death,
and cast out Satan as a destroyer; Christ, reducing
the world to God by the doctrine of his cross, broke
the power of sin, and cast out Satan as a deceiver.
The bruising of his heel was the breaking of the
serpent's head, Gen. 3.15. When his oracles were
silenced, his temples forsaken, his idols famished, and
the kingdoms of the world become Christ's
possessions, then was the prince of this world cast
out, as appears by comparing this with John's vision,
(Rev. 12.8-11.) where it is said to be done by the
blood of the Lamb. Christ's frequent casting of
devils out of the bodies of people, was an indication
of the great design of his whole undertaking. Ob-
serve, With what assurance Christ here speaks
of the victory over Satan; it is as good as done, and
even when he casts devils out of the crafty
kingdoms of the world to Christ (Matt. 12.28) and cast
out the military of darkness, the soldiers of the
world, and they are cast out of the soul in which
they had been dwelling. Observe, this was to be the
desire of all nations, (Hag. 2.7.) and to him
must the gathering of the people be. That
which his enemies dreamed, was, that the world
would go after him, and he would draw them to
him, notwithstanding their opposition. Observe
here how Christ himself is all in all in the conver-
sion of a soul. First, It is Christ that draws; I
mean, it is his drawing power by which the
soul of men is brought to Christ. Secondly, It is Christ
that we are drawn; "I will draw them to me as
the centre of their unity." The soul that was at
a distance from Christ, is brought into an ac-
quaintance with him; that was shy and distrustful of him,
is brought to love him and trust him; drawn up
to his terms, into his arms. Christ was now going
to heaven, and he would draw men's hearts to him
thither.

2. The strange method he took to accomplish
his design by being lifted up from the earth. What
he meant by that, to prevent mistake, we are told;
(y. 33.) This he spoke, signifying by what death he
should die, the death of the cross, though they had
designed, and attempted to stone him to death. He
that was crucified, was first nailed to the cross, and
then lifted up upon it. He was lifted up as a spec-
tacle to the world; lifted up between heaven and
earth, as unworthy of either; yet the word here
uses an expression commonly used of those men
who were slain by the Jews, and were afterwards
—If I be exalted, or he reckoned his sufferings his honour.
Whatever death we die, if we die in Christ, we
shall be lifted up out of this dungeon, this den
of lions, into the regions of light and love. We should
learn of our Master to speak of dying with a holy
pleasantness, and to say, "We shall then be lifted
up." Now Christ's drawing all men to him, followed
his being lifted up from the earth. First, It follow-
ored after it in time. The great increase of the church
was after the death of Christ; while Christ lived,
we read of thousands at a sermon miraculously fed,
but it was after his death that we read of thousands
at a sermon added to the church which should be
saved. Israel began to multiply in Egypt after the
death of Joseph. Secondly, It followed upon it as a
evidence of his power and glory as Saviour. Thirdly, It
was an evidence of his power and grace as a
fulfilment of the promise. Among the tempting
visionary promises was one of his power and
mercy, "He shall not be enemies, neither shall
he fear: for the Lord is in the midst of him." Hence
the divine declaration, "I have taken upon me
pride and glory, and I shall be exalted." Some
make it an allusion to the drawing of fish into a
net; the lifting up of Christ was as the spreading of
the net; (Matt. 13.47, 48.) or to the setting up of
a standard, which draws soldiers together; or rather,
it refers to the lifting up of the brazen serpent in
the wilderness, which drew all those to it that were
stung with fiery serpents, as soon as ever it was
known that it was lifted up, and there was healing
virtue in it. O! what flocking was there to it! So
there was to Christ, when salvation through him
was preached to all nations; see vs. 33. Per-
haps it has some reference to the posture in which
Christ was crucified, with his arms stretched out, to
invite all to him, and embrace all that come. They
that put Christ to that ignominious death, thought
thereby to drive all men from him; but the devil was
outshot in his own bow. Out of the eater came forth
meat.

The people’s exception against what he said, and
their cavil at it, v. 34. Though they had heard the
voice from heaven, and the gracious words that
proceeded out of his mouth, yet they object, and
pick quarrels with him. Christ had called himself, the
Son of man, (v. 22.) which they knew to be one of
the titles of the Messiah, Dan. 7. 13. He had
also said, that the Son of man must be lifted up,
which they understood of his dying, and, probably,
he explained himself so; and some think repeated
what he said to Nicodemus, (ch. 3. 14.) So must the
Son of man be lifted up. Now against this,
1. They alleged those scriptures of the Old Testa-
tament which speak of the perpetuity of the Mes-
iah, that he should be so far from being cut off in
the midst of his days, that he should be a Priest for
ever, (Ps. 110. 4.) and a King for ever, (Ps. 89. 29,
36.) and have length of days for ever and ever, and
his very years shall be without end, (Ps. 69. 26.) from
all this they inferred that the Messiah
should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter
of the scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is
capable of being abused to serve the cause of
infidelity, and to fight against Christianity with its
own weapons. Their perverseness in opposing this to what
Jesus had said, will appear, if we consider, (1.) That,
when they vouched the scripture to prove that the
Messiah abideth for ever, they took no notice of
those texts which speak of the Messiah’s death and
sufferings: they had heard out of the law, that Mes-
iah abideth for ever; and had they never heard out
of the law, that Messiah shall be cut off, (Dan.
9. 26.) and that he shall pour out his soul unto
death, (Isa. 53. 12.) and particularly, that his hands
and feet shall be stretched on the tree, (v. 14.) And
who makes strange the lifting up of the Son of
man? Note, We often run into great mistakes, and
then defend them with scripture-arguments, by put-
ting those things asunder, which God in his word
has put together; and opposing one truth, under
pretence of supporting another. We have heard
out of the gospel, that which exalts free grace, we
have heard also that which enjoin duty, and we
must cordially embrace both, and not separate them;
or set them at variance. (2.) That, when they op-
posed what Christ said concerning the sufferings of
the Son of man, they took no notice of what he had
said concerning his glory and exaltation. They had
heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever;
and had they not heard our Lord Jesus say that he
should be glorified, that he should bring forth much
fruit, and draw all men to him? It is not just now
true, as it was when our Lord came to his followers,
which supposed his abiding for ever? But this they
overlook. Thus unfair disputants oppose some parts
of the opinion of an adversary, which, if they would
but take entire, they could not but subscribe to;
and in the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes,
which to men of corrupt minds are stones of stum-
bling—as Christ crucified, and yet glorified; lifted
after death—Dan. 7. 13. (2.) They ask, hereupon, Who is this Son of man? Those they asked, not with a desire to be instructed, but tauntingly and insultingly, as if now they had
afflicted him, and run him down. “ Then sayest,
The Son of man must die; we have proved the
Messiah must not, and where is then thy Messiah-
ship? This Son of man, as thou callest thyself,
cannot be the Messiah, thou must therefore think
of something else to pretend to.” Now that which
was justified of Christ, was, his meanness and poverty;
they would rather have no Christ than a suffering
one.

VI. What Christ said to this exception, or, rather,
what he said upon it. The objection was a perfect
cavil; they might, if they pleased, answer it
themselves. Man dies, and yet is immortal, and
abideth for ever, so the Son of man; therefore,
instead of answering the objection, he points out
fully, he gives them a serious caution to take heed
of trilling away the day of their opportunities in
such vain and fruitless cavils as these; (v. 35. 36.)
"Yet a little while, and but a little while, is the light
with you; therefore be wise for yourselves, and
walk while we have the light.”

In general, we may observe here, 1. The concern
Christ has for the souls of men, and his desire of
their welfare. We would have them believe that
he admires those to look well to themselves, who were
centring ill against him? Even when he endured the contradiction of sinners, he endeavoured their
conversion. See Prov. 29. 10. 2. The method he
takes with those objectors; with meekness instruct
those that opposed themselves, 2 Tim. 2. 25.
Were but men’s consciences awakened by a due
be the shadow of the example of the state, and did they
consider how little time they have to spend, and none
to spare, they would not waste precious thoughts
and time in trifling cavils.

 Particularly we have here,
(1.) The privilege and advantage they enjoyed in
having Christ and his gospel among them, with
the shortness and uncertainty of their enjoyment of
it. Let a little while while is the light with you. Christ
was but a little while, and yet was eclipsed by his sufferings, and was but a little while within our horizon. Now, [1.] The Jews at this time had the light with them, they had Christ’s bodily presence, heard his preaching, saw his miracles.
The scripture is to us a light shining in a
dark place. [2.] It was to be but a little while with
them; Christ would shortly leave them, their visi-
ble church state would soon after he be dissolved, and
the kingdom of God taken from them, and blindness
and hardness would happen unto Israel. Note, It
is good for us all to consider what a little while we
are to have the light with us Time is short, and
perhaps opportunity not so long. The candlestick
may be removed; however, we must be removed shortly. Yet while with the light, he left his bless-
ing little while is the light of the gospel with
us, the day of grace, the means of grace, the Spirit
of grace, yet a very little while.

(2.) The warning given them to make the best of
these advantages while they enjoyed them, because
of the danger they were in of losing them; Walk
while we have the light: as travellers who make
the best of their way forward, that they may not be
weighted in the night, but take care of going
through the night is uncomfortable and unsafe. “Come,” say they, “let us mend our pace, and get forward, while
we have day-light.” Thus wise should we be for
made worse by that which should have made them better.

37. But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38. That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39. Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. 41. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

We have here the honour done to our Lord Jesus by the Old Testament prophets, who foretold and lamented the infidelity of the many that believed not his word. It was indeed a dishonour and grief to Christ, that his doctrine met with so little acceptance, and so much opposition; but this takes off the wonder and reproach, makes the offence of it to cease, and made it no disappointment to Christ, that herein the scriptures were fulfilled. Two things are here said concerning this untractable people, and both were foretold by the evangelical prophet Esaias: 1. They did not believe; and 2. They could not believe.

1. They did not believe; (v. 37.) Though he had done so many miracles before them, which, one would think, should have convinced them, yet they believed not, but opposed him. Observe, 1. The plenty of the means of conviction which Christ afforded them; he did miracles, so many miracles (græc. miracles) it signifies both so many, and so great. It refers to all the miracles he had wrought formerly; nay the blind and lame now came to him into the temple, and he healed them, Matt. 21. 14. His miracles were the great proof of his mission, and on the evidence of them he relied. Two things concerning them he here insists upon; (1.) The number of them; they were many; (2.) Their constancy and continued nature; they were repeated; and every new miracle confirmed the reality of all that went before. The multitude of his miracles was not only a proof of his unexhausted power, but gave the greater opportunity to examine them; and if there had been a cheat in them, it was morally impossible but that in some or other of them it would have been discovered; and, being all miracles of mercy, the more they were, the more good was done. (2.) The notoriety of them. He wrought these miracles before them, not at a distance, not in a corner, but before many witnesses, appearing to their own eyes.

2. The inefficacy of these means; yet they believed not on him. They could not gainsay the promises, and yet would not grant the conclusion. Note, The most plentiful and powerful means of conviction will not of themselves work faith in the depraved prejudiced hearts of men. These saw and yet believed not.

3. The fulfilling of the scripture in this; (v. 58.) That the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled. Not that these infidel Jews designed the fulfilling of the scripture, (they rather fancied those scriptures which speak of the church's best sons, to be fulfilled in themselves) but the event exactly answered the prediction, so that (ut for ita ut) this saying of Esaias was fulfilled. The more improbable any event is, the more does a divine foresight appear in
the prediction of it. One could not have imagined that the kingdom of the Messiah, supported with such pregnant proofs, should have met with so much opposition among the Jews, and therefore their unbeliever is called a marvellous work, and a wonder, Isa. 29. 9. 14. Christ himself marvelled at it, but it was what Isaiah foretold, (Isa. 53. 1.) and now it is accomplished. Observe, (1.) The gospel is here called their report; Who has believed, (v. 1.) and who is he among you, (v. 2.) which tells of the grace of God, and which you have heard from us; our report is the report that we bring, like the report of a matter of fact; or the report of a solemn resolution in the senate. (2.) It is foretold, that few comparatively of those to whom this report is brought, will be persuaded to give credit to it. Many hear it, but few heed it, and embrace it; Who hath believed? Here and there one, but none to speak of; not the wise, not the noble; it is not then a report, but a report which wants confirmation. (3.) It is spoken of as a thing to be greatly lamented, that so few believe the report of the gospel. Lord is here prefixed from the LXX, but is not in the Hebrew, and it intimates a sorrowful account brought to God by the messengers, of the cold entertainment which they and their report had; as the servant came, and said, Lord, he found none to work in the vineyard, Matt. 20. 16, 17. The reason why men believe not the report of the gospel, is, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them, because they do not acquaint themselves with, and submit themselves to, the grace of God; they do not experimentally know the virtue and fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, in which the arm of the Lord is revealed. They saw Christ's miracles, but did not see the arm of the Lord revealed; they saw his miracles, but did not see his ascribed to the Lord.

II. They could not believe, and therefore they could not, because Esaias said, He hath blinded their eyes. This is a hard saying, who can explain it? We are sure that God is infinitely just and merciful, and therefore we cannot think that there is in any such an impotency to good, resulting from the counsels of God, as laves them under a fatal necessity of being evil; God damns none by mere sovereignty; yet it is said, They could not believe. St. Austin, coming in course to the exposition of these words, expresses himself with a holy fear of entering upon an inquiry into this mystery. Justa sunt judicia ejus, sed occulta—His judgments are just, but hid. 1. They could not believe, that is, they would not; they were obstinately resolved in their infidelity; thus Chrysostom and Austin incline to understand it; and the former gives divers instances of scripture of the putting of an impotency to signify the invincible refusal of the will, as Gen. 37. 4. They could not speak peaceably to him. and ch. 7. 7. This is a moral impotency, like that of one that is accustomed to do evil, Jer. 13. 25. But, 2. They could not, because Esaias had said, He hath blinded their eyes. Here the difficulty increases; it is certain that God doth not do this; for

(1.) There is a righteous hand of God sometimes to be acknowledged in the blindness and obstinacy of those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, by which they are justly punished for their former resistance of the divine light and rebellion against the divine law. If God withdrew analysis grace, and give men over to indulge lusts; if he permit the evil spirit to do his work on them that resisted the good Spirit, and in his providence let laying stumbling-blocks in sinners' way, confirm their prejudices, then he blinds their eyes, and hardens their hearts, and these are spiritual judgments, like the giving up of idolatrous gentiles to vile affections, and degenerate christians to strong delusions.

Observe the method of conversion implied here, and the steps taken in it. [1.] Sinners are brought to see with their eyes, to discern the reality of divine things, and to have some knowledge of them. [2.] To understand with their heart, to apply these things to themselves; not only to assent and approve, but to consent and accept. [3.] To be converted, and effectually turned from sin to Christ, from the world and the flesh to God, as their felicity and portion.

[4.] Then God will heal them, will justify and sanctify them; will harden their sins, which are as bleeding wounds, and mortify their corruption, till the works of the flesh be mortified in them. God denies his grace, nothing of this is done; the alienation of the mind from, and its aversion to, God and the divine life, grows into a rooted and invincible antipathy, and so the case becomes desperate. [5.] The case of God threatened against those who willfully persist in wickedness, and were particularly foretold concerning the Jewish church and nation. Known unto God are all his works, and all our's too. Christ knew before who would betray him, and spake of it, ch. 6. 70. This is a confirmation of the truth of scripture-prophecies, and thus even the unbelief of the Jews may help to strengthen our faith. It is also intended for caution to particular persons, to beware lest that come upon them, which the prophets spake of in the Lord's passion and ministry. Known unto God are all his works, and all our's too.

Let us read the prophecies, that this was said to Esaias, Isa. 6. 9. But here we are told that it was said by him to the purpose. For nothing was said by him as a prophet, which was not first said to him; nor any thing said to him, which was not afterward said by him to those to whom he was sent. See Isa. 21. 10. 11. [1.] The vision which the prophet there had of the glory of God, is here said to be his seeing the glory of Jesus Christ; he saw his glory. Jesus Christ therefore is equal in power and glory with the Father, and his praises are equally celebrated. Christ had a glory before the foundation of the world, and Esaias saw this.

3. It is said that the prophet there spake of him, It seems to have been spoken of the prophet himself, (for none of the passages were there given,) and yet it is here said to be spoken of Christ, for as all the prophets testified of him, so they testify'd him. This they spake of him, that as to many his coming would be not only fruitless, but fatal, a savour of death unto death. It might be objected against his doctrine, If it was from heaven, why did not the Jews believe it? But this is an answer to it; It was not for want of evidence, but be-
cause their heart was made fat, and their ears heavy. It was spoken of Christ, that he should be glorified in the ruin of an unbelieving multitude, as well as in the salvation of a distinguished remnant.

42. Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. 43. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Some honour was done to Christ by these rulers, for they believed on him, were convinced that he was sent of God, and received his doctrine as divine; but they did not do him honour enough, for they had not courage to own their faith in him. Many professed more kindness for Christ than really they had, these had more kindness for him than they were willing to profess.

See here what a struggle was in these rulers between their convictions and their corruptions.

I. See the power of the word in the convictions that many of them were under, who did not wilfully shut their eyes against the light. They believed on him as Nicodemus, received him as a teacher come from God. Note, the truth of the gospel has perhaps more power on the consciences of men than we are aware of. Many cannot but approve of that in their hearts, which yet outwardly they are shy of. Perhaps these chief rulers were true believers, though very weak, and their faith like smoking flax. Note, It may be, there are more good people than we think there are. Elijah thought he was left alone, when God had seven thousand faithful worshippers in Israel. Some are really better than they seem to be. Their faults are known, but their repentance is not; a man's goodness may be concealed by a culpable yet pardonable weakness, which he himself truly repents of. The kingdom of God comes not in all with a like observation; nor have all they that are good the faculty of shewing it as some have.

II. See the power of the world in the smothering of these convictions. They believe in Christ, but because of the Pharisees, who had it in their power to do them a kindness, they durst not confess him, for fear of being excommunicated. Observe here,

1. Wherein they failed and were defective; they did not confess Christ. Note, There is cause to question the sincerity of that faith which is either afraid or ashamed to shew itself; for those who believe with the heart, ought to confess with the mouth, Rom. 10. 9.

2. What they feared; being put out of the synagogue, which they thought would be a disgrace and damage to them; as if it would do them any harm to be expelled a synagogue, that had made itself a synagogue of Satan, and from which God was departing.

3. What was at the bottom of this fear; they loved the praise of men, chose it as a more valuable good, and pursued it as a more desirable end, than the praise of God; which was an implicit idolatry, like that (Rom. 1. 23.) of worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. They set these two in the scale one against the other, and, having weighed them, they proceeded accordingly; (1.) They set the praise of men in one scale, and considered a low interest to give praise to men, and to pay a deference to the opinion of the Pharisees, and receive praise from men, to be commanded by the chief priests, and applauded by the people, as good sons of the church, the Jewish church. And they would not confess Christ, lest they should thereby derogate from the reputation of the Pharisees, and forfeit their own, and thus hinder their own preferment. And besides, the followers of Christ were put into an ill-name, and were looked upon with contempt, which they who had been used to honour could not bear. Yet perhaps if they had been asked, (for all another departeth, [ver. 36.] had brave and more courage; but each one thought that if he should declare himself in favour of Christ, he should stand alone, and have nobody to back him; whereas if any one had had resolution to break the ice, he would have had more seconds than he thought of. (2.) They put the praise of God in the other scale; they were sensible that by confessing Christ they should both give praise to God, and have praise from God, he would be pleased with them, and say, Well done; but, (3.) They gave the preference to the praise of men, and that turned the scale; sense prevailed above faith, and represented it more desirable to stand right in the opinion of the Pharisees, than to be accepted of God. Note, Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness. Many come short of the glory of God, by having a regard to the applause of men, and a value for that. Love of the praise of men, as a by-end in that which is good, will make a man a hypocrite when religion is in fashion, and credit is to be got by it; and love of the praise of men, as a base principle in that which is evil, will make a man an apostate, when religion is in disgrace, and credit is to be lost for it, as here. See Rom. 2. 29.

44. Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

We have here the honour Christ not assumed, but asserted, to himself, in the account he gave of his mission and his errand into the world. Probably, this discourse was not at the same time with that before, (for John 1. 9.) but long after, when he made another public appearance; and as this evangelist records it, it was Christ's farewell sermon to the Jews, and his last public discourse; all that follows, was private with his disciples. Now observe how our Lord Jesus delivered this parting word; he cried and said. Doth not wisdom cry, (Prov. 8. 1.) cry without? Prov. 1. 20. The raising of his voice, and cried; they were loud. His boldness in speaking; though they had not courage openly to profess faith in his doctrine, he had courage openly to publish it; if they were ashamed of it, he was not, but set his face as a flint, Isa. 50. 7. 2. His earnestness in speaking; he cried as one that was serious and importunate, and in good earnest
in what he said, and was willing to impart to them, not only the gospel of God, but even his own soul. 
3. It denotes his desire that all might take notice of it. This being the last time of the publication of his gospel by himself in his person, he makes proclamation, "Whoever will hear me, let them come now." Now we execute precisely this, in the last closing of all Christ's discourses? It is much like that of Moses, (Deut. 30. 13.) See, I have set before you life and death. So Christ here takes leave of the temple, with a solemn declaration of three things.

1. The privileges and dignities which they have, that believe; this gives great encouragement to us to believe. Germanus, Bishop of Constantinople, and Irenæus, Bishop of Lyon, say, that 'in a thing of that nature, that we need not be either shy of doing it, or shy of owning it; for,

1. By believing in Christ we are brought into an honourable acquaintance with God; (v. 44, 45.) He that believes on me, and so sees me, believes on him that sent me, and so sees him. He that believes on Christ, (1.) He does not believe in a mere man, such a one as he seemed to be, and was generally taken to be, but he believes in one that is the Son of God, and equal in power and glory with the Father. Or rather, (2.) His faith does not terminate in Christ, but through him it is carried out to the Father that sent him; to whom, as our end, we come by Christ as our way. The doctrine of Christ is believed and received as the truth of God. The rest of Scripture shines bright in Christ as Mediator; for its designation to Christ is in order to its being presented to God. Christianity is made up, not of philosophy or politics, but pure divinity.

This is illustrated, v. 45. He that sees me, sees him that sent me; which is the same with believing in him, for faith is the eye of the soul; in getting acquaintance with Christ, we come to the knowledge of God. (1.) God makes himself known in the face of Christ, (2 Cor. 4. 6.) who is the express image of his person, Heb. 1. 3. 

2. All that have a believing sight of Christ, are led by him to the knowledge of God, whom Christ has revealed to us by his word and Spirit. Christ, as God, was the image of his Father's person; but Christ, as Mediator, was his Father's representative in his relation to man; the divine light, law, and love, being communicated to us through him; so that in seeing him, we may read; in crying him as our Saviour, Prince, and Lord, in the right of redemption, we see and eye the Father as our Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor, in the right of creation; for God is pleased to deal with fallen man by proxy.

2. We are hereby brought into a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves; (v. 46.) I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believes in me, Jew or Gentile, should not abide in darkness. Observe, (1.) The character of Christ; I am come a light into the world, to be a light to it. It implies that he had a being, and a being as light, before he came into the world, as the sun is before it rises; the prophets and apostles were made lights to the world, but it was Christ only that came a light into this world, having before been a glorious light in the upper world, ch. 3. 19.

(2.) The comfort of christians; they do not abide in darkness. [1.] They do not continue in that dark condition in which they were by nature, they are light in the Lord. They were without any true comfort, or joy, or hope, but do not continue in that condition; light is sown for them. [2.] What darkness of affliction, disquietment, or fear, they may afterward experience, and profess that they may not abide in that darkness. [3.] They are delivered from that darkness which is perpetual, and which abideth for ever, that utter darkness where is not the least gleam of light or hope of it.

II. The peril and danger they are in that believe not, which gives fair warning to take heed of persisting in unbelief; (v. 47, 48.) "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not, not I only, or not now, lest I should be looked upon as unfair in being judge in my own cause; yet let not infidels say this was occasioned by prejudice, for though I judge him not, in one that judgeth him."

So that we have here the doom of unbelief. Observe,

1. Who they are, whose unbelief is here condemned; they who hear Christ's words, and yet believe them not; those shall not be condemned for their infidelity, that never had, or could have, the same light which was the light of the Gentiles. The dispensation of light he was under; they that have sinned without law, shall be judged without law. But those that have heard, or might have heard, and would not, lie open to this doom.

2. What is the constructive malignity of their unbelief; not receiving Christ's word; it is interpreted, (v. 48.) a rejecting of Christ, obsecrati. It denotes a rejection with scorn and contempt. Where the banner of the gospel is displayed, no neutrality is admitted; every man is either a subject or an enemy.

3. The wonderful patience and forbearance of our Lord Jesus, exercised towards those who slighted him when he was come here upon earth; I judge him not, not now. Note, Christ was not quick or hasty to take advantage against those who refused the first offers of his grace, but continued waiting to be gracious. He did not strike those dumb or dead, who contradicted him, never made intercession against Israel, as Elias did; though he had authority to judge, he suspended the execution of it, because he had work of another nature to do first, and that was to save the world. (1.) To save effectually those that were given him, before he came to judge the degenerate body of mankind. (2.) To offer salvation to all the world, and thus for to save them, that it is their own fault if they be not saved. He was to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Now the executing of the power of a judge was not congruous with that undertaking, Acts 8. 33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away, it was suspended for a time.

4. The certain and unavoidable judgment of unbelievers at the coming great day, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; unbelief will certainly be a damning sin. Some think when Christ saith, I judge no man, he means that they are condemned already; there needs no process, they are self-judged, no execution, they are self-ruined; judgment goes against them of course, Heb. 2. 3. Christ needs not appear against them as their accuser, they are miserable if he do not appear for them as their advocate; however, he tells them plainly, when and where they will be reckoned with.

(1.) There is one that judgeth them. Nothing is more dreadful than abused patience, and grace trampled on; though for a while mercy rejected against judgment, yet there will be judgment without mercy.

(2.) Their final judgment is reserved to the last day; to that day of judgment Christ here binds over all unbelievers, to answer then for all the contempts they have put upon him. Divine justice has appointed a day, and adjourns the sentence to that day, as Matt. 26. 64.

(3.) The word of Christ will judge them then: The words that I have spoken, how light soever you have made of them, the same shall judge the unbelievers of Christ's word, are said to judge, Luke 22. 30. Christ's words will judge unbelievers two ways. [1.] As the evidence of their crime, they will convict them. Every word Christ spoke, every sermon,
every argument, every kind offer, will be produced as a testimony against those who slightest all he said.

[2.] As the rule of their doom, they will condemn them; they shall be judged according to the tenor of that covenant which Christ procured and published. That word of Christ, He that believes not, shall be damned, will judge all unbelievers to eternal ruin; and there are many such like.

III. The commission of the authority Christ had to demand our faith, and require us to receive his doctrine upon pain of damnation, 

v. 49, 50. Where observe,

1. The commission which our Lord Jesus received from the Father to deliver his doctrine to the world; (v. 49.) I have not spoken of myself, as a mere man, nor of common man; but the Father gave me a commandment what I should say. This is the same with what he said ch. 7, 16. My doctrine is, (1.) Not mine, for I have not spoken of myself. Christ, as Son of man, did not speak that which was of human contrivance or composures; as Son of God, he did not act separately, or by himself alone, but what he said was the result of the counsels of peace; as Mediator, he coming into the world was voluntary, and with his full consent, but not arbitrary, and of his own head. But, (2.) It was his that sent him. God the Father gave him, [1.] His commission. God sent him as his agent and plenipotentiary to concert matters between him and man, to set a treaty of peace on foot, and to settle the articles. [2.] His instructions, here called a commandment, for the same as those given an ambassador, directing him not only what he may say, but what he must say. The messenger of the covenant was entrusted with an errand which he must deliver. Note, Our Lord Jesus learned obedience himself, before he taught it us, though he were a Son. The Lord God commanded the first Adam, and by his disobedience ruined us; he commanded the second Adam to speak and he by his obedience saved us.

2. God commanded him what he should say, and what he should speak, two words signifying the same thing, to denote that every word was divine. The Old Testament prophets sometimes spoke of themselves; but Christ spoke by the Spirit at all times. Some make this distinction, He was directed what he should say in his set sermons, and what he should speak in his free discourse with his hearers. Others this: He was directed what he should say in his preaching now, and what he should speak in his judging at the last day; for he had commission and instructions for both.

2. The scope, design, and tendency, of that commission, v. 50. I know that his commandment is life everlasting. The commission given to Christ had a reference to the everlasting state of the children of men, and was in order to their everlasting life and happiness in that state: the instructions given to Christ as a prophet, were to reveal eternal life; (1 John 5, 11.) the power given to Christ as a King, was to give eternal life, ch. 17, 2. Thus the command given him was life everlasting. This Christ says he knew; "I know it is so; which intimates how cheerfully, and with what assurance Christ pursued his undertaking, knowing it to be very well that he went upon a good errand, and that which would bring forth fruit unto life eternal. It intimates likewise how justly they will persist, who reject Christ and his word. Those who disobey Christ, despise everlasting life, and renounce it; so that not only Christ’s words will judge them, but even their own; so shall their doings with themselves have decided it; and who can except against it?

S. Christ’s exact observance of the commission and instructions given him, and his steady acting in pursuance of them. Whatever I speak, it is as the Father said unto me. Christ was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God, and was faithful in discovering so much of them to the children of men, as it was agreed should be discovered, and kept back nothing that was profitable. As the faithful witness delivers souls, so did he, and spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Note, (1.) This is a great encouragement to faith; the sayings of Christ, rightly understood, are what we may venture our souls upon. (2.) It is a great example of obedience. Christ said as he was bidden, and so must we; communicated what the Father said to him, and so must we. See Acts 4, 20. In the midst of all the respects paid him, this is the honour he values himself upon, that what the Father had said to him, that he spoke, and in the manner as he was directed, him he spoke. This was his glory, that, as a Son, he was faithful to him that appointed him; and, by an unfeigned belief of every word of Christ, and an entire submission of soul to it, we must give him the glory due to his name.

CHAP. XIII.

Our Saviour, having finished his public discourses, in which he endured the contradiction of sinners, now applies himself to a private conversation with his friends, in which he designed the consolation of saints. Hereafter we have an account of what passed between him and his disciples, who were to be entrusted with the affairs of his household, when he was gone into a far country; the necessary instructions and comforts he furnished them with. His last being at hand, he applies himself to set his house in order. In this chapter, I. He washes his disciples’ feet, v. 1-13. II. He foretells who should betray him, v. 18. 30. III. He instructs them in the great doctrine of his own death, and the great duty of brotherly love, v. 31. 35. IV. He foretells Peter’s denying of him, v. 36. 85.

1. NOW before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. 2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; 4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. 5. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. 6. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? 7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. 8. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt not wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. 9. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. 10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed, needeth not to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. 11. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. 12. So after
ne had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? 13. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well: for so am I. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. 15. For I have given you an example, that ye should as I have done to you. 16. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

It has generally been taken for granted, that Christ's washing his disciples' feet, and the discourse that followed it, were the same night in which he was betrayed, and at the same sitting wherein he ate the passover, as Mr. Henry supposes. But whether before the solemnity began, or after it was all over, or between the eating of the passover, and the institution of the Lord's supper, they are not agreed. This evangelist, making it his business to gather up these passages which the others had omitted, industriously omits these which the others had recorded; which occasions some difficulty in putting them together. And if it were not that the Lord's second time anointed Christ's head with the remainder of her box of ointment, or, it might be at some other supper the night before the passover, not as that was in the house of Simon the leper, but in his own lodgings, where he had none but his disciples about him, and could be more free with them.

In these verses we have the story of Christ's washing his disciples' feet; it was an action of a singular nature, a most peculiar miracle, unless we call it a miracle of humility. Mary had just anointed his head; now, lest his acceptance of that should look like taking state, he presently balances it with this act of abasement. But why would Christ do this? If the disciples' feet needed washing, they could do it themselves; a wise man will not do a thing that looks odd and unusual, but for very good causes and considerations. We are sure that it was not in a humour or a frolic that this was done; no, the transaction was very solemn, and carried on with a deal of seriousness; and four reasons are here intimated why Christ did this. 1. That he might testify his love to his disciples, v. 1, 2. That he might give instance of his own voluntary humility and condescension, v. 5-10. 3. That he might signify to them in their spiritual state, that this is referred to his discourse with Peter, v. 6-11. 4. That he might set them an example, v. 12-17. And the opening of these four reasons for it, will take in the exposition of the whole story.

1. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might give a proof of that great love wherewith he loved them; loved them to the end, v. 1, 2.

1. It is here laid down as an unquestioned truth, that our Lord Jesus, having loved his own which were in the world, loved them to the end, v. 1.

(1.) This is true of the disciples that were his immediate followers, in particular the twelve. These were his own in the world, his family, his school, his bosom-friends. Children he had none to call his own, but he adopted them, and took them as his own. He had those that were his own in the other world, but he left them for a time, to look after his own in this world. These he loved, he called them, he followed them, was familiar with them, was always tender of them, and of their comfort and reputation. He allowed them to be very free with him, and bore with their infirmities.

He loved them to the end, continued his love to them as long as he lived, and after his resurrection; he never took away his loving-kindness. Though there were some persons of quality that espoused his cause, he did not lay aside his love and his fellowship for them, but still stuck to his poor fishermen. They were weak and defective in knowledge and grace, dull and forgetful; and yet, though he preserved them often, he never ceased to love them, and take care of them.

(2.) It is true of all believers, for these twelve patriarchs were the representatives of all the tribes of God's spiritual Israel. Note, [1.] That God's love is constant, and proceeds from the nature of God himself, and its being an essential part of his being. It is the nature of the Godhead itself to love. [2.] That the love of Christ has regard to the whole man, as a centre and a head, and is uniformly so. When the apostle saith, to the same effect, "I care not for the gift brought me, but theoner that brought it." 1 Cor. xvi. 17. And this is especially the case in communion with the Father. [3.] That Christ's love has regard both to the present and the future. Hebrews x. 5. This is as true of every individual as of the church in general; for he has given time to every one of them, and of every one of their posterity.

2. Christ manifested his love to them by washing their feet, as that good woman (Luke 7. 44.) showed her love to Christ by washing his feet, and perfuming them. Thus he would shew that as his love to them was constant, so was condescending, that in preface of the designs of it he was willing to humble himself; and that the graceful of his exalted state, which he was now entering upon, should be no obstruction at all to the favour he bore to his chosen: and thus he would confirm the promise he had made to the apostles, when he washed their feet, and said, it is done to meat, and would come forth, and serve them. (Luke 12. 37.) would put honour upon them, as great and surprising as for the Lord to serve his servants. The disciples had just now betrayed the weakness of their love to him, in grudging the ointment that was poured upon his head; (Matt. 26. 8.) yet he presently gives this proof of his love to them. Own infirmities are foils to Christ's kindnesses, and set them off.

3. He chose this time to do it, a little before his last passover, for two reasons:
(1.) Because now he knew that his hour was come, which he had long expected, when he should depart from this world to the Father. Observe here,

[1.] The change that was to pass over our Lord Jesus; he must depart. This began at his death, but was completed at his ascension. As Christ himself, so all believers, by virtue of their union with him, when they depart out of the world, are absent from the body, go to the Father, are present with the Lord. It is a deep moral and spiritual truth, this unholy, this faithless, this wicked, this world; this world of labour, toil, and temptation; this vale of tears; and it is going to the Father, to the vision of the Father of spirits, and the fruition of him as our's.

[2.] The time of this change; his hour was come. It is sometimes called his enemies' hour, (Luke 22. 53.) the hour of their triumph; sometimes his hour, the hour of his sufferings; of his being washed, it was a deep moral and spiritual truth, this unholy, this faithless, this wicked, this world; this world of labour, toil, and temptation; this vale of tears; and it is going to the Father, to the vision of the Father of spirits, and the fruition of him as our's.

[3.] His foresight of it; He knew that his hour was come; he knew from the beginning that it would come, and when, but now he knew that it was come. We know not when our hour will come, and therefore, it is requisite that we be in habitual preparation for it, that we may be ready when it comes; it ought never to be undone; but when we know by the harbingers that our hour is come, we must vigorously apply ourselves to an actual preparation, as our Master did, 2 Pet. 3. 14.

Now it was in the immediate foresight of his departure that he washed his disciples' feet; that, as his own head was anointed just now against the day of his burial, so their feet might be washed against the day of their consecration by the descent of the Holy Ghost fifty days after, as the priests were washed, Lev. 8. 6. When we see our day of approaching, we should do what good we can to those we leave behind.

(2.) Because the devil had now put it into the heart of Judas to betray him, v. 2. These words in a parenthesis may be considered,

[1.] As tracing Judas's treason to its original; it was a sin of such a nature, that it evidently bore the devil's image and superscription. What way of access the devil has to men's hearts, and by what methods he darts in his suggestions, and mingles them undiscerned with those thoughts which are the natives of the heart, we cannot tell. But there are some sins in their own nature so exceeding sinfulness, that none but the devil himself, and his agents, could possibly, except by the grace of God, contrive; and these are so little temptation from the world and the flesh, that it is plain, Satan laid the egg of them in a heart disposed to be the nest to hatch them in. For Judas to betray such a Master so cheaply, and upon no provocation, was such downright enmity to God, as could not be forged but by Satan himself, who thereby thought to ruin the Redeemer's kingdom, and it proved the ruin of his own.

[2.] As intimating a reason why Christ now washed his disciples' feet. First, Judas being now resolved to betray him, the time of his departure could not be far off; if this matter be determined, it is easy to infer with St. Paul, I am now ready to be offered. Note, The more malicious we perceive our enemies to be against us, the more industrious we should be in that which may be of some use to us; and in that which may come. Secondly, Judas being now got into the snare, and the devil aiming at Peter, and the rest of them, (Luke 22. 31.) Christ would fortify his own against him. If the wolf has seized one of the flock, it is time for the shepherd to look well to the rest. An inducement must be stirring, when the infection is begun. Dr. Lightfoot observes that the disciples had learned of Judas to depart at the coming of Christ; compare ch. 12. 4, &c. with Matt. 26. 8. Now, lest they that had learned that of him, should learn worse, he fortifies them by a lesson of his humility against his most dangerous assaults. Thirdly, Judas, who was now plotting to betray him, was one of the twelve. Now Christ would hereby shew that he did not design to cast them all off for the faults of one. Though one of their college had a devil, and was a traitor, yet they should fear never the worse for that. Christ loves his church, though there are hypocrites in it, and had still a kindness for his disciples, though there was a Judas among them, and he knew it.

II. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might give an instance of his own wonderful humility, and show how lowly and condescending he was, and let all the world know how low he could stoop in love to his own. This is intimated, v. 3. Jesus knowing, and now actually considering, and perhaps discoursing of his honours as Mediator, and telling his friends that the Father had given all things into his hand, he went from sufferer, and, to the great surprise of the company, who wondered what he was going to do, washed his disciples' feet.

1. Here is the rightful advancement of the Lord Jesus. Glorious things are here said of Christ as Messiah.

[1.] The Father had given all things into his hands; had given him a property in all, and a power over all, as Possessor of heaven and earth, in pursuance of the great designs of his undertaking; see Matt. 11. 27. The accommodation and arbitration of all matters in variance between God and man, were committed into his hands as the great umpire and referee; and the administration of the kingdom of God, and the whole course of events, in all the branches of it, was committed to him; so that all acts, both of government and judgment, were to pass through his hands; he is heir of all things.

[2.] He came from God; this implies that he was in the beginning with God, and had a being and glory, not only before he was born into this world, but before the world itself was born; and that when he came into the world, he came as God's ambassador, with a commission from him. He came from God as the Son of God, and the sent of God. The Old Testament prophets were raised up and employed for God, but Christ came directly from him.

[3.] He went to God, to be glorified with him with the same glory which he had with God from eternity. That which comes from God, shall go to God; they that are born from heaven, are bound for heaven; in Christ the tree of life was planted, and God was the root and the foundation thereof; the Saviour is the Agent for us on earth, so he went to God to be an agent for us in heaven; and it is a comfort to us to think how welcome he was there; he was brought near to the Ancient of days, Dan. 7. 13. And it was said to him, Sit thou at my right hand, Ps. 110. 1.

[4.] He knew all this; was not like a prince in the cradle, that knows nothing of the honour he is born for, no, but knew it from God; he knew he had the characteristics and defects of his exalted state, and yet stopped thus low. But how does this come in here?

[1.] As an inducement to him now quickly to leave what lessons and legacies he had to leave to his disciples, because his hour was now come when he must take his leave of them, and be exalted above the familiar converse which he had now with them, v. 1.

[2.] It may come in as that which supported him under his sufferings, and carried him cheerfully through this sharp encounter. Judas was now betraying him, and he knew it, and knew what would be the consequence of it, yet, knowing also that he came from God, and went to God, he did not draw back, but went on cheerfully.

[3.] It seems to come in as a foil to his condescen-
sion, to make it the more admirable. The reasons of divine grace are sometimes represented in scripture as strange and surprising; (as Isa. 57. 17, 18. Hos. 2. 13, 14.) so here that is given as an inducement to Christ to stoop, which should rather have been a reason for his taking state; for God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, nor his ways as man's ways; and we must therefore reverence the most signal instances of condescending grace, with the displays of divine glory, as Ps. 68. 4, 5. Isa. 57. 15.—66. 1, 2.

2. Here is the voluntary abasement of our Lord Jesus notwithstanding this. Jesus knowing his own glory as God, and his own authority and power as Mediator, one would think it should follow, He rises from such a superiority, and employs meaner ways, calls for more servile acts; bids them keep their distance, and do him homage; no, quite contrary, when he considered this, he gave the greatest instance of humility. Note, (1.) A well grounded assurance of heaven and happiness, instead of puffing a man with pride, will make and keep him very humble. (2.) Those that would be found conformable to Christ, and partakers of his Spirit, must study to keep their minds low in the most mean engagements. Now that which Christ humbled himself to, was, to wash his disciples' feet.

[1.] The action itself was mean and servile, and that which servants of the lowest rank were employed in. Let thine handmaid (saith Abigail) be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord; let me be in the meanest of servants, 1 Sam. 25. 41. If it had been to his handmaids or hands, or feet, it had been great condescension; (Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah, 2 Kings 3. 11.) but for Christ to stoop to such a piece of drudgery as this, we may well be amazed at it. Thus he would teach us to think nothing below us, wherein we may be serviceable to God's glory, and the good of our brethren.

[2.] The condescension was so much the greater, that he thought this for his own disciples, who in themselves were of a low and desppicable condition, not curious about their bodies; their feet, it is likely, seldom washed, and therefore very dirty. In relation to him, they were his scholars, his servants, and such as should have washed his feet, whose dependence was upon him, and their expectations from him. Many, of great spirits otherwise, will do a mean action for his favour with their superiors, they rise by stooping, and climb by crying; but for Christ to do this to his disciples, could be no act of policy or complaisance, but pure humility.

[3.] He rose from supper to do it. Though we translate it, (v. 2.) supper being ended; it might be better read, there being a supper made, or he being at supper; for he sat down again, (v. 12.) and we find him dipping a sop, (v. 26.) so that he did it in the midst of his meal, and thereby taught us, First, Not to reckon it a disturbance, or any just cause of uncessiveness, to be called from our meal to do God or our brother any real service, estamishing the discharge of our duty more than our necessary food, ch. 4. 34. Christ would not leave his preaching, to oblige his nearest relations, (Mark 3. 33.) but would leave his supper, to shew his love to his disciples. Secondly, Not to be ashamed, as some, to wash the feet of a servant, though of the greatest dignity, and it would have seemed a squabish stomach to wash dirty feet at supper-time; but Christ did it, not that we might learn to be rude and slovenly, (cleanliness and godliness will do well together,) but to teach us not to be curious, not to indulge, but mortify, the delicacy of the appetite, giving good manners their due place, and no more.

[4.] He put himself in the lowest shape of a servant, to wash the feet of the greatest, to wash the loose and upper garments, that he might apply himself to this service the more expeditely. We must address ourselves to those as duties that are resolved not to take state, but to take

Jesus; we must divest ourselves of every thing that would offended our pride, or hang in our way, and hinder us in what we have to do; must gird up the loins of our mind, as those that in earnest buckle to business.

[5.] He did it with all the humble ceremony that can be, went through all the parts of the ceremony distinctly, and passed by none of them; he did it as if he had been used thus to serve; did it himself alone, and had none to minister to him in it. He girded himself with the towel, as servants throw a napkin on their arm, or put an apron before them; he poured water into the basin out of the water-pots that stood by, (ch. 2. 6.) and then washed their feet; indeed, to consider, it must be thought, he did not wash the feet of them all, but only four or five of them, that being thought sufficient to answer the end; but I see nothing to countenance this conjecture, for in other places where he did make a difference, it is taken notice of; and his washing the feet of them all without exception, teaches us a catholic and extensive charity to all Christ's disciples, even the least.

[6.] Nothing appears to the contrary, but that he washed the feet of Judas among the rest, for he was present, v. 26. It is the character of a widow indeed, that she had washed the same feet, (1 Tim. 5. 10.) and there is some comfort in that; but the blessed Jesus here washed the feet of a sinner, the worst of sinners, the worst to him, who was at this time contriving to betray him.

Many interpreters make Christ washing his disciples' feet a representation of his whole undertaking. He knew that he was equal with God, and all things were his; and yet he rose from his table in glory, laid aside his robes of light, girded himself with our nature, took upon him the form of a servant, came not to be ministered to, but to minister, poured out his blood, poured out his soul unto death, and thus prepared a laver to wash us from our sins, Rev. 1. 5.

III. Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might signify to them spiritual washing, and the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin. This is plainly intimated in his discourse with Peter upon it, v. 6—11. In which we may observe,

1. The surprise Peter was in, when he saw his Master go to wash him, and did lay aside his garments, and bid him put out his feet to be washed. Chrysostom conjectures that he washed the feet of Judas first, who readily admitted it, and was pleased to see his Master so disarm himself. It is most probable, when he went about this service, (which is all that is meant by his beginning to wash, v. 5.) that he took Peter first; and the rest would not have suffered it, if they had not first heard it explained in what passed between Christ and Peter.

Whether Christ came first to Peter or no, when he did come to him, Peter started at the proposal; Lord, (saith he,) dost thou wash my feet? Here is an emphasis to be laid upon the persons, thou and me; and the placing of the words is observable, of Christ to Peter; and to us, thou and me. The question is, Quod est, tu? Quid est, mihi? Cogitabis aut potius quia dixi—Dost thou wash my feet? What is it, thou? What is it, for me? These things are rather to be contemplated than uttered. Aug. in loc. What, thou! our Lord and Master, whom we know and believe to be the Son of God, and Saviour and Ruler of the world, do this for me, a worthless worm of the earth, a sinful man? O Lord, shall these hands wash which have touched a leper, given sight to the blind, and raised the dead? So Theophylact, and from him Dr. Taylor. Very willingly would Peter have taken the basin and towel, and washed his Master's feet, and been proud
of the honour, Luke 17. 7. 8. This had been natural and regular. "For my Master to wash my feet, is such a solemn as never was; such a paradox as cannot be understood; Is this the manner of men?" Note, Christ's condescensions, especially his condescensions to us, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly the matter of our admiration, ch. 14. 22. Who am I, Lord God? And what is my father's house?

2. The immediate satisfaction Christ gave to this question of surprise, which was at least sufficient to make all the immediate followers of him, at least, "What I do, thou knowest now, but shalt know hereafter. Here are two reasons why Peter must submit to what Christ was doing.

(1.) Because he was at present in the dark concerning it, and ought not to oppose what he did not understand, but acquiesce in the will and wisdom of one who could give a good reason for all he said and did. Christ would teach Peter an implicit obedience; "What I do, thou knowest now, and therefore art no competent judge of it, but must believe it is well done, because I do it." Note, Consciousness to ourselves of the darkness we labour under, and our inability to judge of what God doeth, should make us sparing and modest in our censures on others, Heb. 4. 1.

(2.) Because there was something considerable in it, which he should hereafter know the meaning of; "Thou shalt know hereafter what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the heinous sin of denying me;" so some. "Thou shalt know, when, in the discharge of the office of an apostle, thou wilt be employed in washing off those under thy charge the sins and defilements of their earthly affections," so Dr. Hammond. Note, [1.] Our Lord Jesus does many things which even his own disciples do not for the present know the meaning of, but they shall know afterward; what he did, when he became man for us; and what he did when he became a worm, and no man, for us; what he did when he lived our life, and what he did when he laid it down, could not be understood till afterward, and then it appeared that it behoved him, Heb. 2. 17. Subsequent providences explain preceding ones; and we see afterward what was the kind tendency of events that seemed most cross; and the way which we thought was about, proved the right way. [2.] Christ's washing his disciples' feet, had a significancy in it, which they themselves did not discern; afterward; until the Spirit was poured out upon them from on high, when Christ explained it to be a specimen of the laver of regeneration. We must let Christ take his own way, both in ordinances and providences, and we shall find in the issue it was the best way.

3. Peter's peremptory refusal, notwithstanding this, to let Christ wash his feet; (v. 8.) Thou shalt by no means wash my feet, no, ever. So it is in the original. It is the language of a fixed resolution.

Now, (1.) Here was a show of humility and modesty. Peter herein seemed to have, and no doubt he really had, a great respect for his Master, as he had, Luke 5. 8. Thus many are beguiled of their reward in a vesture of humility, Col. 2. 18, 23. Such a self-delusion as Christ seems to expose, by disallowing our pretensions to accept, for, (2.) Under this show of humility there was a real contradiction to the will of the Lord Jesus: I will wash thy feet, saith Christ; "But thou never shalt," saith Peter; "it is not a fitting thing:" so making himself wiser than Christ. It is not humility, but immodesty, to put away the offers of the gospel, either too rich to be made us, or too good news to be true.

4. Christ's insisting upon his offer, and a good reason given to Peter, why he should accept it; If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Which may be taken,

(1.) As a severe caution against disobedience; "If I wash thee not, if thou continue refractory, and wilt not comply with thy Master's will in so small a matter, thou shalt not be owned as one of my disciples, but be justly discarded and cashiered for not observing orders." Thus several of the ancients understand it; if Peter will make himself wiser than his Master, and dispute the commands he ought to obey, he does not give effect to ransom his allegiance, and make God his portion, Wisd. 16. 6. So to hold, will Christ the Son of David? And so shall his doom be, he shall have no part in him. Let him use no more manners than do him good, for to obey is better than sacrifice, 1 Sam. 15. 22. Or,

(2.) As a declaration of the necessity of spiritual washing; and so I think it is to be understood; "If I wash not thy soul from the pollution of sin, thou hast no part with me, no interest in me, no communion with me, no benefit by me." Note, All those, and those only, that are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ. [1.] To have a part in Christ, or with Christ, has all the happiness of a Christian bound up in it, to be partakers of Christ, (Heb. 3. 14.) to share in those inestimable privileges which Christ willed to be distinct from him and his glory, and relation to him. It is that good part, the having of which is one thing needful. [2.] It is necessary to our having a part in Christ, that he wash us. All those whom Christ owns and saves, he justifies and sanctifies, and both are included in his washing them. We cannot partake of his glory, if we partake not of his merit and righteousness, and of his Spirit and grace.

5. Peter's more than submission, his earnest request, to be washed by Christ, v. 9. If this be the meaning of it, Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. How soon is Peter's mind changed! When the mistake of his understanding was rectified, the corrupt resolution of his will was soon altered. Let us therefore not be peremptory in any resolve, (but only in our resolve to follow Christ,) because we may soon see cause to retract it; but let us be cautious in taking up a purpose we will be tenacious of. Observe, (1.) How ready Peter is to recede from what he had said; "Lord, what a fool was I to speak such a hasty word!" Now that the washing of him appeared to be an act of Christ's authority and grace, he admits it; but disliked it, when it seemed only an act of his own free will. Note, [1.] Good men, when they see their error, will not be loath to correct it. [2.] Sooner or later, Christ will bring all to be of his mind.

(2.) How importunate he is for the purifying grace of the Lord Jesus, and the universal influence of it, even upon his hands and head. Note, A divorce from Christ, and an exclusion from having a part in him, is the most formidable evil in the eyes of all that are enlightened, for the fear of which they will be persuaded to any thing. And for fear of this we should be earnest with God in prayer, that he will wash us; will justify and sanctify us. "Lord, that I may not be cut off from thee, make me fit for thee, by the washing of regeneration. Lord, wash, not my feet only from the gross pollutions that cleave to me, but my hands, to trim and adorn the face of thy house. Lord, wash me and cleanse me from all spots which they have contracted, and the undiscovered filth which proceeds by perspiration from the body itself." Note, Those who truly desire to be sanctified, desire to be sanctified throughout, and to have the whole man, with all its parts and powers purified, 1 Thess. 5. 23.

6. Christ's further explication of this sign, as it represents spiritual washing.

(1.) With reference to his disciples that were, faithful to him; (v. 10.) He that is washed all over
in the bath, (as was frequently practised in those countries,) when he returns to his house, needeth not to have his feet washed, his hands and head having been washed, and he having only dirtied his feet in walking home. Peter had gone from one extreme to the other; at first he would not let Christ wash his feet; and now he overlooks what Christ had done for him in his baptism, and, acting after the example of the disciples, he riseth up to have his hands and head washed; now Christ directs him into the meaning: he must have his feet washed, but not his hands and head.

[1.] See here what is the comfort and privilege of such as are in a justified state; they are washed by Christ, and are clean everywhith, they are graciously accepted of God, as if they were so; and though they have been guilty of sin, and repentance, to be again put into a justified state, for then should they often be baptized. The evidence of a justified state may be clauded, and the comfort of it suspended, when yet the charter of it is not vacated or taken away. Though we have occasion to repent daily, God’s gifts and callings are without repentance. The heart may be sweet and garnished, and yet still remain the devil’s palace; but if it is washed, it belongs to Christ, and he will not lose it.

[2.] See what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is, to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from the guilt they contract daily through infirmity and inadvertency, by the renewed exercise of repentance, with a believing application of the virtue of Christ’s blood. We cannot for a moment shirk watchfulness against every thing that is defiling, for we must cleanse our way, and cleanse our feet, by taking heed thereto, Ps. 119. 9. The priests, when they were consecrated, were washed with water; and though they did not need afterward to be so washed all over, yet, whenever they went in, to minister, they must wash their feet and hands at the laver, on pain of death, Exod. 30. 19, 20. The provision made for our cleansing should not make us presumptuous, but the more cautious: I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? From yesterday’s pardon, we should fetch an argument against this day’s temptation.

(2.) With reflection upon Judas; and ye are clean, but not all, v. 10, 11. He pronounces his disciples clean, and then he hath spoken to them; v. 12. He washed them himself, Ye are clean; but he excepts Judas; not all; they were all baptized, even Judas, yet not all clean; many have the sign, that have not the thing signified. Note, [1.] Even among those who are called disciples of Christ, and profess relation to him, there are some who are not clean, Prov. 30. 12. [2.] The Lord knows them that are his, and them that are not, 2 Tim. 2. 19. The eye of Christ can separate, between the precious and the vile, the clean and the unclean. [3.] When those that have called themselves disciples, afterward prove traitors, their apostacy, at last, is a certain evidence of their hypocrisy all along. [4.] Christ sees it necessary to let his disciples know that they are not all clean; that we may all be jealous over ourselves, (Is it I, Lord, is it I, that am among the clean, yet not clean?) and that when we are discovered, it may be no surprise or stumbling to us.

IV. Christ washed his disciples’ feet, to set before us an example. This explication he gave of what he had done, when he had done it, v. 12—17. 1. Observe with what solemnity he gave an account of the meaning of what he had done, (v. 12.) After he had washed their feet, he said, Know ye what I have done? (1.) He adjourned the explication till he had finished the transaction, [1.] To try their submission

and implicit obedience. What he did, they should not know till after, that they might learn to acquiesce in his will when they could not give a reason for it. [2.] Because it was proper to finish the riddle before he unbriddled it. Thus, as to his whole undertaking, when his sufferings were finished, he had resumed the garments of his exalted state, and was ready to sit down again, then he opened the understandings of his disciples, and poured out his Spirit, Luke 24. 45, 46.

(2.) Before he explained it, he asked them if they could construe it; Know ye what I have done to you? He put this question to them, not only to make them sensible of their ignorance, and the need they had to be instructed, (as Zech. 4, 6, 11.) But that they might reflect upon the view of their desires and expectations of instruction; "I would have you know, and if you will give attention, I will tell you." Note, It is the will of Christ that sacramental signs should be explained, and that his people should be acquainted with the meaning of them; otherwise, though ever so significant, to them who know not the thing signified, they are insignificant; it is one thing to ask, What mean ye by this service? Exod. 12. 26.

2. Observe what he grounds that which he had to say upon; (v. 13.) ‘You call me Master and Lord, you give me those titles, in speaking of me, in speaking to me, and you say well, for so I am; you are in the relation of scholars to me, and I do the part of a master to you.’ Note, (1.) Jesus Christ is our Master and Lord; he is that we Redeemer and Saviour, in order to engage, or draw us to him. Master, &c. —or Ruler and Owner, that has authority over us, and propriety in us. (2.) It becomes the disciples of Christ to call him Master and Lord, not in compliment, but in reality; not by constraint, but with delight. Devout Mr. Herbert, when he mentioned the name of Christ, used to add, my Master; and thus expresses himself concerning it in one of his poems; How sweetly doth my Master sound, my Master! As ambergris leaves a rich scent unto the taster. So do these words a sweet content; an oriental fragrance, my Master.

3. Our calling Christ Master and Lord, is an obligation upon us to receive and observe the instructions he gives us. Christ would thus pre-engage their obedience to a command that was displeasing to flesh and blood. If Christ be our Master and Lord, he be so by our own consent, and we have often called him so, we are bound in honour and honesty to be observant of him.

3. Observe the lesson which Christ hereby taught; Ye are also taught to wash one another’s feet, v. 14. (1.) Some have understood this literally, and have thought these words amount to the institution of a standing ordinance in the church; that Christians should, in a solemn religious manner, wash one another’s feet, in token of their condescending love to one another. St. Ambrose took it so, and practised it in the church of Milan. St. Austin saith, that this Christian love they did not do it with their hands, yet (he supposed) did it with their hearts and humility; but he saith, It is much better to do it with the hands also, when there is occasion, as 1 Tim. 5. 10. What Christ has done, Christians should not disdain to do. Calvin saith, that the pope, in the annual observing of this ceremony on Thursday in the passion week, is rather Christ’s ape than his follower, for the duty enjoined, in conformity to Christ, was mutual; Wash one another’s feet. And Januarius saith, It is done. Frigidus et dissimilis—Frigidly, and unlike the primitive model.
(2.) But doubtless it is to be understood figuratively; it is an instructive sign, but not sacramental, as the eucharist. This was a parable to the eye; and three things our Master hereby designed to teach us.

[1.] A humble condensation; we must learn of our Master to be lovely in heart, (Matt. 11. 29.) and walk with all lowliness; we must think meanly of ourselves, and respectful to them who are called brethren. We must see that our humility is not sin; we must say of that which seems mean, but has a tendency to the glory of God, and our brethren’s good, as David, (2 Sam. 6. 22.) If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile. Christ had often taught his disciples humility, and they had forgotten the lesson; but now he teaches them in such a way as surely they could never forget.

[2.] A precept to be serviceable. To one another’s feet is to stoop. To stoop is the meanest offices of love, for the real good and benefit one of another, as blessed Paul, who, though free from all, made himself servant of all; and the blessed Jesus, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We must not grudge to take care and pains, and to spend time, and to diminish ourselves for the good of others, that we are not under any particular obligations to do so, even to our inferiors, and such as are not in a capacity of making us any requital. Washing the feet after travel, contributes both to the decency of the person, and to his ease, so that to wash one another’s feet, is to consult both the credit and the comfort one of another; to do what we can, to both advance our brethren’s reputation and to make their minds easy. See to it, (3 John 1.) for this is a command, (Gal. 6. 10.) The duty is mutual; we must both accept help from our brethren, and afford help to our brethren.

[3.] A serviceableness to the sanctification of one another; Ye ought to wash one another’s feet, from the pollutions of sin. Austin takes it in this sense, and many others. We cannot satisfy for one another’s sins, that is peculiar to Christ, but we may help to free one another from sin. We must wash our brethren in the first place wash ourselves; this charity must begin at home, (Matt. 7. 5.) but it must not end there, we must sorrow for the failings and follies of our brethren, much more their gross pollutions, (1 Cor. 5. 2.) must wash our brethren’s polluted feet in tears. We must faithfully reprove them, and do what we can to bring them to repentance, (Gal. 6. 1.) and to diminish their falling into the mire; this is washing their feet.

4. Here is the ratifying and enforcing of this command from the example of what Christ had now done; If your Lord and Master have done it to you, you ought to do it to one another. He shews the efficacy of this argument in two things.

(1.) I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you ought to learn of me. (13.) I am in this, as in other things, I have given you an example, that you should do to others, as I have done to you. Observe,

[1.] What a good teacher Christ is. He teaches by example as well as doctrine, and for that end came into this world, and dwelt among us, that he might set us a copy of all these graces and duties which his holy religion teaches; and that it is as it is in heaven, without one false stroke. Hereby he made his own laws more intelligible and honourable. Christ is a commander like Gideon, who said to his soldiers, Look on me, and do likewise; (Judg. 7. 17.) like Abimelech, who said, What ye have seen me do, make haste and do as I have done; (Judg. 9. 48.) like Cassar, who called his soldiers, not milites —soldiers, but cameleers; or fellow soldiers, and whose usual word was, not Ist leu, but Varius hic; not Go, but Come.

[2.] What good scholars we must be; we must do as he hath done; for therefore he gave us a copy, that we should write after it, that we might be as he was in this world, (1 John 4. 17.) and walk as he walked, 1 John 2. 6. Christ’s example herein is to be followed by ministers in particular, in whom the graces of humility and holy love should especially appear, and by the exercise thereof they effectually serve the interests of their Master, and the ends of their ministry. When Christ sent his apostles alone with his angels, in the war with the powers of darkness, they should not take state upon them, nor carry things with a high hand, but become all things to all men, 1 Cor. 9. 22. What I have done to your dirty feet, that do ye to the polluted souls of sinners; wash them. Some who suppose this to be done at the passover supper, think it intimates a rule in admitting communicants to the Lord’s supper, to see that they be first washed and cleansed, by faith and prayer, and a blameless conversation, and then take them in to compass God’s altar. But all christians likewise are here taught to condense and to each other in love, and to do it as Christ did it, unasked, unpaid; we must not be mercenary in the services of love, nor do them with reluctance.

(2.) I am your Master, and you are my disciples, and therefore you cannot think it before you do that, how mean soever it may seem, which you have seen me do, for, (7. 16.) the servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, though sent with all the pomp and power of an ambassador, greater than he that sent him. Christ had urged this (Matt. 10. 24. 25.) as a reason why they should not think it strange if they suffered as he did; here he urges this as his reason why they should not think it strange if they suffered as he suffered. We must much humbly do much more humbly do ourselves, lest Christ’s gracious condensations to us, and advancements of us, through the corruption of nature, occasion us to think it strange if we are offended, or meet with the evils of them. They must be in the same condition as their Master, and what was consistent with his dignity, was much more consistent with their’s. If he were humble and condescending, it will become them to be proud and assuming. Note, [1.] We must take good heed to ourselves, lest Christ’s gracious condensations to us, and advancements of us, through the corruption of nature, occasion us to think it strange if we are offended, or meet with the evils of them. They must be in the same condition as their Master, and what was consistent with his dignity, was much more consistent with their’s. If he were humble and condescending, it will become them to be proud and assuming. Note, [2.] Whatever our Master was pleased to condense to, in favour to us, we should much more condense to, in conformity to him. Christ, by humbling himself, has dignified humility, and put an honour upon it, and obliged his followers to think nothing below them but dishonour. We commonly say to those who disdain to do such or such a thing, As good as you have done it, and been never the worse thought of; and true indeed it is, if our Master has done it. When we see our Master serving, we cannot but see how ill it becomes us to be domineering.

Lastly, Our Saviour closes this part of his discourse with an intimation of the necessity of their intercourse with science; and to these instructions (If ye know these things; or, Seeing ye know them,) he added; Most people think, Happy are they that rise and rule. Washing one another’s feet will never get estates and preferments; but Christ saith, for all that, Happy are they that stoop and obey. If ye know these things; that may be understood either as speaking undoubtedly, whether they knew them or no; so strong was their conceit of a temporal kingdom, that it was a question whether they could entertain the notion of a duty so contrary to that conception; or, as taking it for granted, that they did know these things; since they had such excellent precepts given them, recommended by such an excellent
pattern, it will be necessary to the completing of their  

Note. Though it is a great advantage  

1. This is applicable to the commands of Christ  

2. It is to be applied especially to this command of humility and serviceableness. Nothing is better known, or more readily acknowledged, than this, that we should be humble; and therefore, though many will own themselves to be passionate and intemperate, few will own themselves to be proud, for it is as inexcusable a sin, and as hateful, as any other; and yet how little is to be seen of true humility, and that mutual subjection and concension, which the law of Christ insists so much upon! Most know these things so well as to expect that others should do accordingly to them, yield to them, and serve them, but not so well as to do so themselves.

18. I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. 19. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he. 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me: and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. 21. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. 22. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. 23. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. 25. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him Lord, who is it? 26. Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. 27. And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou dost, do quickly. 28. Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. 29. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast: or, that he should give something to the poor. 30. He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.

We have here the discovery of Judas's plot to betray his Master. Christ knew it from the beginning; but now first he discovered it to his disciples, who did not expect Christ should be betrayed, though he had often told them so, much less did they suspect that one of them should do it. Now here,

1. Christ gives them a general intimation of it; (v. 8.) If speak not of you all, I cannot expect you will all do as I have chosen, or whom I have chosen, and whom I have forebode by; but the scripture will be fulfilled, (Ps. 41. 9.) He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me. He doth not yet speak out of the crime, or the criminal, but raiseth their expectations of a further discovery.

1. He intimates to them, that they were not all right. He had said, (v. 10.) Ye are clean, but not all. So here, What is said of the excellencies of Christ's disciples cannot be said of all that are called so. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, which separates between cattle and cattle, and will distinguish thousands into hell, who flatter themselves with hopes that they were going to heaven. (v. 18.) I speak not of you all; you my disciples and followers. Note, There is a mixture of bad with good in the best societies; a Judas among the apostles; it will be so till we come to the blessed society into which shall enter nothing unclean or disguised.

2. That he himself knew who were right, and who were not: (v. 18.) I know whom I have chosen, who the few are, that are chosen among the many that are called with the common call. Note, (1.) They that are chosen, Christ himself had the choosing of them; he submitted the persons, and undertook for. (2.) They that are chosen, are known to Christ, for he never forgets any, whom he has once had in his thoughts of love, (2 Tim. 2. 19.)

3. That in the treachery of him that proved false to him, the scripture was fulfilled, which takes off very much both the surprise and offence of the thing. Christ took one into his family, whom he foresaw to be a traitor, and did not by effectual grace prevent him, but he being discovered, the scripture was fulfilled. Let it not therefore be a stumbling-block to us; for though it do not at all lessen Judas's offence, it may lessen our offence at it. The scripture referred to, is David's complaint of the treachery of some of his enemies; the Jewish expositors generally understand it of Ahithophel, and ear's from them; Grotius thinks it intimates that the death of Judas would be like that of Ahithophel. But because that Psalm speaks of David's enemies, he was at their disposal when of the time of Ahithophel's deserting him, it may better be understood of some other friend of his, that proved false to him. This our Saviour applies to Judas.

(1.) Judas, as an apostle, was admitted to the highest privilege; he did eat bread with Christ. He was familiar with him, and favoured by him, was one of his family, one of those with whom he was intimately conversant. David saith of his treacherous friend, He did eat of my bread, but Christ, being poor, had no bread he could properly call his own, he saith, He did eat bread with me; such as he had by the kindness of his friends, that ministered to him, his disciples had their share of, Judas among the rest. Wherever he went, Judas was welcome with him, did not dine among servants, but sat at table with his masters, ate of the same dish, drank of the same cup, and in all respects fared as he fared. He ate miraculous bread with him, when the loaves were multiplied, ate the passover with him. Note, All that eat bread with Christ, are not his disciples indeed. See 1 Cor. 10. 5—8.

(2.) Judas, as an apostate, was guilty of the basest treachery; he lifted up the heel against Christ. [1.] He forsook him, turned his back upon him, went out from him, was snared by his own heart, and rush'd out from the house of his friends. [2.] He destituted him, shook off the dust of his feet against him, in contempt of him and his gospel. Nay, [3.] He became an enemy to him; spurned at him, as wrestlers do at their adversaries, whom they would
overthrow. Note, It is no new thing for those that were Christ's seeming friends, to prove his real enemies. They who pretended to magnify him, magnify themselves against him. They eat not only the bread of his charity, but the bread of his covenant, yet rebel against him, and thereby prove themselves guilty not only of the basest ingratitude, but the basest treachery and perfidioseness. He therefore, when he told them beforehand of the treachery of Judas; (v. 19.) 'Now I tell you before it come, before Judas has begun to put his wicked plot in execution, that when it is come to pass, you may, instead of stumbling at it, be confirmed in your belief, that I am he, that he should come.' 1. By his clear and certain foresight of things to come, which in this, as in other instances, he gave incontestable proof of, he proved himself to be the true God, before whom all things are naked and open. Christ foretold that Judas would betray him, when there was no ground to suspect such a thing, and so proved himself the eternal Word, which is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. The prophecies of the New Testament concerning the latter things, are in the Old Testament. 2 Thess. 2. 1 Tim. 4. and in the Apocalypse) being evidently accomplished, it is a proof that those writings were divinely inspired, and confirms our faith in the whole canon of scripture. 2. By this application of the types and prophecies of the Old Testament to himself, he proved himself to be the true Messiah, to whom all the prophets bare witness. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and he suffered, just as it was written, Luke 24. 25. 26. ch. 8. 28. III. He gives a word of encouragement to his apostles, and all his ministers; who he employed in his service; (v. 20.) He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me. The purport of these words is the same with what we have in other scriptures, but it is not easy to make out their coherence here. 1. Christ had told his disciples that they must humble and abase themselves. 'Now,' saith he, 'though there may be those that will despise you for your condensation, yet there will be those that will do you honour, and shall be honoured for so doing.' They who know themselves dignified by Christ's commission, may be content to be vilified in the world's opinion. 2. It is intended to silence the sense of the apostles now, that because there was a traitor among the apostles, would be shy of receiving any of them; for if one of them was false to his Master, whom would any of them be true to? Ex uno disce omnes—They are all alike. No, as Christ will think never the worse of them for Judas's crime, so he will stand by them, and own them, and will raise up such as shall receive them. They that had received Judas, when he was a preacher, and perhaps were converted and edified by his preaching, were never the worse, nor should reflect upon it with any regret, though he afterward proved a traitor; for he was one whom Christ sent. We cannot know what men are, much less what they will be, but those who appear to be sent of Christ, we must receive, till the contrary appear. Though some, by causing strangers, have entertained robbers unwares, yet we cannot cause these, for what help were they, if some have entertained angels. The abuses put upon our charity, though ordered with ever so much discretion, will neither justify our uncharitableness, nor lose us the reward of our charity. (1.) We are here encouraged to receive ministers as sent of Christ. He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth strong, weak, and poor, and subject to like passions, as others, (for as the law, so the gospel, makes men priests that have infirmity,) yet if he deliver my message, and be regularly called and appointed to do so, and, as an officer, give himself to the word and prayer; he that entertains, him shall be owned as a friend of mine.' Christ was now leaving the world, but he would leave an order of men, to be his agents, to deliver his word, and those who received that in the light and love of it, receive him; to believe the doctrine of Christ, and obey his law, and accept the salvation offered upon the terms proposed; this is receiving those whom Christ sends, and it is receiving Christ Jesus the Lord himself. (2.) We are here encouraged to receive Christ as sent of God; He that thus receiveth me, that receiveth Christ in his ministers, receiveth the Father also, for they come upon his errand likewise, baptizing in the name of the Father, as well as of the Son. Christ to call his Father, is more than his Prince and Saviour, receiveth him that sent me, as his Portion and Felicity. Christ was sent of God, and in embracing his religion, we embrace the only true religion. IV. Christ more particularly notifies to them the plot which one of their number was now hatching against him; (v. 21.) When Jesus had thus said in general, to prepare them for a more particular discovery, he made a more particular instance, and show them, what gesture or sign, and he testified, he solemnly declared it (cum animo testando—with the solemnity of a witness on oath.) 'One of you shall betray me, one of you mine apostles and constant followers.' None indeed could be said to betray him but those whom he reposed a confidence in, and were the witnesses of his retirements. This did not determine Judas to the sin by any fatal necessity; for though the event did follow according to the prediction, yet not from the prediction. Christ is not the author of sin; yet as to this heinous sin of Judas, 1. Christ foresaw it; for even that which is secret and future, and hid from the eyes of all living, is naked and open before the eyes of Christ. He knows what is in man better than they do themselves, (2 Kings 8. 12.) and therefore sees what will be done by them. I knew that thou wouldest do very treacherously, Isa. 48. 8. 2. He foretold it, not only for the sake of the rest of the disciples, but for the sake of Judas himself, that he might take warning, and recover himself out of the snare of the devil. Traitors proceed not in their plots, when they find they are discovered; surely Judas, when he finds that his Master knows such and such practices, in time; if not, it will aggravate his condemnation. 3. He speak of it with a manifest concern; he was troubled in spirit when he mentioned it. He had often spoken of his own sufferings and death, without any such trouble of spirit as he here discover when he speak of the ingratitude and treachery of Judas. This touched him in a tender part. Note, the falls and miscarriages of the disciples of Christ are a great trouble of spirit to the Master: the sins of christians are the grief of Christ. 'What? One of you betray me? You that have received from me such distinguished favours, you that I had reason to think would be firm to me, that have professed such a respect for me; what injustice have you found in me, that one of you should betray me? This went to his heart, as the unfaithfulness of a child doth to a father. He that榜)brought them up, Isa. 1. 2. See Ps. 95. 10. Isa. 63. 10. V. The disciples quickly take the alarm; they knew their Master would neither deceive them nor jest with them; and therefore looked one upon another, with a manifest concern, doubting of whom he spake. By looking one upon another, they discovered the trouble they were in upon this notice given them; it struck such an horror upon them, that they knew not well which way to look, or what to say.
They saw their Master troubled, and therefore they were troubled. This was at a feast where they were crowded together, and, being called upon to rejoice with trembling, and as though we rejected not. When David went for his son's rebellion, all his followers wept with him (2 Sam. 15. 30.) so Christ's disciples here. Note, That which grieves Christ, is, and must be, a grief to all that are his; particularly the scandalous miscarriages of those that are called by his name; Who is offended, and I but offend myself. (v. 4.)

2. Hereby they endeavoured to discover the traitor; they looked wistly in one another's face, to see who blushed, or by some disorder in the countenance, manifested guilt in the heart, upon this notice; but while these were faithful, had their consciences so clear, that they could lift up their faces without spot; he that was false, had his conscience so seared, that he was not ashamed, neither could he blush, and so no discovery could be made this way. Christ thus perplexed his disciples for a time, and put them into confusion, that he might humble them, and prove them, might excite in them a jealousy of themselves, and an indignation at the baseness of Judas. It is good for us sometimes to be put to a gaze, to be put to a pause.

The disciples were solicitous to get their Master to explain himself, and to tell them particularly whom he meant; for nothing but that can put them out of their present pain, for each of them thought he had as much reason to suspect himself as any of his brethren; now, 1. Of all the disciples, John was most fit to ask, because he was the favourite, and sat next his Master; (v. 25.) There was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his discip]es whom Jesus loved. It appears that this was John, by comparing ch. 21. 20.

Observe, (1.) The particular kindness which Jesus had for him; he was known by this periphrasis, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He loved them all, (v. 1.) but John was particularly dear to him. His name signifies gracious. Daniel, who was honoured with the revelations of the Old Testament, as John of the New, was a man greatly beloved, Dan. 9. 22. Note, Among the disciples of Christ, some are dearer to him than others.

(2.) His place and posture at this time; He was leaning on Jesus' bosom. Some say that it was the fashion in those countries to sit at meat in a leaning posture, so that the second lay in the bosom of the first, and so on; which does not seem probable to me, for in such a posture as that they could neither eat nor drink conveniently; but whether that were so or no, John now leaned in his bosom, and it seems to be an extraordinary expression of endearment used at this time. Note, There are some of Christ's disciples whom he lays in his bosom, who have more free and intimate communion with him than others. The Father loved the Son, and laid him in his bosom, (ch. 1. 18.) and believers are in like manner one with him. Is. 41. 9. He is the first-born among many brethren; and shall have shortly in the bosom of Abraham. They lay themselves at Christ's feet, he will lay them in his bosom.

(3.) Yet he conceals his name, because he himself was the penman of the story; he puts this instead of his name, to shew that he was pleased with it; it is his title of honour, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved, as in David's and Solomon's court, there was one that was the king's beloved, yet he does not put his name down, to shew that he was not proud of it, nor would seem to boast of it. Paul in a like case saith, I knew a man in Christ. (v. 24.)

2. Of all the disciples Peter was most forward to know; (v. 24.) Peter, sitting at some distance, beckoned to John, by some sign or other to ask. Peter was generally the leading man, most apt to put himself forth; and where men's natural tempers lead them to be thus bold in answering and asking, if they have a will to make themselves known in the seasons of humility and wisdom, they make men very serviceable. God gives his gifts variously; but that the forward men in the church may not think too well of themselves, nor the modest be discouraged, it must be noted that it was not Peter, but John, that was the beloved disciple. Peter was desirous to know, not only that he might be sure it was not he, but that, the question was put, he might be made, and guard against him, and, if possible, prevent his design. It were a desirable thing, we would think, to know who in the church will deceive us; yet let this suffice—Christ knows, though we do not. The reason why Peter did not ask himself, was, because John had a much fairer opportunity, by the advantage of his seat at table, to whisper the question into the ear of Christ, and to receive a like private answer. It is good to improve our interest in those that are near to Christ, and to engage their prayers for us. Do we know any that we have reason to think lie in Christ's bosom? Let us beg of them to speak a good word for us.

3. The question was asked accordingly (v. 25.) He then, lying at the breast of Jesus, and so having the convenience of whispering with him, saith unto him, Lord, who is it that betrayeth thee? (v. 25.)

(1.) A regard to his fellow-disciple, and to the motion he made. Though Peter had not the honour he had at this time, yet he did not therefore disdain to take the hint and intimation he gave him. Note, They who lie in Christ's bosom, may often learn from those who lie at his feet, something that will be profitable for them, and be reminded of that, which they did not of themselves think of. John was willing to gratify Peter herein, having so fair an opportunity for it. As every one had received the gift, so let him minister the same for a common good, Rom. 12. 6.

(2.) A reverence of his Master. Though he whispered that in Christ's ear, yet he called him Lord; the familiarity he was admitted to, did not at all lessen his respect for his Master. It becomes us to use a reverence and distinction, and to observe a decorum, even in our secret devotions, which no eye is a witness to, as well as in public assemblies. The more intimate communion gracious souls have with Christ, the more sensible they are of his worthiness, and their own unworthiness, as Gen. 18. 27. 4. Christ gave a speedy answer to this question, but whispered it in John's ear; for it appears (v. 29.) that the rest were still ignorant of the matter. He is to whom I shall give a sop, a morsel, a crust; when I have dipped it in the sauce. And when he had dipped the sop, John strictly observing his motions, he gave it to Judas; and Judas took it readily enough, not suspecting the design of it, but glad of a savoury bit, to make up his mouth with.

(1.) Christ notified the traitor by a sign. He could have told John by name who he was; The adversary's chief enemy is that wicked Judas, he is the traitor, and none but he; but thus he would exercise the observation of John, and intimate what need his ministers have of a spirit of discerning; for the false brethren we are to stand upon our guard against, are not made known to us by words, but by signs; they are to be known to us by their fruits, by their spirits; it requires great diligence and the fear of the Lord, to make them out.

(2.) That sign was a sop, which Christ gave him a very proper sign, because it was the fulfilling of the scripture, (v. 18.) that the traitor should be one that ate bread with him, that was at this time a fellow-commoner with him. It had likewise a significance in it, and teaches us, [1.] That Christ sometimes gives sops to traitors; worldly richer,
nonours, and pleasures, are soft, (if I may so speak) which providence sometimes gives into the hands of wicked men. Judas perhaps thought himself a favourite because he had the sop, like Benjamin at Joseph's table, a mess by himself; thus the prosperity of fools, like a stupefying soft, helps to destroy them.

[2.] That we must not be outrageous against those whom we know to be very malicious against us.

Christ caried to Judas as kindly as to any at the table, though he knew he was then plotting his death. *If thine enemy hunger, feed him, that is to do as Christ does.*

VII. Judas himself, instead of being convinced hereby, that we must not be outrageous against Christ and his doctrine, and a contempt of him, as one whose life was of small value, to excite in him a covetous desire of the wages of unrighteousness, and a resolution to stick at nothing for the obtaining of them. But,

(1.) What was Judas' design? He then is said, that now Satan entered into him. Judas was all along a devil, (ch. 6. 70.) a son of perdition, but now Satan gained a more full possession of him, had a more abundant entrance into him. His purpose to betray his Master was now ripened into a fixed resolution; now he returned with seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, Luke 11. 24. Note, [1.] Satan works in many men that does his works, (Eph. 2. 2.) yet sometimes it enters more manifestly and more powerfully than at other times, when he puts them upon some enormous wickedness, which humanity and natural conscience startle at. [2.] Betrayers of Christ have much of the devil in them. Christ speaks of the sin of Judas as greater than that of any of his persecutors.

(2.) How came Satan to enter into him after the soft? Perhaps he was presently aware that it was the discovery of him, and it made him desperate in his resolutions. Many are made worse by the gifts of Christ's bounty, and are confirmed in their impenitency by that which should have led them to repentance. The coals of fire heaped upon their heads, instead of driving them, hardened them.

2. Christ hereupon dismissed him, and delivered him up to his own heart's lusts; Then said Jesus unto him, *That thou dost, do quickly.* This is not to be understood as either advising him to his wickedness, or warranting him in it; but either, (1.) As abandoning him to the conduct and power of Satan. Christ knew that Satan was entered into him, and had power over him; it is to be noted, it gives him up as hopeless. The various edges that Christ had laid before him for his conviction, were ineffectual; and therefore, *What thou dost thou wilt do quickly; if thou art resolved to run thyself, go on, and take what comes.* Note, When the evil spirit is willingly admitted, the good spirit justly withdraws. Or, (2.) As challenging him to do his worst; *Thou art plotting against me, yet the judgment of execution that is to be against thee, welcome, the sooner the better, I do not fear thee, I am ready for thee.* Note, Our Lord Jesus was very forward to suffer and die for us, and was impatient of delay in the perfecting of his undertaking. Christ speaks of Judas's betraying him as a thing he was now doing, though he was only purposing it. Those who are contriving and designing mischief, are, in God's account, doing mischief.

3. They that were at table, understood not what he meant, because they did not hear what he whispered to John; (v. 28, 29.) No man at table, either the disciples, or any other of the guests, except John, knew for what intent he spake this to him.

[3.] To lose one another, that they could not learn to suspect one another; *charity thinks no evil.*

(2.) They therefore took it for granted that he said it to Judas as a traitor, because it did not enter into their heads that Judas was such a one, or would prove so. Note, It is an excusable durness in the disciples of Christ not to be quick sighted in their censures. Most are ready enough to say, when they hear harsh things spoken in general, now such a one is meant, and now such a one: but Christ's disciples were so well taught to lose one another, that they could not learn to suspect one another; *charity thinks no evil.*

[4.] Of his speedy departure; he went out presently, and quit the house. [1.] For fear of being more plainly discovered to the company, which if he were, he expected they would all fall upon him, and be the death of him, or at least of his project. [2.] He went out as one weary of Christ's company, and that of his apostles. Christ needed not to expel him, he expelled himself. Note, Withdrawning from the communion of the faithful, is commonly the first overt act of a backslider, and the beginning of an apostasy. Though he might very well be excused, not only because he was poor himself, but because he did so much good otherwise, curing some many gratis; yet, to set us an example, he gave, for the relief of the poor, out of that which he had for the subsistence of his family; see Eph. 4. 28. Secondly, That the time of a religious feast was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover, he ordered something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, that should make us bountiful to the poor.

4. Judas hereupon sets himself vigorously to pursue his design against him; *He went away.* Notice is taken,

(1.) Of his speedy departure; he went out presently, and quit the house. [1.] For fear of being more plainly discovered to the company, which if he were, he expected they would all fall upon him, and be the death of him, or at least of his project. [2.] He went out as one weary of Christ's company, and that of his apostles. Christ needed not to expel him, he expelled himself. Note, Withdrawning from the communion of the faithful, is commonly the first overt act of a backslider, and the beginning of an apostasy. Though he might very well be excused, not only because he was poor himself, but because he did so much good otherwise, curing some many gratis; yet, to set us an example, he gave, for the relief of the poor, out of that which he had for the subsistence of his family; see Eph. 4. 28. Secondly, That the time of a religious feast was thought a proper time for works of charity. When he celebrated the passover, he ordered something for the poor. When we experience God's bounty to us, that should make us bountiful to the poor.

(2.) Of the time of his departure: *It was night.* [1.] Though it was night, an unsseasonable time for missionary not, Satan had not entered into him, he made no difficulty of the coldness and darkness of the night. *This should shame us out of our slothfulness and cowardice in the service of Christ, that the devil's servants are so earnest and venturous in his service.* [2.] Because it was night, and that gave him advantage of privacy and concealment. He was not
31. Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. 32. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him. 33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you. 34. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

This and what follows, to the end of ch. 14. was Christ's table-talk with his disciples. When supper was done, Judas went out; but what did the Master and his disciples do, whom he left sitting at table? They applied themselves to profitable discourse, to teach us, as much as we can, to make conversation with our friends at table serviceable to religion. Christ begins this discourse; the more forward we are humbly to promote that communion with one another, which is good, and to the use of edifying, the more like we are to Jesus Christ. Those especially that by their place, reputation, gifts, command the company, to whom men give ear, ought to use the interest they have in other respects, as an opportunity of doing them good.

Now our Lord Jesus discourses with them, (and, probably, discourses much more largely than is here recorded.)

1. Concerning the great mystery of his own death and sufferings, which they were as yet so much in the dark about, that they could not persuade themselves to expect the thing itself, much less did they understand the meaning of it; and therefore Christ gives them such instructions concerning it, as made the offence of the cross to cease. Christ did not begin this discourse till Judas was gone out; for he was a false brother. The presence of wicked people is often a hindrance to good discourse. When Judas was gone out, Christ said, Now is the Son of man glorified: now that Judas is discovered and discarded, who was a spot in their love-feast, and a scandal to their family, now is the Son of man glorified. Note, Christ is glorified by the purifying of christian societies; corruptions in his church are a reproach to him; the purging out of those corruptions rolls away the reproach. Or, rather, now Judas was gone, it was a good time for the wheels a-going, in order to his being put to death, and the thing was likely to be effected shortly; Now is the Son of man glorified, meaning, Now he is crucified.

1. Here is something which Christ instructs them in concerning his sufferings, that was very comforting.

Three things.

(1.) That he should himself be glorified in them. Note, the Son of man is to be exalted to the greatest honour and disgrace, to be despised and cast out by the world, and despised and cast out by his own people; yet now he is glorified:

For, [1.] Now he is to obtain a glorious victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and triumph over them. He is now girding on the harness, to take the field against those adversaries of God and man, with as great an assurance as if he had put it off.

[2.] Now he is to work out a glorious deliverance for his people; by his death to reconcile them to God, and bring in an everlasting righteousness and happiness for them; to shed that blood which is to be an inexhaustible fountain of joys and blessings to all believers.

[3.] Now he is to give a glorious example of self-denial and patience under the cross, courage and contempt of the world, zeal for the glory of God, and love to the souls of men, such as will make him to be for ever admired and had in honour. Christ had been glorified in many miracles he had wrought, and yet had been reproached and being glorified in his sufferings, as if that were more than all his other glories in his humbled state.

(2.) That God the Father should be glorified in them. The sufferings of Christ were, [1.] The satisfaction of God's justice, and so God was glorified in them. Reparation was thereby made with great advantage for the wrong done him in his honour by the sin of man. The ends of the law were abundantly answered, and the glory of his government effectually asserted and maintained. [2.] They were the manifestation of his holiness and mercy. The attributes of God shine bright in creation and providence, but much more in the work of redemption; see 1 Cor. 1. 24. 2 Cor. 4. 6. God is Love, and herein he hath commended his love.

(3.) That he should himself be greatly glorified after them, in consideration of God's being greatly glorified by them, v. 32. Observe how he enlarges upon it.

[1.] He is sure that God will glorify him; and those whom God glorifies, are glorious indeed. Hell and earth set themselves to vitify Christ, but God resolved to glorify him, and he did it. He glorified him in his sufferings by the amazing signs and wonders, both in heaven and earth, which attended them, and extorted even from his crucifiers an acknowledgment that he was the Son of God. But especially after his sufferings he glorified him, when he set him at his own right hand, gave him a name above every name.

[2.] That he will glorify him in himself—"in ipsis," Father. First, In Christ himself. He will glorify him in his own person, and not only in his kingdom among men. This supposes his speedy resurrection. A common person may be honoured after his death; but a man glorified in his own life, like our Lord, is never glorified but when he is risen again. And especially after his sufferings he glorified him, when he set him at his own right hand, gave him a name above every name.

[3.] That he will glorify him straightway. He looked upon the joy and glory set before him, not only as great, but as near; and his sorrows and sufferings short and soon over. Good services done to earthly princes, often remain unsatisfied; but Christ had his preferments presently. It was but forty hours (or not so much) from his death to his resurrection, and forty days from thence to his ascension, so that it might well be said that he was straightway glorified, Ps. 16. 10.

[4.] All this, in consideration of God's being glorified in and by his sufferings; Seeing God is glorified in him, and receives honour from him, God shall magnify himself in him, and give him honour to him. Note, First, In the exaltation of Christ there was a regard had to his humiliation, and a reward given for it. Because he humbled himself, therefore God highly exalted him. If the Father be so great a giver in his glory by the death of Christ, we may be sure that the Son shall be no loser in his. See the covenant between them, Isa. 53. 12. Secondly, Those who mind the business of
proved himself a false brother; but they must not therefore harbor such jealousies and suspicions one of another, as would be the bane of love: though there was one Judas among them, yet they were not all Judases. Now that the enmity of the Jews against Christ and his followers was swelling to the height, and they must expect such treatment as their Mattادات had, it comforted them to brotherly love to strengthen one another’s hands.

Three arguments for mutual love are here urged.

1. The command of their Master; (v. 34.) A new commandment I give unto you. He not only commends it as amiable and pleasant, not only counsels it as excellent and profitable, but commands it, and makes it one of the fundamental laws of his kingdom, and of the kingdom of God; for the believing in Christ, 1 John 3. 23. 1 Pet. 1. 22. is the command of our Ruler, who has right to give law to us; it is the command of our Redeemer, who gives us this law in order to the curing of our spiritual diseases, and the preparing of us for eternal bliss. It is a new commandment; that is, (1.) It is a renewed commandment; it was a commandment from the beginning; (1 John 2. 7.) as old as the law. (2.) It is a new commandment; it is a new commandment of the law of Moses; yet, because it is also one of the great commandments of the New Testament of Christ, the new lawyer, it is called a new commandment; it is like an old book in a new edition corrected and enlarged. This commandment had been so corrupted by the traditions of the Jewish church, that, when Christ revived it, and gave it in a true light, it might well be called a new commandment. Laws and traditions were so much in vogue, and self-love had so much the ascendancy, that the law of brotherly love was forgotten as obsolete, and out of date; so that as it came from Christ new, it was new to the people. (2.) It is an excellent commandment; as a new song is an excellent song, that has an uncommon gratefulness in it. (3.) It is an everlasting command; so strongly new as to be always so, as the new covenant which shall never decay; (Heb. 8. 13.) it shall be new to eternity when faith and hope are annihilated. (4.) As Christ gives it, it is new. Before it was, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; now it is, Ye shall love one another; it is pressed in a more winning way, when it is thus pressed as mutual duty owing to one another.

2. The example of their Saviour is another argument for mutual love; as I have loved you. This is it that makes it a new commandment—that this rule and reason of love, (as I have loved you,) is perfectly new, and such as had been hid from ages and generations. Understand this, (1.) Of all the instances of Christ’s love to his disciples, which they had already experienced during the time he went in and out among them. He spake kindly to them, concerned himself hearkenly for them, and for their welfare ; instructed, comforted, and restrained them; prayed with them, and for them; vindicated them when they were accused, took their part when they were run down, and publicly owned them to be dearer to him than his mother, or sister, or brother. He reproved them for what was amiss, and yet compassionately bore with their failings, excused them, made the best of them, and passed by many of their faults. Thus he loved them, and just now washed their feet; and thus they must love one another, and love to the end. Or, (2.) It may be understood of the special instance of love to all his disciples, which he was now about to give, in laying down his life for them, Greater love hath no man than this, ch. 15. 13. Has he thus loved us all? Justly may he expect that we should be loving to one another. Not that we are capable of doing any thing of the same nature for each other, (Ps. 49. 7.) but
we must love one another in some respects after the same manner; we must set this before us as our copy, and take directions from it. Our love to one another must be free and ready, laborious and expense, constant and persevering; it must be love to the souls one of another. We must also love one another from this motive, and upon this consideration—because Christ has loved us. See Rom. 15. 1—

1. Peter’s curiosity, and the check given to that. (v. 36.)

Lord, whither goest thou? Referring to what Christ had said, (v. 36.) Peter, in his Hinn, I go, ye know not. The previous instructions Christ had given them concerning brotherly love, he overlooks, and asks no questions upon them, but fastens upon that concerning which Christ purposely kept them in the dark. Note, It is a common fault among us, to be more inquisitive concerning things secret, which belong to God only, than concerning things revealed, which belong to us and our children; more desirous to have our curiosity gratified, than our inquiries directed; to know what is done in heaven than what we may do to get thither. It is easy to observe it in the converse of christians, how soon a discourse of that which is plain and edifying, is dropped, and no more said to it, the subject is exhausted; while a matter of doubtful disputation runs into an endless strife of words.

2. Christ’s answer was instructive. He did not gratify him with any particular account of the world he was going to, nor ever foretold his glories and joys so distinctly as he did his sufferings; but said what he had said before; (v. 33.) Let that suffice. thou cannot not follow me now, but shalt follow me hereafter.

(1.) We must understand it of his following him to the cross: Thou hast not yet strength enough of faith and resolution to drink of my cup; therefore it appeared so by his cowardice, when Christ was suffering. For this reason, when Christ was seized, he provided for the safety of his disciples; Let these go their way, because they could not follow him now. Christ considers the frame of his disciples, and will not cut out for them that work and hardship which they are not as yet fit for; the day shall be as the strength is. Peter, though designed for a martyrdom, cannot follow Christ now, not being come to his full growth, but he shall follow him hereafter; he shall be crucified at last, like his Master. Let him not think that because he escapes suffering now, he shall never suffer. From our missing the cross once, we must not infer that we shall never meet it; we may be reserved for greater trials than we have yet known.

(2.) We may understand it of his following him to the crown. Christ was now going to his glory, and Peter was very desirous to go with him; "No," said Christ, "thou cannot not follow me now, thou art not yet ripe for heaven, nor hast thou finished thy work on earth. The forerunner must first enter to prepare a place for thee, but thou shalt follow me afterwards, after thou hast fought the good fight, and at the time appointed." Note, Believers must not expect to be glorified as soon as they are effectually called, for there is a wilderness between the Red-sea and Canaan.

II. Peter’s confidence, and the check given to that. 36. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

solves, as Thomas did, that he will go and die with him; and better die with him, than live without him. See here, (1.) What an affectionate love Peter had to our Lord Jesus, "I will lay down my life for thy sake, and I can do no more." I believe Peter spake as he thought, and though he was inconsiderate, he was not insincere, in this resolution. Note, Christ should be dearer to us than our own lives, which thou art in danger of losing when thou art called to it, we should be willing to lay down for his sake, Acts 20. 24. (2.) How ill he took it to have it questioned, intimated in that expostulation, "Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? Dost thou suspect my fidelity to thee?" 1 Sam. 29. 8. Note, It is with regret that true love hears its own sincerity arraigned, as ch. 21. 17. Christ had given a promise of his love to Peter; and this must be one reason why he was discovered, and gone out, and therefore Peter thinks he may speak with the more assurance of his own sincerity; "Lord, I am resolved I will never leave thee, and therefore why cannot I follow thee?" We are apt to think that we can do any thing, and take it amiss to be told that this and the other we cannot do, whereas without Christ we can do nothing.

2. Christ gives him a surprising prediction of his inconstancy, v. 28. Jesus Christ knows us better than we know ourselves, and has many ways of discovering those to themselves, whom he loves, and will hide pride from.

(1.) He upholds Peter with his confidence; Will thou lay down thy life for my sake? Methinks, he speakers with this a smile, "Peter, thy promises are so large, too lavish to be believed; thou dost not consider with what reluctance and struggle a life is laid down, and what a hard task it is to die; not so soon done as said." Christ hereby puts Peter upon second thoughts, not that he might retract his resolution, or recede from it, but that he might insert into it that necessary proviso, "Lord, thy grace enabling me, I will lay down my life for thy sake." "Wilt thou undertake to die for me? What, thou that tremblest to walk upon the water to me? What, thou that, when sufferings were spoken of, cried out, Be it far from thee, Lord? It was an easy thing to leave thy boats and nets to follow me, but not so easy to lay down thy life." His Master himself struggled when it came to that, and the disciple is not greater than his Lord. Note, It is good for us to shame ourselves of our presumptuous confidence in ourselves. Shall a bruised reed set up for a pillar, or a sickly child undertake to be a champion? What a fool am I to talk so big?

(2.) He plainly foretells his cowardice in the critical hour. To stop the mouth of his boasting, lest Peter should say it again, Yea, Master, what I will; Christ solemnly assures it with, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. He does not say, as afterward, This night, for it seems to have been two nights before the passover; but, "Shortly thou wilt have denied me thrice, within the space of one night; nay, within so short a space as between the first and last crowing of the cock was to be the occasion of his repentance, which of itself would not have been, if Christ had not put this into the prediction. Christ not only foresaw that Judas would betray him, though he only in heart designed it; but he foresaw that Peter would deny him, though he did not design it, but the contrary. He knows not only the wickedness of sinners, but the weakness of saints. Christ told Peter, First, That he would deny him, would renounce and abjure him; "Thou wilt not only not follow me still, but be ashamed to own that ever thou didst follow me." Secondly, That he would do this not once only by a hasty slip of the tongue, but that his denial had passed, would repeat it a second and a third time; and I doubt he freed too meanly. We commonly give it as a reason, why the prophecies of scripture are expressed darkly and figuratively; because, if they did plainly describe the event, the accomplishment would thereby either be defeated, or necessitated by a fatality inconsistent with human liberty; and yet this plain and express prophecy of Peter's denial was given Peter himself. Peter, it is said, must at least make Christ accessory to Peter's sin. But we may well imagine what a mortification it was to Peter's confidence of his own courage, to be told this; and to be told in such a manner, that he durst not contradict it, else he would have said as Hazael: What is thy servant a dog? This could not but fill him with confusion. Note, The most secure are commonly the least safe, and the most complexly betray their own weakness, that most confidently presume upon their own strength, 1 Cor. 10. 12.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter is a continuation of Christ's discourse with his disciples after supper; when he had convicted and discarmed Judas, he set himself to comfort the rest, who were full of sorrow upon what he had said of leaving them, and a great many good words and comfortable words he here speaks to them. The discourse is interlocutory: as Peter in the foregoing chapter, so Thomas, and Philip, and Jude, in this interposed their thoughts upon what he said, according to the liberty he left them to think. These discourses, or conferences are as instructive as solemn speeches, and more so. The general scope of this chapter is in the first verse; it is designed to keep them from their hearts; now in order to that, they must believe; and it is in order to that; free conferences are as instructive as solemn speeches, and more so. The general scope of this chapter is in the first verse; it is designed to keep them from their hearts; now in order to that, they must believe; and it is in order to that; free conferences are as instruc-
hearts; he takes cognizance of all the trouble which
his people are at any time in danger of being over-
whelmed by; and he knows our souls in adversity.
Many things concurred to trouble the disciples now.

(1.) Christ had just told them of the unkindness
he should receive from some of them, and this tronbled
them all. Peter, no doubt, looked very sorrow-
ful upon what Christ said to him, and all the rest
were sorry for him and for themselves too, not
knowing how to solve such a difficult question: and
some ill thing or other they should do. As to this,
Christ comforts them; though a godly jealousy over
ourselves is of great use to keep us humble and
watchful, yet it must not prevail to the disquiting of
our spirits and the damping of our holy joy.

(2.) He had just told them of his own departure
from them; that he should not only go away, but
go away in a cloud of sufferings. They must shortly
hear him loaded with reproaches, and those will be
as a sword in their bones; must see him barbarously
abused, and put to death, and this also will be a
word piercing through their own souls, for they had
loved him, and chosen him, and left all to follow
him. When we now look upon Christ pierced, we
cannot but mourn and be in bitterness, though we
see the end of the issue and fruit of it; much more
grieved must the sight be to them who could then
look no further.

If Christ depart from them, [1.] They will think
themselves shamefully disappointed; for they looked
that this had been he that should have delivered Is-
rael, and should have set up his kingdom in secular
power and glory, and, in expectation of that, had
lost all to follow him. Now, if he leave the world in
the same circumstances of meanness and poverty
in which he had lived, and worse, they are quite
dejected. [2.] They will think themselves sadly
deserted and exposed. They knew by experience
what little presence of mind they had in difficult
emergencies, that they could count upon nothing but
being ruined and run down if they part with their
Master. Now, in reference to all these, Let not
your heart be troubled. Here are three words,
upon any of which the emphasis may significantly
be laid.

First, Upon the word troubled, μὴ γεμνασοίητε. Be
not so troubled, as to be put into a hurry and
confusion, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.
He does not say, Let not your hearts be sensible
of the griefs, or sad because of them, but, Be
not made a prey, be not taken and disquieted.” Ps.
42. 5.

Secondly, Upon the word heart; Thou
ought the
city be troubled, though your little family
and flock be troubled, yet let not your heart be
troubled. Keep possession of your own souls when
you can keep possession of nothing else. The heart is
the main fort; whatever you do, keep trouble from
that, keep that with all diligence. The spirit must
sustain the infirmity, therefore see that it be not
wounded.

Thirdly, Upon the word your; You that are
my disciples and followers, my redeemed, chosen,
sanctified ones, however others are overwhelmed
with the sorrows of this present time, be not you so,
for you know better; let the sinners in Zion tremble,
but let the sons of the living God be joyful in their
king. His Father's disciples should do more than others,
should keep their minds quiet, when every thing
else is unquiet.

2. The remedy he prescribes against this trouble
of mind, which he saw ready to prevail over them;
in general, believe—trusting. (1.) Some read it in
both parts imperatively, Believe in God, and his
perfections and providences, believe also in me, and
my mediation. Build with confidence upon the
great acknowledged principles of natural religion;
that there is a God, that he is most holy, wise, pow-
full, and he knows our souls in adversity.

But, (2.) We read the former as an acknow-
ledgment, that they did believe in God, for which
he commends them; “But if you would effectually
provide against a stormy day, believe also in me.”

And, The Father, who has given you the
God, and become interested in his favour and pro-
mise, which otherwise as sinners we must despair
of, and the remembrance of God would have been
our trouble; but by believing in Christ as the me-
diator between God and man, our belief in God
becomes comfortable; and this is the will of God, that
all men should honour the Son as they honour the
Father; by believing in the Son, as they believe in
the Father; those that rightly believe in God, will
believe in Jesus Christ, whom he has made known
to them; and believing in God through Jesus Christ,
is an excellent means of keeping trouble from the
heart. The joys of faith are the best remedies
against the griefs of sense; it is a remedy with a
promise annexed to it; the just shall live by faith;
and a remedy was annexed to it; I had fainted unless I
had believed.

II. Here is a particular direction to act faith upon.
The promise of eternal life, v. 2, 5. He had directed
them to trust to God, and to trust in him; but what
must they trust God and Christ for? Trust them
for a happiness to come, when this body, and this
world shall be no more; and for a happiness to last,
as long as the immortal soul and the eternal world
shall last. Now this is proposed as a sovereign
cure under all the troubles of this present time,
to which there is that in the happiness of heaven, which
is admirably adapted and accommodated. All the
saints have encouraged themselves with this in their
greatest extremities, That heaven would make
amends for all.

Let us see how this is suggested here:

1. “Believe and consider that really there is such
a happiness; In my Father's house there are many
mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.”

(1.) See under what notion the happiness of heaven
is here represented; as mansions, many mansions
in Christ's Father's house. [1.] Heaven is a house,
not a tent or tabernacle; it is a house not made with
hands, eternal in the heavens. [2.] It is a Father's
house; not a Father's inn or hotel; it is a Father's
house, to whom he was now ascending; so that in
right of their elder brother all true believers shall
be welcome to that happiness as to their home. It
is his house, who is King of kings and Lord of lords,
delves in light, and inhabits eternity. [3.] There
are mansions there; that is, First, Distinct dwell-
ings, an apartment for each; perhaps there is an
apartment for each of the disciples, as we are told
about the temple. In heaven there are accommodations
for particular saints; though all shall be swallowed up
in God, yet our indwelling shall not be lost there
every Israelite had his lot in Canaan, and every el-
der a seat, Rev. 4, 4. Secondly, Durable dwellings.
Messiā, from μέσον, maneo, abiding places. The
house itself is lasting; our estate in it is not for a
Theopel; the possession of what we have in heaven.
Here are we as in an inn, in heaven we shall gain a
bottle; at last, the disciples had quitted their houses to attend
Christ, who had not where to lay his head, but the man-
sions in heaven will make them amends. [4.] There
are many mansions, for there are many sons to be
brought to glory, and he exactly knows their num-
ber; nor will be straitened for room by the coming
of more company than he expects. He had told
Peter that he should follow him, (ch. 13. 36.) but
let not the rest be discouraged, in heaven there are mansions for them all. Rehoboth, Gen. 26. 22.

(2.) See what assurance we have of the reality of the happiness itself, and the sincerity of the proposal of it to us; "If it were not so, I would have told you. If you had received your returns, when you quitted your livelihoods, and ventured your lives for me, in prospect of a happiness future and unseen, I would not have brought the hope of it before you." Then the assurance is built. [1.] Upon the veracity of his word. It is implied, "If there were not such a happiness, valuable and attainable, I would not have told you that there was." [2.] Upon the sincerity of his affection to them. As he is true, and would not impose upon them, so he is kind, and would not suffer them to be imposed upon. If either there were no such mansions, or none designed for them, who had left all to follow him, he would have made them timely notice of the mistake, that they might have made an honourable retreat to the world again, and have made the best hand they could of it. Note, Christ's good-will to us is a great encouragement to our hope in him. He loves us too well, and means us too well, to disappoint the expectations of his own raising, or it would have been the ruin of all men most miserable, who have been of him most obnoxious.

2. "Believe and consider that the design of Christ's going away was to prepare a place in heaven for his disciples. You are grieved to think of my going away, whereas I go on your errand, as the forerunner; I am to enter for you." He went to prepare a place for us; that is, (1.) To take possession for us, as our advocate or attorney, and so to secure our title as indefeasible. (2.) A peculiar gift of salvation was given to Christ, for the use and behalf of all that should believe on him. (2.) To make provision for us as our friend and father. The happiness of heaven, though prepared before the foundation of the world, yet must be further fitted up for man in his fallen state. It consisting much in the presence of Christ there, it is therefore necessary that he should go before, to enter into that glory which his disciples were to share in. Heaven would be an unready place for a Christian if Christ were not there. He went to prepare a table for them, to prepare thrones for them, Luke 22. 30. Thus he designed to bespeak the fitness of heaven's happiness for the saints for whom it is prepared.

3. Believe and consider that therefore he would certainly come again in due time, to fetch them to that blessed place which he went to prepare, and prepare for them; (v. 3.) "If I go and prepare a place for you, if that be the errand of my journey, you may be sure, when every thing is ready, I will come again, to receive you to myself, so that you shall follow me hereafter, that where I am there ye may be also." Now these are comforter words indeed:

(1.) That Jesus Christ will come again, as you say— I do come; intimating the certainty of it, that he will come, and that he is daily coming. We say, We are coming, when we are busy in preparing for our coming, and so he is; all he does has a reference and tendency to his second coming. Note, The belief of Christ's second coming, which he has given us, the assurance of, is an excellent preservative against trouble of heart, Phil. 4. 5. Jam. 5. 8.

(2.) That he will come again, to receive all his faithful followers to himself. He sends for them privately at death, and gathers them one by one; but they are to make their public entry in solemn triumph together at the last day, and then Christ himself will come again with them, to conduct them out of the abundance of his glory, and to receive them out of the abundance of his love; he will have them by testifying the utmost respect and endearment imagin-
disciples to address themselves to him, and he answers them both.

1. Thomas inquired concerning the way; (v. 5.) without any apology for contradicting his Master; he said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, to what place or what state, and how can we know the way, in which we must follow thee? We can neither see the way at it, nor inquire it out in a less."

Christ's testimony concerning their ignorance made them more sensible of their ignorance, and more inquisitive after further light.

Thomas here shows more modesty than Peter, who thought he could follow Christ now. Peter was the more solicitous to know whither Christ went. Thomas here, though he complains that he did not know that, yet seems most solicitous to know the way. Now. 1. His confidence in his ignorance was commendable enough; if good men be in the dark, and know but in part, yet they are willing to own their defects; but, 2. The cause of his ignorance was culpable. They knew not whither Christ went, because they dreamed of a temporal kingdom in external pomp and power, and dotted upon that, notwithstanding what he had said again and again to them. Now, it was, that, when Christ spake of going away and their following him, their fancy ran upon his going to some remarkable city or other, Bethlem, or Nazareth, or Capernaum, or some of the cities of the Gentiles, as David to Hebron, there to be anointed king, and to restore the kingdom to Israel; and which way this place lay, where these castles in the air were to be built, east, west, north, or south, they could not tell, and therefore knew not the way. Thus we still do ourselves more in the dark than we need to be, concerning the future state of the church, because we expect its worldly prosperity, whereas it is spiritual advancement that the promise points at. Had Thomas understood, as he might have done, that Christ was going to the invisible world, the world of spirits, to which spiritual things only have a reference, he would not have said, Lord, we do not know the way.

Now to this complaint of their ignorance, which included a desire to be taught, Christ gives a full answer, v. 6, 7. Thomas had inquired, both whither he went, and what was the way, and Christ answers both these inquiries, and makes good what he had said, that they would have needed no answer if they had understood the others. They were not to know the way, they knew the Father, and he was the end; and therefore, whither I go ye know, and the way we know. Believe in God, and in me, as the way, (v. 1.) and ye do all ye should do.

1. He speaks of himself as the way, v. 6. Dost thou not know the way? I am the way, and I only, for no man comes to the Father, but by me. Great things Christ here saith of himself, shewing us by his doctrine and example he teaches us, and by his sufferings he procures us happiness, and so he is the way. In him God and man meet, and are brought together. We could not get to the tree of life in the way of innocency; but Christ is another way to it. By Christ, as the way, an intercourse is settled and kept up between heaven and earth; the angels of God ascend and descend; our prayers go to God, and his blessings come to us by him; this is the way that leads to rest he good old way. The disciples followed him, and Christ tells them that they followed the road, and, while they continued following him, they would never be out of their way.

2. He is the truth; 1. As truth is opposed to figure and shadow. Christ is the substance of all the Old Testament types, which are therefore said to be figures of the truth, Heb. 9. 24. Christ is the true manna, (ch. 6. 32.) the true tabernacle, Heb. 8. 2. 3. Christ is opposed to falsehood and error; the doctrine of Christ is true doctrine; when we inquire for truth, we need learn no more than the truth as it is in Jesus. 3. As truth is opposed to futility and deceit; he is true to all that trust in him, as true as truth itself, 2 Cor. 1. 20.

Thirdly, He is the life; for we are alive unto God, only in and through Jesus Christ, Rom. 6. 11. Christ formed in us the true life. Hence, these souls, which our souls are to our bodies. Christ is the resurrection and the life.

Let us consider these jointly, and with reference to each other. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; that is, 1. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end. In him we must set out, go on, and finish. As the truth, he is the guide of our way; as the life, he is the support of our existence. Hence, the true and living way; (Heb. 10. 20.) there is truth and life in it, as well as at the end of it. 3. He is the true way to life, the only true way; other ways may seem right, but the end of them is the way of death.

2. The necessity of his mediation; No man cometh to the Father but by me. Fallen man must come to God as a Judge, but cannot come to him as a Father, otherwise than by Christ as Mediator. The way to the Father is not open by repentance and the acts of worship, without the Spirit and grace of Christ, nor obtain the happiness of coming to God as our Father, without his merit and righteousness; he is the High-Priest of our profession, our Advocate.

2. He speaks of his Father as the end; (v. 7.) if ye had known me aright, ye should, or would, have known my Father also; and henceforth, by the glory you have seen in me, and the doctrine ye have heard from me, ye know him and have seen him. Here it is,

[1.] A tacit rebuke to them for their dulness and carelessness in acquainting themselves with Jesus Christ, though they had been his constant followers and associates: If ye had known me—. They knew him, and yet did not know him; and as they might and should have known him. They know him not, though they know the Christ, but did not follow on to know: God in him. Christ had said to the Jews, (ch. 8. 19.) If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; and here the same to his disciples; for it is hard to say, which is more strange, the wilful ignorance of those that are enemies to the light, or the defects and mistakes of the children of light, that have had such opportunities of knowledge. If they had known Christ aright, they would have known that his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world; that he came down from heaven, and therefore must return to heaven; and then they would have known his Father also, would have known whither he designed to go; when he said, I go to the Father, to a glory in the other world, not in this. If we knew Christianity better, we would know the world better.

2. A favourable intimation that he was well satisfied concerning their sincerity, notwithstanding the weakness of their understanding: And from henceforth, from my giving you this hint, which will serve as a key to all the instructions I have given you hitherto, let me tell you, ye know him, and have seen him, inasmuch as ye know me, and have seen me; for in the face of Christ we see the glory of God, as we see a father in his son that resembles him. Christ tells his disciples, they were not
so ignorant as they seemed to be; for, though little children, yet they had known the Father. 1 John 2. 13. **Note,** that of the disciples of Christ have more knowledge and more grace than they think they have, and Christ takes notice of, and is well pleased with, that good in them which they themselves are not aware of; for they that know God, do not all at once know that they know him, 1 John 5. 20.

10. Philip inquired concerning the Father, (v. 8.) and answered him, v. 9—11. where observe, 1. Philip's request for some extraordinary discovery of the Father. He was not so forward to speak as some others of them were, and yet, from an earnest desire of further light, he cries out, Shew us the Father. Philip listened to what Christ said to Thomas, and fastened upon the last words, Ye now see him; and gives him a maxim, which not only in general magnifies Christ, and leads us to the knowledge of God in him, but justifies what Christ had said, (v. 7.) Ye know the Father, and have seen him; and answers what Philip had asked, Shew us the Father? Why, saith Christ, the difficulty is soon over, for he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. First, All that saw Christ in the flesh, might have seen the Father in him, if Satan and wickedness had not misled their minds, and kept them from a sight of Christ, as the image of God, 2 Cor. 4. 4. Secondly, All that saw Christ by faith, did see the Father in him, though they were not suddenly aware that they did so. In the light of Christ's doctrine, they saw God as the Father of lights; in the miracles, they saw God as the God of power, the finger of God. The holiness of God shone in the spotless purity of Christ's life, and his grace in all the acts of grace he did.

(2.) He refers him to what he had reason to believe; (v. 10, 11.) "Believeth thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and therefore that in seeing me thou hast seen the Father? Hast thou not believed this? If not, take my word for it, and believe it.

[1.] See here what it is which we are to believe; that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; that is, as he had said, (ch. 10. 30.) I and my Father are one. He speaks of the Father and himself as two persons, and yet so one as never any two were, or can be. In knowing Christ as God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, and as being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, we know the Father; and in seeing him thus we see the Father. In Christ we behold more of the glory of God than Moses did at Mount Horeb.

[2.] See here what inducements we have to believe this; and they are two. We must believe it, First, For his word's sake: The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself: See ch. 7. 16. My doctrine is of Christ. What he saith is not a careless as the word of man, speaking his own thoughts at his own pleasure; but really it was the wisdom of God that indited it, and the will of God that enforced it. He spoke not of himself only, but the mind of God according to the eternal counsels.

Secondly, For his works' sake: The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth them; and therefore believe the Father, because I do the things that he teacheth me. This is not a mere assurance that he said to dwell in him, it was what—he abideth in me, by the inseparable union of the divine and human nature; never had God such a temple to dwell in
on earth, as the body of the Lord Jesus, ch. 2. 21. Here was the true Shechinah, of which that in the tabernacle was but a type. The faiths of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily, Col. 2. 9. The Father so dwells in Christ, that in him he may be found, as a man where he dwells. Seek ye the Lord, seek him, as a man doth his garment, as one captivates himself to his works of mercy, Christ did, and the Father did them in him; and the work of redemption in general was God's own work. 3. We are bound to believe this, for the very works' sake. As we are to believe the being and perfections of God, for the sake of the works of creation, which declare his glory; so we are to believe the revelation of God in man Jesus Christ, for the sake of the mighty works, which, by shewing forth themselves, (Matt. 14. 2.) shew forth him, and God in him. Note, Christ's miracles are proofs of his divine mission, not only for the conviction of infidels, but for the confirmation of the faith of his own disciples, ch. 2. 11.—5. 36.—10. 37.

12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. 13. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

The disciples, as they were full of grief to think of parting with their Master, so they were full of care what would become of themselves when he was gone; while he was with them, he was a support to them, kept them in countenance, kept them in heart; but if he leave them, they will be as sheep having no shepherd, an easy prey to those who seek to run them down. Now, to silence these fears, Christ assures them that they should be clothed with powers sufficient to bear them out. As Christ had all power, they, in his name, should have great power, both in heaven and in earth.

1. Great power on earth; (v. 12.) He that believeth on me, (as I know you all,) the works that I do, shall ye also do also. This does not weaken the argument Christ had taken from his works, to prove himself one with the Father, (that others should do as great works,) but rather strengthens it; for the miracles which the apostles wrought, were wrought in his name, and by faith in him; and this magnifies his power more than anything, that he not only wrought miracles himself, but gave power to others to do so too. Two things are assured them of:

1. That they should be enabled to do such works as he had done, and that they should have a more ample power for the doing of them, than they had had when he first sent them forth, Matt. 10. 8. Did Christ heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead? So should they. Did he convince and convert sinners, and draw multitudes to him? So should they. Though he should depart, the work should not cease, nor fall to the ground, but should be carried on as vigorously and successfully as ever; and it is still in the doing.

2. That they should do greater works than these:

(1.) In the kingdom of nature they should work greater miracles. No miracle is little, but some to our apprehension seem greater than others. Christ had healed with the hem of his garment, but Peter with his shadow, (Acts. 5. 15.) Paul by the handkerchief that had touched him, Acts 19. 12. Christ wrought miracles for two or three years in one country, but his followers wrought miracles in his name for many ages in divers countries. Ye shall do greater works, if there were occasion, for the glory of God. The prayer of faith, if at any time it had been necessary, should have removed mountains.

(2.) In the kingdom of grace. They should obtain greater victories by the gospel than had been obtained while Christ was upon earth. The truth which is in Christ, under such outward disadvantages, was the miracle of all. I think this refers especially to the gift of tongues, which was the immediate effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, which was a constant miracle upon the mind, in which words are framed, and which was made to serve so glorious an intention as that of spreading the gospel to all nations in the same language. His disciples, though at first they were not able to preach the gospel in languages, yet as the Spirit dwelt in them which believed not, (1 Cor. 14. 22,) and more powerful for their conviction, than any other miracle whatsoever.

The reason Christ gives for this, is, Because I go unto my Father. [1.] "Because I go, it will be requisite that you should have such a power, lest the work suffer damage by my absence." [2.] Because I go I the Father shall send the Comforter, from whom you shall receive power," Acts 1. 8. The wonderful works which they did in Christ's name, were part of the glories of his exalted state, when he ascended on high, Eph. 4. 8.

11. Great power in heaven; "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, (v. 13, 14.) as Israel, that was a prince with God. Therefore you should do such mighty works, because you have such an interest in me, and I in my Father." Observe,

1. In what way they were to keep up communion with him, and fetch in power from him, when he was gone to the Father—by prayer. When dear friends are to be removed at a distance from each other, they provide for the settling of a correspondence; thus, when Christ was going to his Father, he tells his disciples how they might write to him upon every occasion, and send it by a safe and ready way of conveyance, without danger of misapplying, or lying by the way; "Let me hear from you by prayer, the prayer of faith, and you shall hear from me by the Spirit." This was the old way of intercourse with one another, every since men began to call upon the name of the Lord; but Christ by his death has laid it more open, and it is still open to us. Here is,

(1.) Humility prescribed; Ye shall ask. Though they had quitted all for Christ, they could demand nothing of him as a debt, but must ask it as an alms, must be humble suppliants, beg or starve, beg or perish.

(2.) Liberty allowed; Ask any thing, any thing that is good and proper for you; any thing, provided you asked it as you ask; you may ask for assistance in what you ask, for a mouth and wisdom, for preservation out of the hands of your enemies, for power to work miracles when there is occasion, for the success of the ministry in the conversion of souls; ask to be informed, directed, vindicated. Occasions vary, but they shall be the world to the throne of grace upon every occasion.

2. In what name they were to present their petitions; Ask in my name. To ask in Christ's name, is, (1.) To plead his merit and intercession, and to depend upon that plea. The Old Testament saints had an eye to this when they prayed for the Lord's sake, (Dan. 9. 17.) and for the sake of the anointed; (Ps. 89. 14.) the Christians make it an especial right to a clearer light by the gospel, and so we are enabled more expressly to ask in his name. When Christ dictated the Lord's prayer, this was not inserted, because they did not so fully understand this matter
as they should afterward, when the Spirit was poured out. If we ask in our own name, we cannot expect to speed, for, being strangers, we have no name in heaven; being sinners, we have an ill name there; but Christ's is a good name, well known in heaven, and very precious. (2.) It is to aim at his glory and honour in our prayers, and to seek that as our highest end in all our prayers.

3. What success they should have in their prayers; "When ye ask, that will I do," v. 13. And again, (v. 14,) "I will do it.

4. For what reason their prayers should speed so well; "that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

II. He promises this great and unspeakable blessing to them, v. 16, 17.

1. It is promised that they shall have another Comforter. This is the great New Testament promise, (Acts 1. 4.) as that of the Messiah was of the Old Testament; a promise to the present distress of the disciples, who were in sorrow, and needed a comforter. Observe here,

1. The blessing promised: ὅλης παρακλησίας. The word is used only here in these discourses of Christ, and 1 John 2. 1, where we translate it an advocate. The Rhetorics, and Dr. Hammond, are for retaining the Greek word Paraclete; we read and translate it, the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, including his whole office as a Paraclete.

2. Ye shall have another advocate. The office of the Spirit was to be Christ's advocate with them and others, to plead for his cause, and take care of his concerns, on earth, to be ὀρθόρρευτος Christ—Christ's vicar, as one of the ancients calls him; and to be their advocate and their opposers. When Christ was with them, he spake for them as there was occasion; but now that he is leaving them, they shall not be run down, the Spirit of the Father shall speak in them, Matt. 10. 19, 20. And the cause cannot miscarry, that is pleaded by such an advocate.

3. Ye shall have another Master or Teacher, another Exhorter. While they had to do with Christ, and exorted them to be holy, but now that he is going, he leaves one with them, which shall do this as effectually, though silently. Jansenius thinks the most proper word to render it by, is a Patron, one that shall both instruct and protect you.

4. Another Comforter. Christ was expected as the consolation of Israel. One of the names of the Messiah was Messiah—the Com- forter. The Targum calls the days of the Messiah, Ye years of consolation. Christ comforted his disciples when he was with them, and now that he was leaving them in their greatest need, he promises them another.

5. The giver of this blessing; The Father shall give him my Father and your Father; it includes both. The same that gave the Son to be our Saviour, will give his Spirit to be our Comforter, pursuant to the same design. The Son is said to send the Comforter, (ch. 15. 26.) but the Father is the prime agent.

6. How this blessing is procured—by the intercession of the Lord Jesus; I will pray the Father. He said, (v. 14.) I will do it; here he saith, I will forthwith, to shew not only that he is both God and man, but that he is both king and priest. As priest he is ordained for men to make intercession, as king he is authorized by the Father to execute judgment. When Christ saith, I will pray the Father, it does not suppose that the Father is unwilling, or must be importuned to it, but only that the gift of the Spirit is from his Father; Christ's mediation, purchased by his merit, is taken out by his intercession.

7. The continuance of this blessing; that he may abide with you for ever. That is, (v. 14.) With you, as long as you live. Ye shall never know the want of a comforter, nor lament his departure, as you are
now lamenting mine." Note, It should support us under the loss of these comforts which were design-
ed us for a time, that there are everlasting consola-
tions provided for us. It was not expedient that Christ should be with them for ever, for they who were designed for public service must not always live a college life, they must disperse, and therefore a comforter that would be with them all, in all places and circumstances, as everywhere dispersed, and however dis-
tressed, was gone fit to be with them for ever. [2.] "With your successors, when ye are gone to the end of
your successors in Christianity, in the minis-
try." [3.] If we take for ever in its utmost extent, the promise will be accomplished in those consola-
tions of God which will be the eternal joy of all the
saints; pleasure for ever. This Comforter is the Spirit of truth, whom ye know, v. 16, 17. They might think it impossible to have a comforter equivalent to him who is the Son of God; "Yea," saith Christ, "ye shall have the Spirit of God, who is equal in power and glory with the Son." 
(1.) The Comforter promised is the Spirit; one who should do his work in a spiritual way and man-
amely, inwardly and invisibly, by working on men's
spirits. (2.) "He is the Spirit of truth. He will be tru-
to you, and to his undertaking for you, which he will
perform to the utmost. He will teach you the truth; will enlighten your minds with the knowledge of it, will strengthen and confirm your belief of it, and will increase your love to it. The Gentiles by their own laws, and those of their tradition, were led into gross errors and mistakes; but the Spirit of
truth shall not only lead you into all truth, but others
by your ministry." Christ is the truth, and he is the
Spirit of Christ, the Spirit that he was appointed with.
(3.) He is one whom the world cannot receive; but ye know him. Therefore he abideth with you. [2.] They care here distinguished from the world, for they are chosen and called out of the world that lies in wickedness; they are the children and heirs of another world, not of this.
(4.) It is the misery of those that are invincibly
devoted to the world, that they cannot receive the
Spirit of truth. The spirit of the world and of God are spoken of as directly contrary the one to the other, (1 Cor. 2. 12.) for whereas the
of the descendant, the Spirit of God is included. Even the princes of this world, though, as princes, they had advantages of knowledge, yet, as princes of this world, they laboured under invincible prejudices, so that they knew not the things of the
Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 8. [3.] Therefore men cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because they see him not, neither know him. The comforters of the Spirit are foolishness to them, as much as ever the cross of Christ was, and the great things of the gospel, like those of the law, counted as a strange thing. These are judgments far above out of their sight. Speak to the children of the
world of the operations of the Spirit, and you are a bar-
avarian to them. [4.] The best knowledge of the Spirit of truth, is that which is got by experience; Ye know him for yourselves, for Christ did not dwell with them and by their acquaintance with him, they could not but know the Spirit of truth. They had themselves been endowed with the Spirit in some measure. What enabled them to leave all to follow Christ, and to continue with him in his temptations? What enabled them to preach the gospel, and work miracles, but the Spirit dwelling in them? The experi-
ences of the saints are the explanations of the prom-
ises; paradoxes to others are axioms to them. [5.] They that have an experimental acquaint-
ance with the Spirit, have a comfortable assurance of his countenance; He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, for the blessed Spirit doth not use to shut his lodging. They that know him, know how to value him, invite him and bid him welcome; and therefore he shall be in them, as the light in the air, as the sap in the tree, as the soul in the body. Their communion with him shall be intimate, and their union with him unchangeable. [6.] The gift of the Holy Ghost is a peculiar gift, bestowed upon the disciples of Christ in a distinguishing
way; them, and not the world; it is to them hidden manna, and the white stone. No comforts compa-
rollable to these which make no show, make no
noise. This is the favour God bears to his chosen; it is the heritage of those that fear his name.
18. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. 22. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? 23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

When friends are parting, it is a common request they make to each other, "Pray let us hear from you as often as you can;" this Christ engaged to his disciples, that out of sight they should not be out of mind.

He promises that he would continue his care of them; (v. 18.) "I will not leave you orphans, or fatherless, for though I leave you, yet I leave you this comfort, I will come to you." His departure from them was it that grieved them; but it was not so bad as they apprehended, for it was neither total nor final.

1. Not total: "Though I leave you without my bodily presence, yet I do not leave you without com-
fort." Though children, and left little, yet they had received the adoption of sons, and his Father would be their Father, with whom those who other-
wise would be fatherless, find mercy. Note, The case of true believers, though sometimes it may be sorrowful, yet it is never comfortless, because they are never orphans: for God is their Father, who is an everlasting Father.

The third day I will rise again. (2.) "I will come quickly, to introduce you into the joy of your Lord." Note, The consideration of Christ's coming to us saves us from being comfortless in his
removals from us; for if he depart for a season, it is that we may receive him for ever. Let this moderate our grief, The Lord is at hand.

11. He promises that they should continue their acquaintance with him, and interest in him; (v. 19, 20.) Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more, that is, I am now no more in the world; after his death, the world saw him no more, for though he rose again, he is said to appear to the disciples in the flesh (Acts 10. 41.) The malignant world thought they had seen enough of him, and cried, Away with him, crucify him; and so shall their doom be; they shall see him no more. Those only that see Christ with an eye of faith, shall see him for ever; the world sees him no more till his second coming; but his disciples have communion with him in his absence.

12. He shall continue to be with us, when the world sees me no more. They saw him with their bodily eyes after his resurrection, for he shewed himself to them by many infallible proofs, Acts 1. 3. and then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. They saw him with an eye of faith after his ascension, sitting at God's right hand, as Lord of all; saw that in him, which the world saw not.

2. Because I live, ye shall live also. That which grieved them, was, that their Master was dying, and they counted upon nothing else but to die with him. No, saith Christ, (1.) I live; this the great God glories in, I live, saith the Lord, and Christ saith the same; not only, I shall live, as he saith of them, but, I do live; for he has life in himself, and lives for evermore. We are not comfortless, while we know that our Redeemer lives. (2.) Therefore we shall live also. Note, The life of Christians is bound up in the life of Christ; as sure and as long as he lives, they that by faith are united to him, shall live also; they shall live spiritually, a divine life in communion with God, this life is hid with Christ; if the head and root live, the members and branches live also. They shall live eternally; their bodies shall rise in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; it will be well with them in the world to come, it cannot but be well with all that are his, Isa. 26. 19.

3. Ye shall have the assurance of this; (v. 20.) At that day, when I am glorified, when the Spirit is poured out, ye shall know more clearly and certainly than ye do now, that I am in my Father, and you in me.

(1.) These glorious mysteries will be fully known in heaven; At that day, when I shall receive you to myself, you shall know perfectly that which now you see through a glass darkly. Now it appears not what we shall be, but then it will appear what we were.

(2.) They were more fully known after the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles; at that day divine light should be shone, and their eyes should see more clearly, their knowledge should greatly advance and increase then, would become more extensive and more distinct, and like the blind man's at the second touch of Christ's hand, who at first only saw men as trees walking.

(3.) They are known by all that receive the Spirit of truth, to their abundant satisfaction, for in the divine light should be shone, and their eyes should see more clearly, their knowledge should greatly advance and increase then, would become more extensive and more distinct, and like the blind man's at the second touch of Christ's hand, who at first only saw men as trees walking.

1. That Christ is in the Father, is one with the Father, by their experience of what he has wrought for them and in them; they find what an admirable consent and harmony there is between Christianity and natural religion, that that is grafted into this, and so they know that Christ is in the Father. 2. That the Christians are instructed and guided by the Spirit, that Christ abides in them, 1 John 3. 3. 24. [3.] That they are in Christ, for the relation is mutual, and equally near on both sides, Christ in them, and they in Christ, which speaks an intimate and inseparable union; in the virtue of which it is that because he lives, they shall live also. Note, First, Union with Christ is the life of believers; and their relation to him, and to God through him, is their felicity. Secondly, The knowledge of this union is their unspeakable joy and satisfaction; they were now in Christ, and in the Father, and in God, who makes a further act of grace, that they should know it, and have the comfort of it. An interest in Christ and the knowledge of it are sometimes separated.

11. He promises that he would love them, and manifest himself to them, v. 21—24. Where observe,

1. Who they are, whom Christ will look upon, and accept, as lovers of him; those that have his commandments, and keep them. By this Christ shews that the kind things he here said to his disciples, were intended not for those only that were now his followers, but for all that should believe in him through their word. Here is,

(1.) The duty of those who claim the dignity of being disciples; having Christ's commandments, and keeping them; the profession, we have Christ's commandments, we have them sounding in our ears, written before our eyes, we have the knowledge of them; but this is not enough; would we approve ourselves Christians indeed, we must keep them. Having them in our heads, we must keep them in our hearts and lives.

(2.) The dignity of those that do the duty of disciples. They are looked upon by Christ to be such as love him. Not those that have the greatest wit, and know how to talk for him, or the greatest estate to lay out for him, but those that keep his commandments. Note, the surest evidence of our love to Christ is obedience to the laws of Christ. Such is the love of a subject to his sovereign, a dutiful, respectful, obedient love, a conformity to his will, and satisfaction in his wisdom.

2. What returns he will make to them for their love; rich returns; there is no love lost upon Christ. (1.) They shall have the Father's love; He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father. We could not love God, if he did not first of all his good-will to us, give us his grace to love him; but there is a love of complacency promised to those that do love and keep, Prov. 8. 17. He loves them, and lets them know it, He loves them, he smiles upon them, and embraces them. God so loves the Son, as to love all those that love him.

1. They shall have Christ's love; and I will love him, as God-man, as Mediator. God will love him as a Father, and I will love him as a brother, an elder brother. The Creator will love him, and be the felicity of his being; the Redeemer will love him, and be the protector of his well-being. In the nature of God, nothing shines more bright than this, that God is love. And in the undertaking of Christ, nothing appears more glorious than this, that he loved us. Now both these loves are the crown and comfort, the grace and glory, which shall be to all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

3. They shall have the comfort of that love; I will manifest myself to him. Some understand it of Christ's shewing himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection, but, it being promised to all that love him and keep his commandments, it must be a kindness for believers, though absent, but is doing them kindness while absent, for he bears them on his heart, and ever lives interceding for them.

(3.) They shall have the comfort of that love; I will manifest myself to him. Some understand it of Christ's shewing himself alive to his disciples after his resurrection, but, it being promised to all that love him and keep his commandments, it must be a kindness for believers, though absent, but is doing them kindness while absent, for he bears them on his heart, and ever lives interceding for them.
know his love, and the dimensions of it, (Eph. 3. 15, 19.) cultivates his graces, and draws them into exercise, and thus enlarges their comforts in himself. When he clears up the evidences of their interest in him, and gives them tokens of his love, experience of his tenderness, and earnest of his kingdom and glory, then he manifests himself to them; and Christ is manifested to none but those to whom he is pleased to manifest himself. Now, upon occasion of Christ's making this promise:

(1.) One of the disciples expresses his wonder and surprise at it, v. 22. Observe,

[1.] Who it was that said this—Judah, not Iscariot. Judah, or Judas, was a famous name; the most famous tribe in Israel was that of Judah; two of Christ's disciples were of that name, one of them was the traitor; the other was the brother of James, (Luke 6. 16.) one of those that were akins to Christ, Matt. 13. 55. He is called Lebbeus and Thaddaeus; was the penman of the last of the apostles, which in our translation, for distinction's sake, we call the Epistle of Jude. This was he that spake here. Observe, First, There was a very good man, and a very ill man, called by the same name; for names conspire not to God, nor do they make men worse; Judas the apostle was never the worse, no more than Judas the apostate ever the better, for being name-sakes. But, Secondly, The evangelist carefully distinguishes between them; when he speaks of this pious Judas, he adds, not Iscariot. Take heed of mistaking; let us not confound the precious and the vile.

[2.] What he said—Lord, how is it? Which speaks either, First, The weakness of his understanding. So some take it. He expected the temporal kingdom of the Messiah, that it should appear in external pomp and power, such as all the world would wonder at. "How then," thinks he, "should it be confined to us only?" τι γενηθη—"what is the matter now, thou wilt not shew thyself openly, as is expected, that the Gentiles may come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising?" Note, We create difficulties to ourselves by mistaking the nature of Christ's kingdom, as if it were of this world. Or, Secondly, As speaking the strength of his affections, and the humble and thankful sense he had of Christ's distinguishing favours to them; Lord, how is it? He is amazed at the condescensions of divine grace, as David, 2Sam. 7. 25. What is there in him to deserve such kindness? Note, 1. Christ's manifesting of himself to his disciples, is done in a distinguishing way; to them, and not unto the world that sit in darkness; to the base, and not to the mighty and noble; to babes, and not to the wise and prudent. Distinguishing favours are very obliging; considering who are passed by, and who are pitched upon. 2. It is justly marvellous in our eyes; for it is unaccountable that such grace should be vouchsafed to such grace; Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

(2.) Christ, in answer hereunto, explains and confirms what he had said, v. 23, 24. He overlooks what inconstancy there was in what Judas spake, and goes on with his comforts.

[1.] He further explains the condition of the promise, which will not be fulfilled, till he keeps his commandments. And as to this, he shews what an inseparable connection there is between love and obedience; love is the root, obedience is the fruit. First, Where a sincere love to Christ is in the heart, there will be obedience; "If a man love me indeed, that love will be such a commanding constraining principle in him that no question, he will keep my words." Where there is true love to Christ, there is a value for his favour; a veneration for his authority, and an entire surrender of the whole man to his conduct and government. Where love is, duty follows of course, is easy and natural, and flows from a principle of gratitude.

Secondly, On the other hand, where there is no true love to Christ, there will be no care to obey him; He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings, v. 24. This comes in here as a discovery of those that do not love Christ; whatever they pretend, certainly, they do not love him, that believe not his truths, and obey not his laws—to whom Christ's sayings are but as idle tales, which he heeds not, or hard sayings, which he likes not. It is also a reason why Christ will not manifest himself to the world that doth not love him, because they put this affliction upon him, not to keep his sayings; why should Christ be familiar with them that will be strange to him?

[2.] He further explains the promise; v. 23. If a man does thus love me, I will manifest myself to him. First, My Father will love him; this he had said before, (v. 21.) and here repeats it for the confirming of our faith; because it is hard to imagine that the great God should make those the objects of his love, that he had so often designated vessels of his wrath. Jude wonders that Christ should manifest himself to them; but this answers it, "If I love my Father, why should not I be free with you?"

Secondly, We will come unto him, and make our abode with him. This explains the meaning of Christ's manifesting himself to him, and magnifies the favour. 1. Not only, I will, but We will, (v. 24.) and the Father, who, in this, are one. See v. 9. The light and love of God are communicated to man in the light and love of the Redeemer, so that wherewith Christ is formed, the image of God is stamped. 2. Not only, "I will shew myself to him at a distance," but, "We will come to him, to be near him, to be with him;" such are the powerful influences of divine graces and comforts upon the souls of those that love Christ in sincerity. 3. Not only, "I will give him a transient view of me, or make him a short and running visit," but, We will take up our abode with him, which notes complacency in him, and constancy to him. God will not only love obedient believers, but he will take a pleasure in loving them, will rest in love to them, Zech. 3. 17. He will be with them as at his home.

[3.] He gives a good reason both to bind us to observance of the commandments, and to expect as much upon the promise; (v. 24.) The word which you hear, is not mine, but his that sent me. To this purport he had often spoken, (ch. 7. 16. 8. 28. 12. 49.) and here it comes in very pertinently; First, The stress of duty is laid upon the precepts of Christ as our rule, and justly, for the word of Christ which we are to keep, is the Father's word, and his will the Father's will. Secondly, The stress of our concern is laid upon the promise of Christ. But far much as, in dependence upon that promise, we must deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and quit all, it concerns us to inquire, whether the security be sufficient for us to venture our all upon; and this satisfies us it is, that the promise is not Christ's bare word, but the Father's which sent him; which therefore we may rely upon.

25. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. 26. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. 27. Peace I leave with you.
I. That they should be under the tuition of his Spirit, v. 26. Where we may observe,

1. The reflection Christ would have them make upon the instructions he had given them, These things have I spoken unto you, (referring to all the good lessons he had taught them, since they entered themselves into his school,) being yet present with you. This intimates, (1.) That what he had said he did not retract or undo, but ratify it, or stand to it. What he had spoken he had spoken, and would abide by it. (2.) That he had improved the opportunity of his bodily presence with them to the utmost; "As long as I have been yet present with you, you know I have lost no time." Note, When our teachers are about to be removed from us, we should call to mind what they have spoken, being yet present with us.

2. The encouragement given them to expect another teacher, and that Christ would find out a way of speaking to them, after his departure from them, v. 26. He had told them before, that the Father would give them this other comforter; (v. 16.) and here he returns to speak of it again; for as the promise of the Messiah had been, so the promise of the Spirit now was, the consolation of Israel. Two things were given them further concerning the sending of the Holy Ghost.

(1.) On whose account he should be sent; "The Father will send him in my name; for my sake, at my special instance and request;" or, "as my agent and representative." He came in his Father's name, as his ambassador; the Spirit comes in his name, as resident in his absence, to carry on his undertaking, and to perform things for his second coming. Hence he is called the Spirit of Christ, for he pleads his cause, and does his work.

(2.) On what errand he should be sent; two things he shall do.

[1.] He shall teach you all things; as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Christ was a teacher to his disciples; if he leave them now that they have made so little proficiency, what will become of them? Why, the Spirit will teach them, shall be their standing Tutor. He shall teach them all things necessary for them, either to learn themselves, or to teach others. For they that would teach the things of God, must first themselves be taught of God; this is the Spirit's work. See Isa. 59. 21.

[2.] He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you. Many a good lesson Christ had taught them, which they had forgotten, and which would be to seek when they had occasion for it; many things they did not retain the remembrance of, because they did not rightly understand the meaning of; the Spirit shall not teach them a new gospel, but bring to their minds that which was taught, by leading them into the understanding of it. He shall not bring all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now if they had been left to themselves, herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them. And to all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him by faith and prayer we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

II. That they should be under the influence of his peace; (v. 27.) Peace I leave with you. When Christ was about to leave the world, he made his will; his soul he committed to his Father, his body he bequeathed to Joseph, to be decently interred, his clothes fell to the soldiers, his mother he left to the care of John; but what should he leave to his poor disciples, that had left all for him? Silver and gold he gave not unto them; but he left them an infinitely better, his peace. "I leave you, but I leave my peace with you. I not only give you a title to it, but put you in possession of it." He did not part in anger, but in love; for this was his farewell, Peace I leave with you, as a dying father leaves portions to his children; and this is a worthy portion.

Observe,

1. The legacy that is here bequeathed; Peace, my peace. Peace is put for all good, and Christ has left us all the needful good, all that is really and truly good, all the purchased promised good. Peace is put for reconciliation and love; the peace bequeathed is peace with God, peace with one another; peace in our own bosoms, that seems to be especially given, a tranquillity in that arising from a sense of our justification before God. It is the counterpart of our pardons, and the composure of our minds. This Christ calls his peace, for he is himself our Peace, Eph. 2. 14. It is the peace he purchased for us, and preached to us, and on which the angels congratulated men at his birth, Luke 2. 14.

2. To whom this legacy is bequeathed; "To you, my disciples and followers, that will be exposed to trouble, and have need of peace; to you that are the sons of peace, and are qualified to receive it." This legacy was left to them as the representatives of the church, to them and their successors, to them and all true christians in all ages.

3. In what manner it is left; Not in the world's giving, give I unto you. That is, (1.) I do not compliment you with, Peace be unto you; n, it is not a mere formality, but a real blessing." (2.) The peace I give is of such a nature, that the smiles of the world cannot give it, nor the frowns of the world take it away." Or, (3.) "The gifts I give to you, are not such as this world gives to its children and votaries, that it is kind to." The world's gifts concern only the body and time; Christ's gifts enrich the soul for eternity; the world gives lying vanities, and that which will cheat us; Christ gives substantial blessings, which will never fail us. The world gives and takes, Christ gives a good part that shall never be taken away. (4.) The peace which Christ gives, is infinitely more valuable than that which the world gives. The world's peace begins in ignorance, consists with sin, and ends in endless troubles; Christ's peace begins in grace, consists with no allowed sin, and ends at length in everlasting peace. As is the difference between a killing lethargy and a reviving refreshing sleep, such is the difference between Christ's peace and the world's.

4. What use they should make of it; Let not your heart be troubled, for any evil past or present, neither let it be afraid of any evil future. Nothing there were all of them to preach, and some of them to write, the things that Jesus did and taught, to transmit them to distant nations and future ages; now if they had been left to themselves, herein, some needful things might have been forgotten, others misrepresented, through the treachery of their memories; therefore the Spirit is promised to enable them truly to relate and record what Christ said unto them. And to all the saints the Spirit of grace is given to be a remembrancer, and to him by faith and prayer we should commit the keeping of what we hear and know.

28. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If I have loved me, ye would rejoice, because I
said. I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. 29. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. 30. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. 31. But the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so do I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Christ here gives his disciples another reason, why their hearts should not be troubled for his going away; and that is, because his heart was not. And here he tells them what it was that enabled him to endure the cross and despise the shame, that they might look unto him, and run with patience. He comforted himself, 1. That though he went away, he should come again; "Ye have heard how I have said, and now I say it again, I go away, and come again." Note, What we have heard of the doctrine of Christ, especially concerning his second coming, we have need to be told again. 2. That when we are under the power of any transport of passion, grief, or fear, or care, we forget that Christ will come again. See Phil. 4. 5. Christ encouraged himself with this, in his sufferings and death, that he should come again, and the same should comfort us in our departure at death; we go away to come again; the leave we take of our friends at that parting, is only a good name for a final farewell. See 1 Thess. 4. 13, 14.

11. That he went to his Father; "If ye loved me, as by your sorrow ye say you do, ye would rejoice instead of mourning, because though I leave you, yet I said, I go unto the Father, not only mine, but yours, which will be my advancement and your advantage; for my Father is greater than I." Observe here, 1. It is matter of joy to Christ's disciples, that he is gone to the Father, to take possession for orphans, and make intercession for transgressors. His departure had a bright side as well as a dark side. Therefore he sent this message after his resurrection, (ch. 20. 17.) I ascend to my Father and your Father, as most comfortable.

2. The reason of this is, because the Father is greater than he, which, if it be a proper proof of his divinity, (which it is alleged, 'Cas, no doubt, it is,) must be understood thus, that his state with his Father would be much more excellent and glorious than his present state; his returning to his Father (so Dr. Hammond) would be the advancing of him to a much higher condition than that which he was to now in. Or, thus, His going to the Father himself, and bringing all his followers to him there, was the ultimate end of his undertaking, and therefore greater than the mean. This is Christ ratifying his own declarations and expectations of his disciples to something greater than that which now they thought all their happiness bound up in. The kingdom of the Father, wherein he shall be all in all, will be greater than the mediatorial kingdom.

3. The disciples of Christ should shew that they love him by their rejoicing in the glories of his exaltation, rather than by lamenting his sorrows and humiliation, and rejoicing that he is gone to his Father, where he would be, and where we shall be shortly with him. Many that love Christ, let their love run out in a wrong channel; they think if they love him, they must be continually in pain because of him; whereas they that love him, should dwell at ease in him, should rejoice in Christ Jesus.

III. That his going away, compared with the prophecies which went before of it, would be a means of confirming the faith of his disciples; (v. 29.) I have told you before it come to pass, that I must die and rise again, and ascend to the Father, and send the Comforter, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. See this reason, ch. 13. 19,—16. 4. Christ told his disciples of his death, though he knew it would both puzzle them and grieve them, because it would afterward redound to the confirmation of their faith in two things.

1. That he who foretold those things, had an existing prescience, and knew beforehand what a day would bring forth. When St. Paul was going to Jerusalem, he knew not the things that did abide him there, but Christ did.

2. That those things foretold were according to the divine purpose and designation, not sudden resolves, but the counterparts of an eternal counsel. Let them therefore know that while he went away, it should be for the confirmation of their faith, and so would redound to their real benefit; for the trial of our faith is very precious, though it cost us present heaviness, through manifold temptations, 1 Pet. 1. 6.

IV. That he was sure of a victory over Satan, with whom he knew he was to have a struggle in his departure; (v. 30.) Henceforth I will not talk much with you. With what may be adjured to the pouring out the Spirit. He had a great deal of good talk with them after this; (ch. 15. and 16.) but, in comparison with what he had said, it was not much. His time was now short, and he therefore spake largely to them now, because the opportunity will soon be over. Note, We should always endeavour to talk to the purpose, because perhaps we may not have time to talk much. We know not how soon our breath will be stopped, and therefore should be always breathing something that is good. When we come to be sick, and die, perhaps we may not be capable of talking much to those about us; and therefore what good counsel we have to give them, let us give it while we are in health.

The reason why he would not talk much with them was, because he had now other work to apply himself to; The prince of this world comes; he called the devil the prince of this world, ch. 12. 31. The disciples dreamed of their Master being the prince of this world, and they, worldly princes under him. But Christ tells them that the prince of this world was his enemy, and so were the princes of this world, that were actuated and ruled by him, 1 Cor. 1. 20. But now, saith he, I ascend to my Father and your Father, as most comfortable.

1. The prospect Christ had of an approaching conflict, not only with men, but with the powers of darkness. The devil had set upon him with his temptations, (Matt. 4.) had offered him the kingdom of this world, if he would hold them as tributary to him, with an eye to which, Christ calls him in disdain, the prince of this world; then the devil departed from him for a season. But now, says Christ, I see him rallying again, preparing to make a furious onset, and so to gain that by terrors, which he could not gain by allurements; to frighten from his undertaking, whom he could not entice from it. Note, The foresight of a temptation gives us great advantage in our resistance of it; for, being forewarned, we should be fore-armed. While we are here, we may see Satan continually coming against us, and ought therefore to be always upon our guard.

2. The assurance he had of good success in the conflict; He hath nothing at all. (1.) There was no guilt in Christ to give authority to the prince of this world in his terrrors. The devil is said to have the power of death; (Heb. 2. 14.) the Jewes called him the angel of death, an executioner. Now Christ having done no evil, he had no legal power against him, and therefore,
though he prevailed to crucify him, he could not prevail to terrify him; though he hurried him to death, yet not to despair. When Satan comes to disquiet us, he has something in us to perplex us with, for we have all sinned; but when he would disturb Christ, he found no occasion against him. (2.) There was no corruption in Christ to give advantage to the prince of this world in his temptations; he could not crush his undertaking by drawing him to sin, because there was nothing sinful in him, nothing irregular for his temptations to fasten upon, no tinder for him to strike fire into; such was the spotless purity of his nature, that he was above the possibility of sinning. The more Satan's interest in us is crushed, and defeat's, the more comfortably may we expect sufferings and death.

V. That his departure was in compliance with, and obedience to, his Father. Satan could not force his life from him, and yet he would die; that the world may know that I love the Father, v. 31. We may take this,

1. As confirming what he had often said, that his undertaking, as Mediator, was a demonstration to the world, (1.) Of his compliance with the Father; hereby it appeared that he loved the Father. As it was an evidence of his love to man, that he died for his salvation; so it was of his love to God, that he died for his glory, and the accomplishing of his purposes. Let the world know that between the Father and the Son there is no love lost, As the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand, so the Son loved the Father, and gave his Spirit into his hand. (2.) Of his obedience to his Father; As the Father gave me commandment, even so I did the thing commanded, in the manner commanded, Note, The best evidence of our love to the Father, is, our doing as he hath given us commandment. As Christ loved the Father, and obeyed him, even to the death; so must we love Christ, and obey him. Christ's eye to the Father's commandment, obliging him to suffer and die, bore him up with cheerfulness, and overcame the reluctancies of nature; this took off the offence of the cross, that what he did was by order from the Father; the command of God is sufficient to bear us out in that which is most disputed by others, and therefore should be submitted to, and borne up in that which is most difficult to ourselves; This is the will of him that made me, that sent me out.

2. As concluding what he had now said; having brought it to this, here he leaves it; that the world may know that I love the Father, you shall see how cheerfully I can meet the appointed cross; Arise, let us go hence to the garden, 24. some; or to Jerusalem. When we talk of troubles at a distance, it is easy to say, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest; but when it comes to the pinch, when an unavoidable cross lies in the way of duty, then to say, Arise, let us go to meet it, instead of going out of our way to miss it, this lets the world know that we love the Father. If this discourse was at the close of the passover-supper, it should seem that at these words he rose from the table, and retired with the withdrawing room, where he might the more freely carry on the discourse with his disciples in the following chapters, and pray with them. Dr. Goodwin's remark upon this, is, that Christ mentioning the great motive of his sufferings, his Father's commandment, was in all haste to go forth to suffer and die, was at the snapping of the time of Judas's meeting him; Arise, says he, let us go hence; but he looks upon the glass, as it were, sees it not quite out, and therefore sits down again, and preaches another sermon.

Now, (1.) In these words he gives his disciples an encouragement to follow him. He does not say, If you go, but, Let us go. He calls them out to no hardships, but what he himself goes before them as their leader. They had promised they would not desert him; Come, says he, let us go hence; if it were at the close of the paschal and eucharistical supper, it teaches us that the solemnities of our communion with God are not to be constant in this world. When we sit down under Christ's love, and cheerfulness, and in the midst of the delights of an agreeable conversation, yet we must not think of being here always; Arise, let us go hence. If it was the time of despair, let us see how you will make the words good.

(2.) He gives them an example, teaching them at all times, especially in suffering times, to sit loose to anything here below, and often to think and speak of leaving them. Though we sit easy, and in the midst of the delights of an agreeable conversation, yet we must not think of being here always; Arise, let us go hence.

CHAP. XV.
It is generally agreed that Christ's discourse in this and the next chapter, was at the close of his last supper, the night in which he was betrayed, and it is a continued discourse, not interrupted as that in the foregoing chapter was; and what he chooses to discourse of is very pertinent to the present sad occasion of a farewell sermon. Now that he was about to leave them, I. They would be tempted to leave him, and return to Moses and the prophets; and therefore he tells them, how necessary it was that they should by faith adhere to him, and abide in him. II. They would be tempted to go and grow strange one to another; and therefore he presses it upon them to love one another, and to keep up that communion when he was gone, which had hitherto been their comfort. III. They would be tempted to shrink from their apostleship, when they met with hardships; and therefore he prepares them to bear the shock of the world's ill-will.

There are four words, to which his discourse in this chapter may be reduced: 1. Fruit, v. 1., 8. 2. Love, v. 9., 17. 3. Hatred, v. 18., 25. 4. The Comforter, v. 26., 27.

I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. 6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. 8. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Here Christ discourses concerning the fruit, the fruits of the Spirit, which his disciples were to bring forth, under the similitude of a vine. Observe here,

1. The doctrine of this similitude; what notion we ought to have of it, 1. That Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine. It is an instance of the humanity of Christ, that he is pleased to speak of himself under low and humble comparisons. He that is the Sun of righteousness, and the bright and morning Star, compares himself to a vine. The church, which is Christ mystical, is
A vine; (Ps. 80. 8.) so is Christ, who is the church seminal. Christ and his church are thus set forth.

(1.) He is the vine, planted in the vineyard, and is not spontaneous; planted in the earth, for he is the Word made flesh. The vine has an unsightly, unpromising outside; and Christ had no form, nor comeliness, Isa. 53. 2. The vine is a spreading plant, and Christ will be known, Salvation to the ends of the earth. The fruit of the vine honours God, and cheers man; (Judg. 9. 13.) so doth Christ's mediation; it is better than gold, Prov. 8. 19.

(2.) He is the true vine, as truth is opposed to pretence and counterfeit; he is really a fruitful plant, a plant of renown. He is not like that wild vine, which deceived those who gathered of it; (2 Kings 4. 39.) but a true vine. Unfruitful trees are said to lie, (Hab. 3. 17. marg.) but Christ is a vine that will not deceive. Whatever excellency there is in any creature, serviceable to man, it is but a shadow of that grace which is in Christ for his people's good. He is that true vine typified by Judah's vine, which enriched him with the blood of the grape, (Gen. 49. 11.) by Joseph's vine, the branches of which run over the wall, (Gen. 49. 22.) by Israel's vine, under which he dwelt safely, 1 Kings 4. 25.

2. That believers are branches of this vine, which supplies them with all the grace of God, is seen by the vine, which is seen, and our life is hid with Christ; the root bears the tree, (Rom. 11. 18.) diffuses sap to it, and is all in all to its flourishing and fruitfulness; and in Christ are all supports and supplies. The branches of the vine are many, some on one side of the house or wall, others on the other side; yet, meeting in the root, are all but one vine; thus all good christians, though in place and opinion distant from each other, yet meet in Christ, the centre of their unity. Believers, like the branches of the vine, are weak, and insufficient to stand of themselves, but as they are borne up. See Ezek. 15. 2.

3. That the Father is the husbandman, who is the land-worker. Though the earth is the Lord's, it yields him no fruit unless he work it. God has not only a propriety in, but a care of, the vine and all the branches. He has plantations and vineyards, and makes the increase; for we are God's husbandry, 1 Cor. 3. 3. See Isa. 5. 1, 2.—27. 2, 3. He had an eye upon Christ, the root, and upheld him, and made him to flourish out of a dry ground. He has an eye upon all the branches, and prunes them, and watches over them, that nothing hurt them. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful about his vineyard, as God is about his church, which therefore must needs prosper.

II. The duty taught us by this similitude, which is, to bring forth fruit, and, in order to that, to abide in Christ.

1. We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes, (Isa. 5. 2.) and from a Christian we look for fruitfulness, that is the fruit, a Christian temper and disposition, a Christian life and conversation, Christ's dishonouring his Church. We must honour God, and do good, and exemplify the purity and power of the religion we profess; and this is bearing fruit. The disciples here must be fruitful, as christians, in all the fruits of righteousness, and as apostles, in diffusing the savour of that knowledge. To persuade them to this, he urges,

(1.) The doom of the unfruitful; (v. 2.) they are thrown in the dunghill. They are ingrafted, that there are many who pass for branches in Christ, who yet do not bear fruit. Were they really united to Christ by faith, they would bear fruit; but, being only tied to him by the thread of an outward profession, though they seem to be branches, they will soon be seen to be dry ones; unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more. It might be read, Every branch that beareth not fruit in me, and it comes much to one; for they do not bear fruit in Christ, and in his Spirit and grace, are as if they bore no fruit at all, Hos. 10. 1. [5.] It is highly threatened, that they shall be taken away, in justice to them and in kindness to the rest of the branches. From him that has not real union with Christ, and fruit produced thereby, shall be taken away even that which he seemed to have, Luke 8. 18. Some think this refers primarly to Judas.

(2.) The promise made to the fruitful; he promises that, he will make them fruitful, and bear much fruit. Note. [1.] Further fruitfulness is the blessed reward of former fruitfulness. The first blessing was, be fruitful; and it is still a great blessing. [2.] Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of pruning, or pruning; zâbâ'as—he taketh away that which is superfluous and luxurious, which hinders its growth and fruitfulness. The best have that in them which is pernicious, album amboitatum—something which should be taken away; some notions, passions, or humours, that want to be purged away, which Christ has promised to do by his word, and Spirit, and providence; and these shall be taken off by degrees in the proper season. [3.] The purging of fruitful branches, in order to their greater fruitfulness, is the care and providence of the great Husbandman, who would preserve the fruitfulness of his church.

(3.) The benefits which believers have by the doctrine of Christ, the power of which they should labour to exemplify in a fruitful conversation; (v. 3.) Now ye are clean. [1.] Their society was clean, now that Judas was expelled by that word of Christ, What thou doest, do quickly; and till they were got clean of him, they were not at all clean. The word of Christ is a distinguishing word, and separates between the judicious and the simple; it will purify the church of the first-born in the great dividing day.

[2.] They were each of them clean, that is, sanctified, by the truth of Christ; (ch. 17. 17.) that faith by which they received the word of Christ, purified their hearts, Acts 15. 9. The Spirit of grace by the word refined them from the dress of the world and the flesh; and purged out of them the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees; which, from when they saw their levit erect and connit against their Master, they were now pretty well cleansed. Apply it to all believers. The word of Christ is spoken to them; there is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption; it cleanses as fire cleanses the gold from its dross, and as physic cleanses the body from its disease. We then evidence that we are cleansed by the word, when we bring forth fruit unto holiness. Perhaps, here is an allusion to the law concerning vineyards in Canaan; the fruit of them was as unclean, and uncircumcised, the three first years after it was planted; and the fourth year it was to be holiness of praise unto the Lord; and then it was clean, Lev. 19. 23, 24. The disciples had now been three years, under Christ's instruction; and now ye are clean.

[4.] The glory that will redound to God by our fruitfulness, with that comfort and honour that will come to ourselves by it, v. 8. If we bear much fruit. [1.] Herein our Father will be glorified. The fruitfulness of the apostles, such as their own diligent discharge of their office, would be to the glory of God in the conversion of souls, and the offering of them up to him, Rom. 15. 9, 16. The fruitfulness of all christians, in a lower and narrower sphere, is to the glory of God. By the eminent good works of christians many are brought to glorify our Father which is in heaven.

[2.] So shall we be Christ's disciples indeed, ap
neft by Christ, who think they have no need of him; and that they who reject him, should be rejected by him; these that abide not in Christ, shall be abandoned by him; they are left to themselves, in their own ungodliness, and then are justly cast out of the communion of the faithful.

[2.] They are withered as a branch broken off from the tree. That they abide not in Christ, though they may flourish a while in a plausible, at least a passable profession, yet in a little time they wither and come to nothing. Their parts and gifts wither, their zeal and devotion wither, their credit and reputation wither, but the good tree remains, Luke 6-11—13. Note, That they bear no fruit, after a while will bear no leaves. How soon is that fig-tree withered away, which Christ has cursed!

[3.] Men gather them. Satan's agents and emissaries pick them up, and make an easy prey of them. They that fall off from Christ, presently fall in with sinners, and the sheep that wander from Christ's fold, the devil stands ready to seize them for himself. When the Spirit of the Lord was departed from Saul, an evil spirit possessed him.

[4.] They cast them into the fire, that is, they are cast into the fire; and they who seduce them and draw them to sin, do in effect cast them there; for they made them children of hell. Fire is the fittest place for withered branches, for they are good for nothing else, Ezek. 15. 4.

[5.] Their fire is burning; that follows of course; but it is here added very emphatically, and makes the threatening very terrible; they will not be consumed in a moment, like thorns under a pot, Ezek. 7. 6; but shall, they are burning for ever in a fire, which not only cannot be quenched, but will never spend itself. This comes of quitting Christ, this is the end of barren trees. Apostates are twice dead; Jude 12 and when it is said, They are cast into the fire and are burned, it speaks as if they were twice damned. Some apply men's gathering them, to the ministry of the angels in the great day, when they shall gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend, and shall bundle the tares for the fire.

[4.] The blessed privilege which they have, that abide in Christ; (v. 7.) If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will of my Father in my name, and it shall be done for you. See here, [1.] How our union with Christ is maintained, by the word; If ye abide in me, he had said before, and I in you; here he explains himself, and my words abide in you; for it is in the word that Christ is set before us, and offered to us, Rom. 10. 6—8. It is in the word that we receive and embrace him; and so where the word of Christ dwells richly, in Christ dwells. If the word be our constant guide and monitor, if it be in us at home, then we abide in Christ, and he in us.

[2.] How our communion with Christ is maintained—by prayer; Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you. And what can we desire more than to have what we will for the asking? Note, They that abide in Christ as their hearts' delight, shall have, through Christ's Spirit and word, all that he gives for us. Two things are implied in this promise: First, That if we abide in Christ, and his word in us, we will not ask anything but what is proper to be done for us. The promises abiding in us, lie ready to be turned into prayers; and the prayers so regulated, cannot but speed. Secondly, That if we abide in Christ and his word, we shall have such an interest in God's favour and Christ's mediation, that we shall have an answer of peace to all our prayers.

9. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.
If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. 12. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. 14. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. 15. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. 16. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. 17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

Christ, who is love itself, is here discoursing concerning love; a fourfold love. 1. Concerning the Father's love to him: and concerning this he here tells us,

1. That the Father did love him; (v. 9.) As the Father hath loved me. He loved him as Mediator; This is my beloved Son. He was the Son of his love. He loved him, and gave all things into his hand; and yet so loved the world, as to deliver him up for us all. When Christ was entering upon his sufferings, he comforted himself with this, that his Father loved him. Those whom God loves as a Father, may despise the hatred of all the world. 2. That he abode in his Father's love, v. 10. He continually loved his Father, and was beloved of him. Even then, when he was made sin and a curse for us, and it pleased the Lord to bruise him; yet he abode in his Father's love. See Ps. 89. 35. Because he loved his Father, he went cheerfully through his sufferings, and therefore his Father continued to love him. 3. That therefore he abode in his Father's love, because he kept his Father's law; I have kept my Father's commandments, as Mediator, and so abide in his love. Hereby he showed that he continued to love his Father; that he went on, and went through, with his undertaking, and therefore the Father continued to love him. His soul delighted in him, because he did not fail, nor was discouraged, Isa. 42. 1, 4. We having broken the law of creation, and thereby thrown ourselves out of the love of God: Christ satisfied for us by obeying the law of redemption, and so he abode in his love, and restored us to it. 11. Concerning his own love to his disciples. The Father leaves them, he loves them. And observe here,

1. The pattern of this love; As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. A strange expression of the condescending grace of Christ! As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy. The Father loved him as his Son, and he loves them as his children. The Father gave all things into his hand; so, with himself, he freely giveth us all things. The Father loved him as Mediator, as head of the church, and the great trustee of divine grace and favour, which he had not for himself only, but for the benefit of these for whom he was intrusted; and says he, "I have been a faithful trustee. As the Father has committed his love to me, so I transmit it to you." Therefore the Father was well pleased with him, that he might be well pleased with us in him; and loved him, that in him, as before, he might make intercession, Eph. 5. 2. The proofs and products of the love, which are four:

(1.) Christ loved his disciples, for he laid down his life for them; (v. 13.) Greater proof of love hath no man than this, to lay down his life for his friend. And this is the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, he is our friend indeed—Pail for us, body for body; life for life. He, who knew our insolvency, and foresaw how dear the engagement would cost him. Observe here,

[1.] The extent of the love of the children of men to one another; the highest proof of it, is, laying down one's life for a friend to save his life, and perhaps there have been some such heroic achievements of love, more than checking our own self-love; (V. 15.) It all that a man has will I give for his life, he that gives that for his friend, gives all, and can give no more; this may sometimes be our duty, 1 John 3. 16. Paul was ambitious of the honour: (Phil. 2. 17.) and for a good man some will even dare to die, Rom. 5. 7. It is love in the highest degree, which is strong as death.

[2.] The excellency of the love of Christ beyond all other love; he has not only exceeded, the most illustrious lovers. Others have laid down their lives, content that they should be taken from them; but Christ gave up his, was not merely passive, but made it his own act and deed. The life which others have laid down, has been but of equal value with the life for which it was laid down, and perhaps less valuable; but Christ is infinitely more worth than the ten thousand lives, that have thus laid down their lives for their friends, but Christ laid down his for us, when we were enemies, Rom. 5. 8. Perhaps more alto least corda esse operet, quae non meliorem tam incomparabili divini amoris suavitatem—Those hearts must be harder than iron or stone, which are not softened by such incomparable sweetness of divine love. Calvin.

(2.) Christ loved his disciples, so much that he took them unto a connivence with himself; (v. 14, 15.) "If ye approve yourselves by your obedience my disciples indeed, we are my friends, and shall be treated as friends." Note, The followers of Christ are the friends of Christ, and he is graciously pleased to call and count them so. They that do the duty of his servants, are admitted and advanced to the dignity of his friends. David had one servant in his court, and Solomon one in his, that was, in a particular manner, the king's friend; (2 Sam. 15. 57. 1 Kings 4. 5.) but this honour have all Christ's servants. We may in some particular instances befriend a stranger; but we espouse all the interests of a friend, and concern ourselves in all his cares; thus Christ takes believers to be his friends, he visits them, and converses with them, as his friends; though we are often afflicted in their afflictions, and takes pleasure in their prosperity; he pleads for them in heaven, and takes care of all their interests there. Have friends but one soul? He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. Though they often show themselves unfriendly, he is a friend that loves at all times.

Observe how endearingly this is expressed here.

[1.] He will not call them servants, though they called him Master and Lord. They that would be called Christ's in humility, may not take a pride in sitting upon all occasions in their authority and su
periority, but remember that their servants are their fellow-servants. But, [2.] He will call them his friends; he will not only love them, but will let them know it; for in his tongue is the law of kindness. After his resurrection he seems to speak with more affectionate tenderness of and to his disciples than before; Go to my brethren, (ch. 20. 17.) Children, have ye any meat, ch. 21. 5. But observe, though Christ called them his friends, they called the Lord of his Father, (1 Pet. 1. 1.) and so James, ch. 1. 1. The more honour Christ puts upon us, the more honour we should study to do him; the higher in his eyes, the lower in our own.

(3.) Christ loved his disciples, for he was very free in communicating his mind to them; (v. 13.) "Henceforth ye shall not be kept so much in the dark as ye have been the Father; but ye shall not only hear their present work; but when the Spirit is poured out, ye shall know your Master's designs as friends. All things that I have heard of my Father, I have declared unto you." As to the secret will of God, there are many things which we must be content not to know; but as to the revealed will of God, Jesus Christ has faithfully handed it to us. [18.] Matt. 11. 27. The great things relating to man's redemption, Christ declared to his disciples, that they might declare them to others; they were the men of his counsel, Matt. 15. 11.

(1.) Christ loved his disciples, for he chose and ordained them to be the prime instruments of his glory and honour in the world; (v. 16.) I have chosen you, and ordained you. His love to them appeared,

[1.] In their election, their election to their apostleship; (ch. 6. 70.) I have chosen you twelve. It did not begin on their side; Ye have not chosen me, but I first chose you. Why were they admitted to such an intimacy with him, employed in such an embassy for him, and endowed with such power from on high? It was not owing to their wisdom and goodness in choosing him for their Master, but to his favour and grace in choosing them for his disciples. It is fit that Christ should have the choosing of his own ministers; still he does it by his providence and Spirit. Though ministers make that holy calling their own choice, Christ's choice is prior to their's, and directs and determines it. All of that are chosen by Christ's love, and God's Spirit, may be said. They have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen them, Deut. 7. 7, 8.

[2.] In their ordination; I have ordained you, saith he; I have put you into the ministry, (1 Tim. 1. 12.) put you into commission." By this it appeared he took them for his friends, that he crowned their heads with such an honour, and filled their hands with such a trust. It was magnificent confidence he reposed in them, when he made them his ambassadors to negotiate the affairs of his kingdom in this lower world, and the prime ministers of state in the administration of it.

The treasure of the gospel was committed to them, First, that it might be propagated; that ye should go, be sent abroad: ye should go as under a commission. Ministry is a work, and ye that go about it, must rest assured, ye have got upon you great trust, that ye may go from place to place all the world over, and bring forth fruit. They were ordained, not to sit still, but to go about, to be diligent in their work, and to lay out themselves unweariedly in doing good. They were ordained, not to beat the air, but to be instrumental in God's hand for the bringing of the gospel, and the Spirit of grace, to Christ, Rom. 1. 11. Note, Those whom Christ ordains, should and shall be fruitful; should labour, and shall not labour in vain. Secondly, That it might be perpetuated; that the fruit should remain, that the good effect of their labours may continue in the world from generation to generation, to the end of time. The church of Christ was not to be a short-lived thing, as many of the sects of the philosophers, that were a nine days' wonder; it did not come up in a night, nor should it perish in a night, but be as the days of heaven. The sermons and writings of the apostles are transmitted to us to continue the church of Christ's foundation, ever since the christian church was first famed by the ministry of the apostles and seventy disciples; as one generation of ministers and christians has passed away, still another has come. By virtue of that great charter, (Matt. 28. 19.) Christ has a church in the world, which, as our lawyers say of bodies corporate, does not die, but lives in a succession of members; and thus the church's power, to this day, and shall do while the earth remains.

Lastly, His love to them appeared in the interest they had at the throne of grace; Whatever ye shall ask of my Father in my name, he will give it you. Probably, this refers in the first place to the power of working miracles, which the apostles were clothed with, which was to be drawn out by prayer. [19.] Matt. 16. 19. It is a way of speaking to the prevalence of your labours, whatever help from heaven ye have occasion for at any time, it is but ask and have.

Three things are here hinted to us for our encouragement in prayer, and very encouraging they are. [1.] That we have a God to go to, who is a Father; Christ here calls him the Father, both mine and yours; and the Spirit in the word and in the heart teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. [2.] That we come in great name. Whatever we ask and we come upon to the throne of grace, according to God's will, we may with a humble boldness mention Christ's name in it, and plead that we are related to him, and he is concerned for us. [3.] That an answer of peace is promised us. What ye come for, shall be given you. This great promise made to that great duty, keeps up a comfortable and gainful intercourse between heaven and earth.

III. Concerning the disciples' love to Christ, enjoined in consideration of the great love where with he had loved them. Three things he exhorts them to;

1. To continue in his love; (v. 9.) "Continue in your love to me, and in mine to you." Both may be taken in. We must place our happiness in the consciousness of Christ's love to us, and of our love to Christ. "Keep up your love to me, and then all the troubles ye meet with will be easy; love made seven years' hard service easy to Jacob. Let not the troubles ye meet with for Christ's sake, quench your love to Christ, but quicken it rather." 2. To let his joy remain in them, and fill them, v. 11. This he designed in those precepts and promises given them. [1.] That his joy might remain in them. The words are so placed in the original, that they may be read either.

[1.] That my joy in you may remain. If they bring forth much fruit, and continue in his love, he will continue to rejoice in them, as he had done. Note, Fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus; he rests in his love to them, Zeph. 3. 17. As there is a transport of joy in heaven in the conversion of sinners, so there is a remaining joy in the perseverance of saints.
It is here recommended by Christ’s pattern, (v. 12.) as I have loved you. Christ’s love to us should direct and engage our love to each other; in that manner, and from that motive, we should love one another, as, and because, Christ has loved us. He here specifies some of the expressions of his love to them; he called them friends, communicated his mind to them, was ready to give them what they asked; Go ye and do likewise.

2. It is required by his precept. He intersperses his authority, has made it one of the statute-laws of his kingdom. Observe how differently it is expressed in these two verses, and both very emphatical.

18. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20. Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persevere you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep your’s also. 21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. 22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. 23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Here Christ discourses concerning hatred, which is the character and genius of the devil’s kingdom, as love is of the kingdom of Christ. Observe here, I. That they who are, in whom this hatred is found; in the world, the children of this world, as distinguished from the children of God; who are in the interests of the god of this world, whose image they bear, and whose power they are subject to; all these, whether Jews or Gentiles, who would not come into the church of Christ, which he had established, and visibly separates from this evil world. The calling of these the world, speaks, 1. Their number; there were a world of people that opposed Christ and Christianity. Lord, how were they increased, that troubled the Son of David! I fear if we should put it to the vote between Christ and Satan, Satan would out-poll us quite. 2. It speaks their confederacy and combination; these ramp up; and are as one, Ps. 135. 5. Jews and Gentiles,
that could agree in nothing else, agreed to persecute Christ's ministers. 3. It speaks their spirit and disposition; they are men of the world, (Ps. 17. 13, 15,) wholly devoted to this world, and the things of it, and never thinking of another world. The people of God, though they are taught to hate the sin of sinners, yet not their persons, but to love and do good to all men. A malicious, spiteful, envious spirit, not the spirit of Christ, but of the world. Who they are against whom this hatred is levelled; against the disciples of Christ, against Christ himself, and against the Father.

1. The world hates the disciples of Christ. The world hated them, (v. 19.) and he speaks of it as that which they must expect and count upon, v. 18, as I John 3. 15. Observe how this comes in. (1.) Christ had expressed the great kindness he had for them as friends; but, lest they should be puffed up with this, there was given them, as there was to Paul, a thorn in the flesh, that is, as it is explained there, reproaches and persecutions for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. 12. 7. 10. (2.) He had appointed them their work, but tells them what hardships they should meet with in it, that it might not be a temptation to them to give up the work accordingly. (3.) He had charged them to love one another, and need enough they had to love one another, for the world would hate them; to be kild to one another, for they would have a great deal of unkindness and ill-will from those that were without. "Keep peace among yourselves, and that will for- tify you against the world's quarrels with you." They that are in Christ's stead, his enemies, are concerned to hold together. See,

1. The world's enmity against the followers of Christ; it hated them. Note, Whom Christ blesseth, the world curseth. The favourites and heirs of Heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity was put between the seed of the woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel, but because his works were righteous? Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing; Joseph's brethren hated him, because his Father loved him; Saul hated David, because the Lord was with him; Ahab hated Micaiah, because of his prophecies; such are the causeless causes of the world's hatred.

2. The fruits of that enmity. Two of which we have here. (1.) They persecute you, because they hate you, for hatred is a restless passion. It is the common lot of those who will live godly in Christ Jesus, to suffer persecution, 2 Tim. 3. 12. Christ foresaw what ill-usage his ambassadors would meet with in the world, and yet, for the sake of those few that by their ministry were to be called out of the world, he sent them forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Secondly, Another fruit of the world's enmity is implied, that they would reject their doctrine; when Christ says, If they have kept my sayings, they will keep yours, he means, They will keep your's, and regard your's, no more than they have regarded and kept mine. Note, The preachers of the gospel cannot but take the despising of their message to be the greatest injury that can be done to themselves; as it was a great affront to Jeremiah, to say, Let us not give heed to any of his words; Jer. 18. 18.

3. The causes of that enmity. The world will hate them.

First, Because they do not belong to it; (v. 19.) If we were of the world, of its spirit, and in its interests, if ye were carnal and worldly, the world would love you, as its own; but, because we are called out of the world, it hates you, and ever will.

Note, 1. We are not to wonder, if those that are devoted to the world, are carressed by it as its friends; most men bless the covetous, Ps. 10. 3.—9. 18. 2. Nor are we to wonder, if those that are delivered from the world, are maligned by it as its enemies; when Israel is rescued out of Egypt, the Egyptians will pursue them. Observe, The reason why Christ's disciples are not of the world, is not because they have by their own wisdom and virtue distinguished themselves from the world, but because Christ hath chosen them out of it, set them apart for himself; and this is the reason why the world hates them; trope. (1.) To make them distinct from the world, which they are designed for, sets them above the world, and so makes them the objects of its envy. The saints shall judge the world, and the upright have dominion, and therefore they are hated. (2.) The grace which by virtue of this choice they are endued with, sets them against the world; they swim against the stream of this world, and are not conformed to it; they witness against the world, and are not conformed to it. This would support them under all the calamities which the world's hatred would bring upon them, that therefore they were hated, because they were the choice and chosen ones of the Lord Jesus, and were not of the world. Now, [1.] This was no just cause for the world's hatred of them. If we do things which are contrary to the world, we may have reason to lament it; but if men hate us for that for which they should love and value us, we have reason to pity them, but no reason to perplex ourselves. Nay, [2.] This was just cause for their own joy. He that is hated because he is rich and prosperous, cares not who has the vexation of it, while he has the satisfaction of it.

—Populus me sibiatur, at mihi plaudo Ipse donec sit, Et si nos sibi, —Let them hiss on, he cries,
While in my own opinion fully blessed.
Timon in Hor.

Much more may they hug themselves, whom the world hates, but Christ loves.

Secondly, Another cause of the world's hating them will be, because you do belong to Christ, (v. 21.) for my name's sake. Here is the core of the controversy; whatever is pretended, this is the ground of the quarrel, they hate Christ's disciples because they bear his name, and bear up his name in the world. Note, 1. It is the character of Christ's disciples, that they stand up for his name. The name into which they were baptized, is that which they have to be accounted by. It is the name of Jesus; and, as it is written, the Lord Jesus Christ. 2. They are told the lot of those that appear for Christ's name, to suffer for so doing; to suffer many things, and hard things, all these things. 3. It is matter of comfort to the greatest sufferers, if they suffer for Christ's name sake. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, (1 Pet. 4. 14.) happy indeed, considering not only the honour that is imprinted upon these sufferings, (Acts 5. 41.) but the comfort that is infused into them, and especially the crown of glory which these sufferings lead to. If we suffer with Christ, and for Christ, we shall reign with him. Thirdly, After all, it is the world's ignorance that is the true cause of its enmity to the disciples of Christ; (v. 21.) because they know not him that sent me. 1. They know not God. If men had but a due sense of the power and majesty of God, and the glory of his name, they would not embrace Christianity, and did but know God, though they would not embrace Christianity, yet they could not hate and persecute it. Those have no knowledge, who eat up God's people, Ps. 14. 4. 2. They know not God, as he sent our Lord Jesus, and authorized him to be the great Mediator of the peace. We do not rightly know God, if we do not know him in Christ, and they who persecute those whom he sends, make it to appear that they know not that he was sent of God. See 1 Cor. 2.8.

2. The world hates Christ himself. And this is spoken of here for two ends.

(1.) To mitigate the trouble of his followers, aris-
ing from the world's hatred, and to make it the less strange, and the less grievous; (v. 18.) Ye know that it hated me before, ... We read it as signifying priority of time; he began in the bitter cut of suffering, and then left us to pledge him; but it may be read as speaking his superiority over them; "Ye know that it hated me, your first, your chief and captain, and your leader and commander." [1] If Christ, who excelled in goodness, and was perfectly innocent and universally beneficent, was hated, can we expect that any virtue or merit of our's should screen us from malice? [2] If only the greatest truths are sometimes so much opposition in the planting of it, his servants and followers can look for no other in the propagating and professing it.

For this he refers them (v. 20.) to his own word, at their admission into discipleship; Remember the word that I said unto you. It would help us to understand Christ's latter sayings, to compare them with his former sayings. Now would any thing contribute more to the making of us easy, than remembering the words of Christ, which will expand his providences. Now in this word there is,

First, A plain truth; The servant is not greater than the Lord. This he had said to them, Matt. 10. 24. Christ is our Lord, and therefore we must diligently attend all his motions, and patiently acquiesce in all his dispositions, for the servant is inferior to his Lord. Thus Christ's truths are sometimes the strongest arguments for the hardest duties; Elisha answers a multitude of Job's murmurs, with this one self-evident truth, that God is greater than man, Job 33. 12. So here is,

Secondly, A proper inference drawn from it, "If they have persecuted me, as ye have seen, and are likely to see much more, they will also persecute your servants. Ye may expect it and count upon it: for," 1. "Ye will do the things they do, and they will do the things they do; they will reprove them; ye will reprove them for their sins, and call them to repentance, and give them strict rules of holy living, which they will not hear." 2. "Ye cannot do more than I have done to oblige them; after so great an instance, let none wonder if they suffer ill for doing well. He adds, "If they have kept my saying, they will keep your's also:" as there had been a few, but in a few, so here be worse; God wrought upon no preaching, there will be by your's a few, and but a few." Some give another sense of this, making ἐπαυξάνουσα, to be put for ἐπαυξηγέρας; "If they have lain in wait for my sayings, with a design to ensnare me, they will in like manner lie in wait to entangle you in your talk." (2.) It serves to aggravate the wickedness of this unbelief, this world, and to discover its exceeding sinfulness: to hate and persecute the apostles was had enough, but in them to hate and persecute Christ himself, was much worse. The world is generally in an ill name in scripture, and nothing can put it into a worse name than this, that it hated Jesus Christ. There is a world of people that are haters of Christ.

Two things he insists upon to aggravate the wickedness of those that hated him.

[1] That there was the greatest reason imaginable why they should love him; men's good words and good works recommend them: now as to Christ, First, His words were such as merited their love; (v. 22.) "If I had not spoken unto them, to count their love, they had not loved me, their opposition had not amounted to a hatred of me; their sin had been comparably no sin. But now that I have said so much to them to recommend myself to their best friends, they do not proceed, no excuse for their sin." Observe here.

1. The advantage which they have, that enjoy the gospel; Christ in it comes and speaks to them; he speak in person to the men of that generation, and is still speaking to us by our Bibles and ministers, and as one that has the most unquestionable authority over us, and affection for us. Every word that he has uttered is a word of infinite authority; and if the reader will observe, there is a condescending tenderness, and not a condescending tenderness, able, one would think, to charm the dearest adder.

2. The excuse which they have, that enjoy the gospel; "If I had not spoken to them, if they had never heard of Christ and salvation by him, they had not had sin." (1.) Not this kind of sin. They had not been chargeable with a contempt of God, before, if he had not called them, and invited them, to hear grace to them. As sin is not imputed where there is no love, so unbelief is not imputed where there is no gospel; and where it is imputed, it is thus far the only damning sin, that, being a sin against the remedy, other sins would not damn, if the guilt of them were not bound on with this. (2.) Not such a degree of sin. If they had not had the gospel among them, their other sins had not been so:


3. The aggravating guilt which they lie under, to whom Christ has come and spoken in vain, whom he has called and invited in vain, with whom he has reasoned and pleaded in vain; they have no cloak for their sin, they are altogether excusable, and in the judgment-day will be speechless, and will not have a word to say for themselves. Then will God be also clearer and fuller the discoveries are, which are made us of the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, the more is said to us, that is convincing and endearing, the greater is our sin if we do not love him and be here in him. The word of Christ strips sin of its cloak, that it may appear sin.

Secondly, His works were such as merited their love, as well as his words; (v. 24.) "If I had not done among them, in their country, and before their eyes, such works as no other man ever did, they had not had sin; their unbelief and enmity had been excusable; and they might have had some colour to say that my word was not to be credited, if not otherwise confirmed; but he produced satisfactory proofs of his divine mission, works which no other man did. Note 1. As the Creator demonstrates his power over the elements, so the Redeemer over men, by both the Redeemer. His miracles, his mercies, works of wonder, and works of grace, prove him sent of God, and sent on a kind errand. 2. Christ's works were such as no man ever did. No common person that had not a commission from heaven, and God with him, could work miracles, ch. 3. 2. And no prophet ever wrought such miracles, so many, so illustrious. Moses and Elias wrought miracles as servants by a derived power: but Christ, as a King, by his own power. This was it that amazed the people, that with authority he commanded diseases and devils; (Mark 1. 27.) they owned they never saw the like, Mark 2. 12. They were all good works, works of mercy; and this seems especially intended here, for he is upbraiding them with this, that they hated him. One that was so universally useful, so many to so many, should have been universally beloved, and yet even he is hated. 3. The works of Christ enhance the guilt of sinners' infidelity and enmity to him, to the last degree of wickedness and absurdity. If they had only heard his words, and not seen his works; if we had only his sermons upon record, and not his miracles, unbelief might have pleaded want of proof; but now it has no excuse. Nay, the rejection of Christ both by them and us, is in the light of the only of obstinate unbelief, but of base ingratitude. They saw Christ to be most amiable, and studious to do them a kindness; yet they hated him, and studied to do him mischief. And ye see in his
word that great love wherewith he loved us, and yet are not wrought upon by it.

[2.] That there was no reason at all why they should hate him. For it is provoking and disobliging, but our Lord Jesus not only did much to merit men's esteem and good-will, but never did any thing justly to incur their displeasure; this he pleads by quoting a scripture for it; (v. 25.) "This comes to pass, this unreasonable hatred of me, and my discourses for my sake, that the word might be fulfilled, which is written in their law," (that is, in the Old Testament, which is a law, and was received by them as a law.) "They hated me without a cause." This David speaks of himself as a type of Christ, Ps. 35. 19.—59. 4. Note, First, They that hate Christ, hate him without any just cause, to Christ is unreasonable enmity. We think those deserve to be hated, that are haughty and froward, but Christ is meek and lowly, compassionate and tender; those also that under colour of complaivity are malicious, envious, and revengeful, but Christ devoted himself to the service of those that used him nay, and of those that abused him; tolled for others' case, and impoverished us. Secondly, He is not our incombustible light, that are hurtful to kings and princes, and disturbers of the public peace; but Christ, on the contrary, was the greatest blessing imaginable to his country, and yet was hated. He testified indeed that their works were evil, with a design to make them good, but to hate him for that cause was to hate him without a cause. Secondly, Herein the scripture was fulfilled, and the antitype answered the type. Soul and his courtiers hated David without cause, for he had been serviceable to him with his harp, and with his sword; Absalom and his party hated him, though to him he had been an indulgent father, and to them a great benefactor. Thus was the Son of David, hated and hunted most unjustly, They that hated Christ, did not design therein to fulfill the scripture; but God, in permitting it, had that in his eye; and it confirms our faith in Christ as the Messiah, that even this was foretold concerning him, and, being foretold, was accomplished in him. And we must not think it strange or hard, if it have a further accomplishment in us. We are apt to justify our complaints of injuries done us, with this, that they are causeless, whereas the more than causeless complaints are more hurtful to the feelings of Christ, and may be the more easily borne.

3. In Christ the world hates God himself; this is twice said here: (v. 23.) He that hateth me, though he think his hatred goes no further, yet really he hates my Father also. And again, v. 24. They have seen and hated both me and my Father. Note, (1.) There are those that hate God, notwithstanding the beauty of his nature, and the bounty of his providence; they are enraged at his justice, as the devils that believe it and tremble, are vexed at his dominion, and would gladly break his bands asunder. They who cannot bring themselves to deny that there is a God, and yet wish there were none, they see and hate him. (2.) Hatred of Christ will be construed and adjudged hatred of God, for he is in his person his Father, and in his person his Father. As his great agent and ambassador. God will have all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father, and therefore what entertainment the Son has, that the Father has. Hence it is easy to infer, that those who are enemies to the Christian religion, however they may cry up natural religion, are really the enemies to God; for all their professions are in effect atheism, and they that ridicule the religion of the Christian, would, if they could, extinguish even natural light, and shake off all obligations of conscience and the fear of God. Let an unbelieving malignant world know that their enmity to the gospel of Christ, will be the greater proof in the sight of the blessed God himself; and let all that suffer for righteousness' sake, according to the will of God, take comfort from this; if God himself be hated in them, and struck at through them, they need not be either ashamed of their cause, or afraid of the issue.

26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 27. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Christ having spoken of the great opposition which his gospel was likely to meet with in the world, and the hardships that would be put upon the preachers of it, lest any should fear that they and it would be run down by that violent torrent, he here intimates to all those that were well-wishers to his cause and interest, what effectual provision was made for the supporting it, both by the principal testimony of the Spirit, (v. 26.) and the subordinate testimony of the apostles; (v. 27.) and testimonies are the proper supports of truth.

1. It is here promised that the blessed Spirit shall maintain the cause of Christ in the world, notwithstanding the opposition it should meet with. Christ, when he was reviled, committed his injured cause to his Father, and did not lose by his silence, for the Comforter came, pleaded it powerfully, and carried it triumphantly. "When the Comforter or Advocate is come, which proceedeth from the Father, and whom I will send to supply the want of my bodily presence, he shall testify of me against those that hate me without cause."

We have more in this verse concerning the Holy Ghost, than in any one verse beside in the Bible; and being baptized into his name, we are concerned to acquaint ourselves with him, as far as he is revealed.

1. Here is an account of him in his essence, or subsistence rather. He is the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father. Here, (1.) He is spoken of as a distinct person; not a quality or property, but a person under the proper name of a Spirit, and proper title of the Spirit of truth, a title fitly given him, having such an operation to bear the name of divine light, and the energy of divine power. The rays of the sun, by which it dispenses and diffuses its light, heat, and influence, proceed from the sun, and yet are one with it. The Vicene Creed says, the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, for he is called the Spirit of the Son, Gal. 4. 6. and the Son is here said to send him. The Greek church of old, when they baptized a person, they were in testimony of divine light, and the energy of divine power. The rays of the sun, by which it dispenses and diffuses its light, heat, and influence, proceed from the sun, and yet are one with it. The Vicene Creed says, the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, for he is called the Spirit of the Son, Gal. 4. 6. and the Son is here said to send him. The Greek church of old, when they baptized a person, they were in testimony of the Father and the Son, making of the person whom they baptized, the fruit of the union of the two persons, a new creature within the veil, he says, I will send him; that speaks him to be the fruit of his dominion within.
the veil. The Spirit was sent, (1.) By Christ as Mediator, now ascended on high to give gifts unto men, and all power being given to him. (2.) From the house. They went from heaven, my Father's house," (the Spirit was given in a season for the beginning, Acts 2, 2), "but according to my Father's will and appointment, and with his concurring power and authority." (3.) To the apostles, to instruct them in their preaching, enable them for working, and carry them through their sufferings. He was given to them and their successors, both in Christianity and in the ministry; to them and their seed, and their seed's seed, according to that promise, Isa. 59. 21.

5. In his office and operations, which are two;
   (1.) One implied in the title given to him, he is the Comforter, or Advocate. An advocate for Christ, to maintain his cause against the world's infidelity, a comforter to the saints against the world's hatred.
   (2.) Another expressed; He shall testify of me. He is not only an advocate, but a witness for Jesus Christ; he is one of the three that bear record in heaven, and the first of the three that bear witness on earth, 1 John 5. 7, 8. He instructed the apostles, and enabled them to work miracles; he indicted the scriptures which are the standing witnesses that testify of Christ, ch. 3. 39. "The power of the ministry is derived from the Spirit, for he qualifies ministers, and the power of Christianity, too, for he sanctifies Christians, and in both testifies of Christ.

II. It is here promised that the apostles also, by the Spirit's assistance, should have the honour of being Christ's witnesses; (v. 27.) And ye also shall bear witness of me, being competent witnesses, for ye have been with me from the beginning of my ministry. Observe here,

1. That the apostles were attainted to be witnesses for Christ in the world. When he had said, The Spirit shall testify, he adds, And you also shall bear witness. Note, The Spirit's working is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage our's. Though the Spirit testify, ministers also must bear their testimony, and people attend to it; for the Spirit of grace witnesses and works by the means of grace. The apostles were the first witnesses that were called in the famous trial between Christ and the prince of this world, which is issued in the ejectment of the intruder. This speaks, (1.) The work cut out for them; they were to attest the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning Christ, for the recovering of his just right, and the maintaining of his crown and dignity. Though Christ's disciples fled when they should have been witnesses for him upon his trials before the High-Priest and Pilate, yet after the Spirit was poured out upon them, they appeared courageous in vindication of the cause of Christ against the accusations it was loaded with. The truth of the christian religion was to be proved very much by the evidence of matter of fact, especially Christ's resurrection, which was attested by the presence of witnesses, which were five, and the tincture of which was common, chosen witnesses, (Acts 10. 41.) and they bore their testimony accordingly, Acts 3. 15.—5. 39. Christ's ministers are his witnesses. (2.) The honour put upon them hereby—that they should be workers together with God; "The Spirit shall testify of me, and you also, under the conduct of the Spirit, and in concomitance with the Spirit, (who will preserve you from mistaking in that which you rely upon your own knowledge, and will inform you of that which you cannot know but by revelation,) shall bear witness." This might encourage them against the hatred and contempt of the world, that Christ had honoured them, and would own them.

2. That they were qualified to be so; Ye have been with me from the beginning. They not only heard his public sermons, but had constant private converse with him. He went about doing good, and while others saw his wonderful and merciful works, which he did in their own town and country only, they that went about with him were witnesses of them all. They had likewise opportunity of observing the unsotted purity of his conversation, and could witness for him that they never saw in him, or heard from him, anything that had the least tincture of human frailty. Note, (1.) We have great reason to receive the record which the apostles gave of Christ, for they did not speak by hearsay, but what they had the greatest assurance of. (2.) These are best able to bear witness for Christ, that have themselves been with him, by faith, hope, and love, and by living a life of communion with God in him. Ministers must first learn Christ, and then preach them. These speak best of the things of God, that work experimentally. It is particularly an great advantage to have been acquainted with Christ from the beginning, to understand all things from the very first, (Luke 1. 3.) to have been with him from the beginning of our days. An early acquaintance, and constant converse with the gospel of Christ, will make a man like a good householder.

CHAP. XVI.

Among other glorious things God hath spoken of himself, this is one, I wound, and I heal, Deut. 32. 39. Christ's discourse in this chapter, which continues and concludes his farewell sermon to his disciples, does so. 1. Here are wounding words in the comfort he administers to them for their support under these troubles, which are five. 1. That he would send them the Comforter, v. 7. 12. 2. That he would visit them again at his resurrection, v. 16. 22. 3. That he would secure to them an answer of peace to all their prayers, v. 23. 27. 4. That he was now but returning to his Father, v. 28. 32. 5. That the troubles they might meet with in this world, by virtue of his victory over it they should be sure of peace in him, v. 33.

1. THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service. 3. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. 5. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6. But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

Christ dealt faithfully with his disciples when he sent them forth on his errands, for he told them the worst of it, that they might sit down and count the cost. He had hid them in the chapter before to expect the worst, and now he here tells them why. 1. He gives them a reason why he alarmed them thus with the expectation of trouble; These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended, or scandalized, v. 1. 2. The disciples of Christ are apt to be offended at the cross; and the offence of the cross is a dangerous temptation, even to good men, either to turn
III. He gives them the true reason of the world's enmity and rage against them; (v. 3.) "These things will they do unto you, not because you have done them any harm, but because they have not known the Father, nor me. Let this comfort you, that none can work the evil enemies that the world can invent against you. 1. Many that pretend to know God, are wretchedly ignorant of him. They that pretend to do him service thought they knew him, but it was a wrong notion they had of him. Israel transgressed the covenant, and yet cried, My God, we know thee, Hos. 8. 1, 2. 2. They that are ignorant of Christ, cannot have any right knowledge of God. In vain do men pretend to know the Father, and yet not believe on Jesus Christ, and know not his doctrine. 3. Those are very ignorant indeed of God and Christ, that think it an acceptable piece of service to persecute good people. They that know Christ, know that he came not into the world to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that he rules by the power of truth and love, not of fire and storm. Never was there such a persecuting church as that which makes ignorance the mother of devotion.

IV. He tells them why he gave them notice of this now, and why not sooner.

1. Why he told them of it now; (v. 4.) not to discourage them, or add to their present sorrow; nor did he tell them of their danger, that they might converse how to avoid it, but that, when the time shall come (and you may be sure it will come) you may remember how I did your office. While suffering is their enemies' comfort, it will be of use to us, to remember what Christ has told us of sufferings. (1.) That our belief of Christ's foresight and faithfulness may be confirmed; and, (2.) That the trouble may be the less grievous, for we were forewarned of it before, and we took up our profession in expectation of it, so that it ought not to be a surprise to us, nor looked upon as a wrong to us. As Christ in his sufferings, so his followers in theirs, should have an eye to the fulfilling of the scripture.

2. Why he did not tell them of it sooner: "I spake not this to you, from the beginning;" (v. 5.) when you and I came to be first acquainted, because I was with you. (1.) While he was with them, he bore the shock of the world's malice, and stood in the front of the battle; against him the powers of darkness levelled all their force, not against small, or great, but only against this one man, John 17. 11, and the world did not need them to say so much to them of suffering, because it did not fall much to their share; but we do find that from the beginning he bid them prepare for sufferings; and therefore, (2.) It seems rather to be meant of the promise of another Comforter. This he had said little of to them at the beginning; because he was himself with them to instruct, guide, and comfort them; and then they needed not the promise of the Spirit's extraordinary presence. The children of the bride-chamber would not have so much need of a comforter till the bridegroom should be taken away.

V. He expresses a very affectionate concern for the present sadness of his disciples, upon occasion of what he had said to them; (v. 5, 6.) "Now I am to be no longer with you, but going away to him that sent me, and in his presence; and none of you asketh me with any courage, Whither goest thou? But, instead of inquiring after that which would comfort you, you are apt upon that which looks melancholy, and sorrow has filled your heart." 1. He had told them that he was about to leave them: Now I go my way. He was not driven away by force, but voluntarily departed; his life was not extorted from him, but deposited by him. He went to him that sent him, to give an account of his narrative. Thus, when we depart out of this world, we go to him that sent us into it, which should make us all solicitous to live to good purposes, remember back from the ways of God, or turn aside out of them, or drive on heavily in them; to quit either their integrity or their comfort. It is not for nothing that a suffering time is called an hour of temptation.

Our Lord Jesus, by giving us notice of trouble, designed to take off the terror of it, that it might not be a surprise to us. Of all the adversities of our peace in this world of troubles, none insult us more violently, nor put our troops more into disorder, than disappointment does; but we can easily welcome a guest we expect, and Being fore-warned, are fore-armed—Prævidunt, prævénunt. It was the thoughts what they should suffer; (v. 2.) "They that have power to do it, shall put you out of your synagogues; and that is not the worst, they shall kill you." Ever duos gladiis—Behold two swords drawn against the followers of the Lord Jesus.

1. The sword of ecclesiastical censure; this is drawn against them by the Jews, for they were the only pretenders to church-power. They shall cast you out of their synagogues, λαθρεύοντας παρακινοῦντες— they shall make you excommuni- cate. (1.) "They shall cast you out of the particular synagogues ye were members of." At first, they scourged them in their synagogues as contemners of the law, (Matt. 10. 17.) and at length, cast them out as incorrigible. (2.) "They shall cast you out of the congregation of Israel in general, the national church of the Jews; and thus driven out of a house infected and falling. Note, It has often been the lot of Christ's disciples to be unjustly excommunicated. Many a good truth has been branded with an anathema, and many a child of God delivered to Satan.

2. The sword of civil power: "The time cometh, the hour is come;"—new things are likely to be worse with you than hitherto they have been; when you are expelled as heretics, they will kill you, and think they have done you more service. (1.) You will find them really cruel: They will kill you. Christ's sheep have been accounted as sheep for the slaughter; the twelve apostles (we are told) were all put to death, except John. Christ had said, (ch. 13. 27.) Ye shall hear witness, μάρτυρες—ye shall be martys, shall seal the truth with your blood, your hearts' blood. (2.) You will find them seemingly conscionable; they will think they do God service; they will seem λαθρεύονται—to offer a sacrifice to God; as those that cast out God's servants of old, and said, Let the Lord be glorified, Isa. 66. 3. Note, [1.] It is possible for those that are real enemies to God's service, to pretend a mighty zeal for it. The devil's work has many a time been done in God's name. They are one of the most mischievous enemies of all the world's power; and the children of men, and the children of God, and the children of the world, together, have been the instruments of God's vengeance. [2.] It is common to patronise an enmity to religion with a colour of duty to God, and service to his church. God's people have suffered the greatest hardships from conscientious persecutors. Paul verily thought he ought to do what he did against the name of Jesus. This does not at all lessen the sin of the profane, or the villany of the world; their very misery, and even the blood of the saints, will not be avenged on the world; but it does grieve the sufferings of the persecuted, to die under the character of being enemies to God; but there will be a resurrection of names, as well as of bodies, at the great day.
ing we have a commission to execute, which must be returned at a certain day.

2. He had told them what hard things they must suffer when he was gone, and that they must not expect such an easy quiet life as they had had. Now, if these were the legacies he had left to them, who had left all for him, they would be tempted to think twice about bargains of it; and were, for the present, in a consternation about it, in which their Master sympathizes with them, yet blames them.

(1.) That they were careless of the means of comfort, and did not stir up themselves to seek it; *None of you asks me, Whither goest thou?* Peter had started that question, (ch. 13. 36.) and Thomas had somewhat echoed it, (ch. 14. 5.) but they did not pursue it, they did not take the answer, they were in the dark concerning it, and did not enquire further, nor seek for fuller satisfaction; they did not continue seeking, continue knocking. See what a compassionate teacher Christ is, and how condescending to the weak and ignorant? Many a teacher will not endure that the learner should ask the same question twice; if he cannot take a thing quiedy, by trampling them; but our Lord Jesus knows how to deal with babes, that must be taught with *precept upon precept.* If the disciples here would have pushed on that enquiry, they would have found that his going away was for his advancement, and therefore his departure from them should not inordinately trouble them, (for why should they be against his preferment?) and for their advantage; and therefore their sufferings for him would be a part of their reward; but our Lord Jesus knows how to deal with babes, that must be taught with *precept upon precept.*

(2.) That they were too intent, and pored too much, upon the occasions of their grief; *Sorrow has filled their heart.* Christ had said enough to fill them with joy; (ch. 15. 11.) but, by looking at that only which made against them, and overlooking that which made for them, they were so full of sorrow, that there was no room left for joy. *It is the common fault and folly of melancholy Christians, to dwell only upon the dark side of the cloud; to meditate nothing but terror, and turn a deaf ear to the voice of joy and gladness.* That which filled the disciples’ hearts with sorrow, and hindered the operation of the cords which Christ administered, was, too great an affection to this present life. They were big with hopes of their Master’s external kingdom and glory, and that they should shine and reign with him; and now, instead of that, to hear of nothing but bonds and afflictions, this filled them with sorrow. Nothing is a greater prejudice to our joy in God, than the love of the world; and the sorrow of the world, the consequence of it.

7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9. Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

12. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.

As it was usual with the Old Testament prophets to comfort the church in its calamities with the promise of the Messiah, (Isa. 9. 6. Mic. 5. 5. Zech. 3. 8.) so, the Messiah being come, the promise of the Spirit was the great cordial, and is still.

Three things we have here concerning the Comforter’s coming:

1. That Christ’s departure was absolutely necessary to the Comforter’s coming, v. 7. The disciples were so loath to believe this, that Christ saw cause to assert it with a more than ordinary solemnity; *I tell you the truth.* We may be confident of the truth of every thing that Christ has told us, he has no design to impose upon us. Now, to make them easy, he here tells them,

1. In general, *It was expedient for them that he should go away.* This was strange doctrine, but if it was true, it was comfortable enough, and showed them how absurd their sorrow was; *It is expedient,* not only for me, but for you also, *that I go away;* though they do not see it, and are loath to believe it, so it is. Note, (1.) These things often seem grievous to us, that are really expedient for us; and particularly our going away when we have finished our course. (2.) Our Lord Jesus is always for that which is most expedient for us, whether we think so or no. He deals not with us according to the folly of our own choices, but graciously over-rules them, and gives us the physic we are loath to take, because he knows it is good for us.

2. It was therefore expedient, because it was in order to the sending of the Spirit. Now observe, (1.) This Christ’s going was in order to the Comforter’s coming.

[1] This is expressed negatively; *If I go not away,* the Comforter will not come. And why not? First, So it was settled in the divine counsels concerning this affair, and the measures must not be altered; *shall the earth be forsaken for them?* He that gives freely, may recoll one gift before he bestows another; while we would fondly hold all. Secondly, It is contrary enough to the ambassador extraordinary should be recalled, before the envoy come, that is constantly to reside. Thirdly, The sending of the Spirit was to be the fruit of Christ’s purchase, and that purchase was to be made by his death, which was his going away. Fourthly, It was to be in answer to his intercession within the veil. See ch. 14. 16. Thus must this gift be both paid for, and prayed for by our intercession, thus, that we may have the greater value upon it.

Fifthly, The great argument the Spirit was to use in convincing the world, must be, Christ’s ascension into heaven, and his welcome there. See v. 10. and ch. 7. 39. Lastly, The disciples must be weaned from his bodily presence, which they were too apt to dote upon, before they were duly prepared to receive the spiritual aids and comforts of a new dispensation.

[2] It is expressed positively; *If I depart, I will send him to you;* as though he had said, “I’ll just me
to provide effectually that you shall be no losers by my departure." The glorified Redeemer is not un-

mindful of his church on earth, nor will ever leave it without its necessary supports. Though he departs, he sends the Comforter; nay, he departs on purpose to send him. Thus still, though on the last day of his departure, another is raised up in their room, for Christ will maintain his own cause.

(2.) That the presence of Christ's Spirit in his church is so much better, and more desirable, than his bodily presence, that it was really expedient for us that he should go away, to send the Comforter. His corporeal presence could be but in one place at one time, but his Spirit is everywhere, in all places, at all times, whenever two or three are gathered in his name. Christ's bodily presence draws men's eyes, his spirit draws their hearts; that was the letter which kills, his Spirit gives life.

II. That the coming of the Spirit is absolutely necessary to the carrying on of Christ's interest on earth; (v. 8.) And when he is come, (which is, that he is sent, is willing of himself to come, and at his first coming he will do this;) he will reprove, or, as the margin reads it, he will convince the world, by your ministry, concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. See here what the office of the Spirit is, and on what errand he is sent: (1.) To reprove. The Spirit, by the word and conscience, is a reprove: ministers are reproved by him, and so are professors, by the Spirit. (2.) To convince. It is a law term, and speaks the office of the judge in summing up the evidence, and setting a matter that has been long canvassed in a clear and true light. He shall con-

vince, that is, "He shall put to silence the adver-
saries of Christ and his cause, by discovering and de-
momstrating the falsehood and fallacy of that which they have said, and that it is clear and certainly proved that which they have opposed." Note, Convincing work is the Spirit's work, he can do it effectually, and none but he; man may open the cause, but it is the Spirit only that can open the heart. The Spirit is called the Comforter, (v. 7.) and here it is said, He shall convince. One would think that were cold comfort, but it is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort; first to open the wound, and then apply healing medicines. Or, taking conviction more generally, for a demonstration of what is right, it intimates that the Spirit's comforts are solid, and grounded upon truth.

2. See who are they, whom he is to reprove and convince; the world, both Jew and Gentile. (1.) He shall give the world the most prow in every place, in every city, in every nation, for the apostles shall go into all the world, hasted by the Spirit, to preach the gospel, fully proved. He shall sufficiently provide for the taking off and silencing of the objections and prejudices of the world against the gospel. Many an infidel was convinced of all, and judged of all, 1 Cor. 14. 24. (2.) He shall effectually and convincingly convince many in the world, some in every age in every place, in order to their conversion to the faith of Christ. Now that was a most encouraging to the disciples, in reference to the difficulties they were likely to meet with,

[1.] That they should see good done, Satan's king-
dom fall like lightenings, which would be their joy, as it was his. Even this malignant world the Spirit shall work upon; and the conviction of sinners is the comfort of faithful ministers. [2.] That this would be a wise, Christlike, and competent use of his love, and would contribute very much to this good work.

3. See what the Spirit shall convince the world of. (1.) Of sin, (v. 9.) because they believe not on me. [1.] The Spirit is sent to convince sinners of sin, not barely to tell them of it; in conviction there is more than that, it is to prove it upon them, and force to own it, as they (ch. 8. 9.) that were convic-
ed of their own consciences; Make them to know their abominations. The Spirit convinces of the fact of sin, that we have done so and so; of the fault of sin, that we have done ill in doing so; of the folly of sin, that we have acted against right reason, and our true interest; of the filth of sin, that by it we are become odious to God; of the fountain of sin, the corrupt nature; and lastly, of the fruit of sin, that the end thereof is death. The Spirit demonstrates the depravity and degeneracy of the whole world, that all the world is guilty before God.

[2.] The Spirit, in conviction, fastens especially upon the unbelief of men, by bringing them in Christ. First, As the great reigning sin. There was, and is, a world of people, that believe not in Jesus Christ, and they are not sensible that it is their sin; natural conscience tells them that murder and theft are sins; but it is a supernatural work of the Spirit to convince them that it is a sin to suspend their belief of the gospel, and to reject the salvation offered by it. Na-
tural religion, after it has given us its best discover-
yes and directions, lays and leaves us under this further obligation, that whatever divine revelation shall be made to us at any time, with sufficient evidence to prove it divine, we accept it, and submit to it; which law they transgress, who, when God speaketh to us by his Son, refuse him that speaketh; and therefore it is sin.

Secondly, Because it is the great ruining sin. Every sin is so in its own nature, no sin is so to that believe in Christ; so that it is unbelief that damns sinners; it is because of that, that they cannot enter into rest, that they cannot escape the wrath of God; it is a sin against the remedy.

Thirdly, As that which is at the bottom of all sin; so Calvin takes it. The Spirit shall convince the world, that the true reason why sin reigns among them, is, because they are not by faith united to Christ. Ne putemus vel gutam unam rectitudinem sine Christo nobis iness-um—Let us not suppose that, apart from Christ, we have a drop of rectitude. Cal-

[2.] Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more, (v. 10.) We may under-

stand this.

[1.] Of Christ's personal righteousness. He shall convince the world, that Jesus of Nazareth was Christ the righteous, (1 John 2. 1.) as the centurion owned, (Luke 23. 47.) Certainly this was a righ-
teous man. His enemies put him under the worst of characters, and multitudes were not, or would not, be convinced but that he was a bad man, which, indeed, was the common and prevalent opinion of other men, yea, of the people; but he is justified by the Spirit, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) he is proved to be a righteous man, and not a deceiver; and then the point is in effect gained; for he is either the great Redeemer, or a great cheat; but a cheat we are sure he is not.

Now by what medium or argument will the Spirit convince men of the sincerity of our Lord Jesus? Why, it is the very principle of holiness, and that which contributes toward the removal of their prejudice; they shall see him no more, in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the form of a servant, which made them slight him. Moses was more respected after his removal than before. But, Secondly, His going to the Father would be a full conviction of it. The coming of the Spirit, according to the promise, was the preparation for his conversion to God's right hand. (Acts 2. 33.) and that was a demonstration of his righteousness; for the holy God would never set a deceiver at his right hand.

[2.] Of Christ's righteousness, communicated to us for our justification and salvation; that everlasting righteousness, which Messiah was to bring in, Dan. 9. 24. Now,

First, The Spirit shall convince men of this righ-
trueness; having by convictions of sin shewed them their need of a righteousness, lest that drive them to despair, he will shew them where it is to be had, and how they may, upon their believing, be acquitted from guilt, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. It was hard to convince those of this righteousness, that went about to establish their own; ' Accordingly,' says John, ' the Spirit will do it.

Secondly, Christ's dispensation being a great argument proper to convince men of this righteousness; I go to the Father, and, as an evidence of my welcome with him, you shall see me no more. If Christ had left any part of his undertaking unfinished, he had been sent back again; but now we are sure he is at the right hand of God, we are sure of being justified through him. (3.) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, v. 11. Observe here, [1.] The devil, the prince of this world, was judged; was discovered to be a great deceiver and destroyer; and as such, judgment was entered against him, and execution in part done. He was cast out of the Gentile world, when his oracles were silenced, and his altars deserted; cast out of the bodies of many. Christ's name, which miraculous power continued long in the church; he was cast out of the souls of people by the grace of God working with the gospel of Christ; he fell as lightning from heaven. [2.] This is a good argument wherewith the Spirit convinces the world of judgment, that is, First, Of inherent holiness and sanctification, Matt. 12. 18. By the judgment of the prince of this world, it appears that Christ is stronger than Satan, and can disarm and dispossess him, and set up his throne upon the ruins of his. Secondly, Of a new and better dispensation of things. He shall shew that Christ's errand into the world, was to set things right in it, and to introduce times of reformation and regeneration; and he proves it by this, that the prince of this world, that great master of vice, is judged and expelled. All will be well when his power is broken, who made all the mischief. Thirdly, Of the power and dominion of the Lord Jesus. He shall convince the world that all judgment is committed to him, and that he is the Lord of all; which is evidently this, that he has judged the prince of this world, has broken the serpent's head, destroyed him that had the power of death, and spoiled principalities and powers; if Satan be thus subdued by Christ, we may be sure no other power can stand before him. Fourthly, Of the final day of judgment; all the obstinate enemies of Christ's gospel and kingdom shall certainly be reckoned with at last, for the devil, their ringleader, is judged. III. That the coming of the Spirit would be of unspeakable advantage to the disciples themselves; the Spirit has work to do, not only on the enemies of Christ, to convince and humble them, but upon his servants and agents, to instruct and comfort them; and therefore it was expedient for them that he should go away. 1. He intimates to them the tender sense he had of their present weakness; (v. 12.) I have yet many things to say unto you, (not which should have been said, but v. 23.) but I do not, only on the enemies of Christ, to convince and humble them, but upon his servants and agents, to instruct and comfort them; and therefore it was expedient for them that he should go away. When, after his resurrection, they spake to him of restoring the kingdom to Israel, he referred them to the coming of the Holy Ghost, by which they should receive power to bear those discoveries which were so contrary to the notions they had received, that they could not bear them now. 2. He assures them of sufficient assistance, by the pouring out of the Spirit. The Spirit is given to them, to do all that they are capable of; the Holy Ghost, by which they should receive power to bear those discoveries which were so contrary to the notions they had received, that they could not bear them now. And what shall they do now their Master is leaving them? "But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, you will be easy, and all will be well." Well indeed! for he shall undertake to guide the apostles, and glorify Christ. (1.) To guide the apostles; he will take care, [1.] That they do not miss their way; He will guide you; as the camp of Israel was guided through the wilderness by the pillar of cloud and fire. The Spirit guided their tongues in speaking, and their pens in writing, to secure them from mistakes. The Spirit is given to us to be our guide, (Rom. 8. 14.) not only to shew us the way, but to go along with us, by his continued aids and influences. [2.] That they may not come short of their end; He will guide them into all truth, as the skilful pilot guides the ship into the port it is bound for. To be led into a truth, is more than barely to know it; it is to be intimately and experimentally acquainted with it; to be piously and strongly affected with it; not only to have the notion of it in our heads, but the relish, and savour, and power of it in our hearts; it densifies a gradual discovery of truth shining more and more; "He shall guide you by those truths that are plain and easy, to those that are more difficult." But how into all truth? The meaning is, First, Into the whole truth relating to their embassy; whatever was needful or useful for them to know, in order to the due discharge of their office, they should be fully instructed in; what truths they were to teach others, the Spirit would teach them, would give them the understanding of, and enable them both to explain and to defend. Secondly, Into nothing but the truth; All that he shall guide you into, shall be truth; (1 John 2. 27.) the anointing is truth. In the following words he proves both these: 1. "The Spirit shall teach nothing but the truth, for he shall not speak of himself, but he shall hear, and shall speak the mind of the Father, that, and that only, shall he speak." This intimates, (1.) That the testimony of the Spirit, in the word and by the apostles, is what we may rely upon. The Spirit knows and searches all things, even the deep things of God, and the apostles received that Spirit; (1 Cor. 2. 10, 11.) so that we may venture our souls upon the Spirit's word. (2.) That the testimony of the Spirit always concurs with the word of Christ, for he does not speak of himself, he had no separate interest or intention of his own, but, as in essence, so in records, he is one with the Father and the Son, 1 John 5. 7. Men's word and spirit often disagree, but the eternal Word and the eternal Spirit never do. 2. "He shall teach you all truth, and keep back nothing that is profitable, and shall shew you things to come." The Spirit was in the apostles a Spirit of prophecy; it was foretold he should be so, (Joel 2. 28.) and he was so. The Spirit shewed them things to come, as Acts 11. 28.—20. 23.—21. 11. The Spirit spake of the apostles of the last times, 1 Tim. 4. 1. John when he was in the Spirit, had things to come shewed him in vision. Now this was to satisfy the minds of men of the correctness and of use to them in their conduct, and was also a great confirmation of their mission. Jansenius has a pious note upon this: We should not grudge that
the Spirit does now shew us things to come in this world, as he did to the apostles; let it suffice, that the Spirit in the word hath shewed us things to come in the other world, which are our chief concern.

(2.) The Spirit undertook to glorify Christ. v. 14, 15.

[1.] Even the sending of the Spirit was the glorifying of Christ. God the Father glorified him in heaven, and the Spirit glorified him on earth. It was the honour of the Redeemer, that the Spirit was both sent in his name, and sent on his errand, to carry on and perfect his undertaking. All the gifts and graces of the Spirit, all the preaching and all the writing of the apostles, under the influence of the Spirit, the tongues, and miracles, were to glorify Christ.

[2.] The Spirit glorified Christ, by leading his followers into the truth as it is in Jesus. Eph. 4. 21. He assures them,

First, That the Spirit should communicate the things of Christ to them; He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. As in essence he proceeded from the Son, so in influence and operation he derives from him. He shall take, is a part of that which is mine. All that the Spirit shews us, that is, applies to us, for our instruction and comfort, all that he gives us for our strength and quickening, and all he secures and seals to us, did all belong to Christ, and was had and received from him. All was his, for he bought it, and paid dear for it, and therefore he had reaision to call it his own; his, for he first received it; it was given him as the Head of the church, to be derived from him to all his members. The Spirit came not to erect a new kingdom, but to advance and establish the same kingdom that Christ had erected to maintain the same interest, and pursue the same design; those therefore who pretend to the Spirit, and yet vilify Christ, give themselves the lie, for he came to glorify Christ.

Secondly, That herein the things of God should be communicated to us; lest any should think that the receiving of this would not make them much the richer, he adds, All things that the Father hath, are mine. As God, all that self-existent light and self-sufficient happiness which the Father hath, has; as Mediator, all things are delivered to him of the Father; (Matt. 11. 27.) all that grace and truth which God designed to shew to us, he lodged in the hands of the Lord Jesus, Col. 1. 19. Spiritual blessings, he said, were given by the Father to the Son for us, and the Son entrusts the Spirit to shew them to us. Some apply it to that which goes just before; He shall shew you things to come, and so it is explained by Rev. 1. 1. God gave it to Christ, and he signified it to John, who wrote what the Spirit said, Rev. 3. 1, 6.

16. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. 17. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father? 18. They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. 19. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them. Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. 21. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. 22. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

Our Lord Jesus, for the comfort of his sorrowful disciples, here promises that he would visit them again.

1. Observe the intimation he gave them of the comfort he designed them, v. 16. Here he tells them,

1. That they should now shortly lose the sight of him; A little while, and ye that beheld me so long, and still desire to see me, shall not see me; and therefore if they had any good question to ask him, they must ask quickly, for he was now taking his leave of them. Note, It is good to consider how near to a period our seasons of grace are, that we may be quickened to improve them while they are continued. Now our eyes see our teachers, see the days of the Son of man; but, perhaps, yet a little while, and we shall not see his face. They lost the sight of Christ, (1.) At his death, when he withdrew from this world, and never after shewed himself openly in it. The most that death does to our Christian friends, is, to take them out of our sight, not out of being, not out of bliss, not out of all relation to us, only out of sight, and then not out of mind. (2.) At his ascension, when he withdrew from them, (who, after his resurrection, had for some time conversed with him,) out of their sight; a cloud received him, and, though they looked up steadfastly after him, they saw him no more, Acts 1. 9. 10. 2 Kings 2. 12. See 2 Cor. 5. 16.

2. That yet they should speedily recover the sight of him; Again a little while, and ye shall see me, and therefore ye ought not to sorrow as those that have no hope; his farewell was not a final farewell, they should see him again. (1.) At his resurrection, soon after his death, when he appeared himself alive, by many infallible proofs, and this in a very little while, not forty hours. See Hos. 6. 2. (2.) By the pouring out of the Spirit, soon after his ascension, which scattered the mists of ignorance and mistakes they were almost lost in, and gave them a much clearer insight into the mysteries of Christ's gospel than they had yet had. The Spirit's coming was Christ's visit to his disciples, not a transient but a permanent one, and such a visit as abundantly repairs the sight of him. (3.) At his second coming. They saw him again as they removed one by one to him at death, and they shall all see him together at the end of time, when he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him. It might be truly said of this, that it was but a little while, and they should see him; for what is the days of time, to the days of eternity? 2 Pet. 3. 8, 9.

The reason given is, "Because I go to the Father, and therefore," [1.] "I must leave you for a time, because my business calls me to the upper world, and you must be content to want me, for really my business is your's." [2.] "Therefore you shall see me again shortly, for the Father will not detain me to your prejudice. If I go upon your errand, you shall see me again as soon as my business is done, as soon as is convenient." It should seem, all this
not as yet offered up, the groanings that cannot be uttered, and even prevents them with the blessings of his goodness. Christ instructed those who he knew were desirous to ask him, though they did not ask. Before we call, he answers.

Another reason why Christ explained it, was, because he observed them canvassing this matter among themselves. Do ye inquire this among yourselves? Well, I will make it easy to you. This intimates to us who they are that Christ will teach: (1.) The humble that confess their ignorance, for so much their inquiry implied. (2.) The diligent, that use the means they have; "Do ye inquire? You shall be taught. To him that hath, shall be given."

I. There were some, it seems, that were desirous to have a sight of the resurrection, but Christ would not comply with their request. He was about to ascend, and yet they were desirous to have an eye in upon the event. This is a case of wonderful providence, and yet it seems to have been allowed, for the purpose of instructing the disciples, before and after. Let us examine the matter: (1.) Let us consider the time and the manner when this discourse was delivered. It was during the last week of Christ's ministry. They were now full of expectant musing, and therefore he could not but be solicitous to furnish them with that knowledge which was more delicate than anything of their request. (2.) Let us consider the nature and design of the discourse. It was a discourse for instruction, and to prevent the mistake of the disciples. It is the speech of Christ, and therefore he could not but be solicitous to have his own design accomplished. (3.) Let us consider the condition and constitution of the disciples. They were in a mixture of ignorance and knowledge. They were fit for instruction, and yet they were fit for correction also.

II. The perplexity of the disciples upon the intimation given them; they were at a loss what to make of it; (v. 17. 18.) Some of them said, softly, among themselves, either some of the weakest, that were least able, or some of the most inquisitive, that were most desirous to understand him. What is this that he saith to us? Though Christ had often spoken to them, yet as they had not yet comprehended, as he would have had them, so it waxed dark; though precept be upon precept, it is in vain, unless God give the understanding. Now see here.

1. The disciples' weakness, in that they could not understand so obscure a saying which Christ had already given them a key to, having told them so often in plain terms that he should be killed, and the third day rise again; yet, say they, We cannot tell what he saith; for, (1.) Sorrow had filled their hearts, and made them unapt to receive the impressions of comfort. The darkness of ignorance and the darkness of melancholy commonly increase and thicken one another; mistakes cause griefs, and then griefs confirm mistakes. (2.) The notion of Christ's secular kingdom was so deeply rooted in them, that they could make no sense at all of those sayings of his, which they knew not how to reconcile with that notion. When we think the scripture must be made to agree with the false ideas we have imbibed, no wonder that we complain of its difficulty; but when our reasonings are captivated to revelation, the matter becomes easy. (3.) It should seem, that which puzzled them, was the little while. If he must go at last, yet they could not conceive how he should leave them quickly, when his stay lietherto had been so short, and so little while, comparatively. Thus it is hard for the reasons of our own hearts, which are near, which yet we know will come certainly, and may come suddenly. When we are told, Ye shall see a little while, and we must go hence; Yet a little while, and we must give up our account; we know not how to digest it; for we always took the vision to be for a great while to come, Ezek. 12. 27.

2. Their willingness to be instructed. When they were at a loss about the meaning of Christ's words, they returned to him, and asked help of one another. By mutual conversation about divine things we both borrow the light of others, and improve our own. Observe how exactly they repeat Christ's words. Though we cannot fully solve every difficulty we meet with in scripture, yet we must not therefore throw it by, but resolve what we cannot explain, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us.

III. The further explication of what Christ had said.

1. See here why Christ explained it; (v. 19.) because he knew they were desirous to ask him, and designed it. Note, The knots we cannot untie, we must bring to him who alone can give an understanding. Christ knew they were desirous to ask him, but were bashful and ashamed to ask. Note, Christ takes cognizance of pious desires, though they be
like travailing pains, sure and sharp, but not to last long, and in order to a joyful product; they are in pain to be delivered, as the church is described, (Rev. 12. 2.) and the whole creation, Rom. 8. 22. And, (2.) Their joys after these sorrows, which will be wrought out for them, for their sins, is a fruit they have in the midst of this world, Rev. 21. 4. When they are born into that blessed world, and reap the fruit of all their services and sorrows, the toil and anguish of this world will be no more remembered, as Christ's were not, when he saw of the travail of his soul abundantly to his satisfaction, Isa. 53. 11.

Secondly, The application of the similitude; (v. 22.) "Ye now therefore have sorrow; and are likely to have more, but I will see you again, and you me, and then all will be well." 1. Here again he tells them of their sorrow; "Ye now therefore have sorrow; therefore, because I am leaving you," as is intimated in the antithesis, I will see you again. Note, Christ's withdrawals are just cause of grief to his disciples. If he hide his face, they cannot but be troubled. When the sun sets, the sunflower will hang the head. And Christ takes notice of those griefs, has a battle for the tears, and a book for the sighs, of all gracious mourners.

2. He, more largely than before, assures them of a return of joy, Ps. 30. 5, 11. He himself went through his own griefs, and bore our's, for the joy that was set before him; and he would have us encourage ourselves with the same prospect. Three things are said concerning it.

(1.) The cause of it; "I will see you again. I will make you a kind and friendly visit, to inquire after you, and minister comfort to you." Note, [1.] Christ will graciously return to those that wait for him, though for a small moment he has seemed to forsake them, Isa. 54. 7. Men, when they are preferred, will scarcely look upon their inferiors; but the exalted Jesus will visit his disciples. They shall not only see him in his glory, but he will see them in their meanness. [2.] Christ's returns are returns of joy to all his disciples. When clouded evidences are cleared up, interrupted communion revived, then is the mouth filled with laughter.

(2.) The cordialness of it; Your heart shall rejoice. Divine consolations put gladness into the heart. (1. John 5. 14.) It is sweet, and not flashy: sweet, and that which a stranger does not intermeddle with: it is sweet, and gives a good man satisfaction in himself; it is sure, and not easily broken in upon. Christ's disciples should heartily rejoice in his returns, sincerely and greatly.

(3.) The continuance of it; Your joy no man taketh from you. Men will attempt to take their joy from them, they would if they could; but they shall not prevail. Some understand it of the eternal joy of them that are glorified: they that are entered into the joy of their Lord, shall go no more out. Our joys on earth we are liable to be robbed of by a thousand accidents, but heavenly joys are everlasting.

I rather understand it of the spiritual joys of those that are sanctified, particularly the apostles among them. In the triumphant doom of this, says Paul, in the name of the rest, who always cause us to triumph, 2 Cor. 2. 14. A malicious world would have taken it from them: if bonds and banishments, tortures and deaths, would have taken it from them, they had lost it: but when they took every thing else from them, they could not take this; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. They could not rob them of their joy, because they could not separate them from their love of Christ, could not rob them of their God, nor of their treasure in heaven.

23. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my

the Lamb, and deserves the common case of christians.

[1.] Their condition and disposition are both mournful; sorrows are their lot, and seriousness is their temper: they that are acquainted with Christ, must, as he was, be acquainted with grief; they are an olive tree cut down, which others make light of, their own sins, and the sins of those about them; they mourn with sufferers that mourn, and mourn for sinners that mourn not for themselves.

[2.] The world at the same time, goes away with all the mirth; they laugh now, and spend their days so joyfully, that one would think they neither knew sorrow, nor feared it. Carnal mirth and pleasures are greatly more precious to them, at least, two thousand women would not have so large a share of them, and the favourites of heaven be such strangers to them.

[3.] Spiritual mourning will shortly be turned into eternal rejoicing. Gladness is sown for the upright in heart, that sow in tears, and without doubt they shall shortly reap in joy. Their sorrow will not only be followed with joy, but turned into it; for the most precious comforts take rise from pious griefs. This he illustrates by a similitude taken of a woman in travails, to whose sorrows he compares those of his disciples, for their encouragement; for it is the will of Christ that his people should be a comforted people.

First, Here is the similitude or parable itself; (v. 21.) A woman, we know, when she is in travails, hath sorrow; and the pangs of bearing child are; (Jer. 14, 15.) but when she is delivered, her sorrow is over, and the after-pains are more hardly borne, (Isa. 66. 7.) for joy that a child is born into the world, is sweet, or, one of the human race, a child, be it a son or daughter, for the word speaks either. Observe, 1. The fruit of the curse, in the sorrow and pain of a woman in travails, according to the sentence, (Gen. 3. 16.) In sorrow shalt thou bring forth. These pains are extreme, the greatest griefs and pains being the more aptly compared, Isa. 66. 7. [21. 3. Jer. 4. 31. —6. 24.] and they are inevitable, 1 Thess. 5. 3. See what this world is; all its roses are surrounded with thorns; all the children of men are upon this account foolish children, that they are the heinousness of him that bore them from the very first. This comes of sin.

2. The fruit of the blessing; in the joy that is for a child-born into the world. If God had not preserved the blessing in force after the fall, Be fruitful and multiply, parents could never have looked upon their children with any comfort; but what is the fruit of a blessing is matter of joy; the birth of a living child is, (1.) The parents' joy; it makes them very glad, Jer. 29. 15. Though children are certain cares, uncertain comforts, and often prove the scene of trouble with trembling, lest it should prove better for them that they had never been born. (2.) This is such joy as makes the anguish not to be remembered, or remembered as waters that pass away, Job 11. 16. Hæc olim meminisse iuvabit. Gen. 41. 51. Now this is very proper to set forth. [1.] The sorrows of Christ's disciples in this world; they are
name, he will give it you. 24. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. 25. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. 26. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: 27. For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. 

An answer to their askings is here promised, for their further comfort. Now there are two ways of asking, asking by way of inquiry, that is the asking of the ignorant; and asking by way of request, and that is the asking of the indigent. Christ here speaks of both, and the way of inquiry, they should not need to ask; (v. 23.) "In that day ye shall ask me nothing: whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, shall be given you." Of this he had hitherto spoken to them in proverbs, which are wise sayings, and instructive, but figurative, and resting in generals. Christ had spoken many things very plainly to them, and explained his parables privately to the disciples; but, 

1. The great thing Christ would lead them into, was, the knowledge of God; "I will shew you the Father, and bring you acquainted with him." This is that which Christ designs to give, and which all true christians desire to have. When Christ would speak the greatest favour intended for his disciples, he tells them that he would shew them plainly the Father; for what is the happiness of heaven, but immediately and everlastingly to see God? To know God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the greatest favour that can be commanded of God. And this is accounted the contemplation of; and to know him as our Father, is the greatest happiness for the will and affections to please themselves with the choice and enjoyment of.

2. Of this he had hitherto spoken to them in proverbs, which are wise sayings, and instructive, but figurative, and resting in generals. Christ had spoken many things very plainly to them, and explained his parables privately to the disciples; but, 

(1.) Considering their dulness, and unaptness to receive what he said to them, he might be said to speak in proverbs: what he said to them was as a book sealed, Is. 29. 11. (2.) Comparing the discoveries he had made to them, in what he had spoken to their ears, with what he would make to them, when he would put his Spirit into their hearts; all hitherto had been but proverbs. It would be a pleasing sight to the indigent, not only to see themselves in a new world, when they would reflect upon all their former notions as confused and enigmatical, compared with their present clear and distinct knowledge of divine things. The minimisation of the letter was nothing to that of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3. 8—11. (3.) Confining it to what he had said of the Father, and the counsels of the Father, which he had thus revealed them, was as what was shortly to be revealed, Col. 2. 2.

3. He would speak to them plainly, with freedom, of the Father. When the Spirit was poured out, the apostles attained to a much greater knowledge of divine things than they had before, as appears by the utterance the Spirit gave them, Acts 2. 4. These things, which they had a very confused view of before, they now saw and plain sights: and what God had shewed them, Christ is here said to shew them, for as the Father speaks by the Son, so the Son by the Spirit. But this promise will have its full accomplishment in heaven, where we shall see the Father as he is, face to face, not as we do now, through a glass darkly; (1 Cor. 13. 12.) which is matter of comfort to us under the cloud of present darkness, by reason of which we cannot discern the speech, but often mistake it. And here, we have many questions to ask concerning the invisible God and the invisible world; but in that day we shall see all things clearly, and ask no more questions.

11. He promises that by way of request, they should ask nothing in vain. It is taken for granted that all Christ's disciples give themselves to prayer. He had taught them why his precept is so plain, and pattern to be much in prayer; that must be his support and comfort when he had left them; their instruction, direction, strength, and success, must be fetched in by prayer.

Now, 1. Here is an express promise of a grant, v. 23. The preface to this promise is such as makes it inviolably sure, and leaves no room to question it; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will give you a parable, and a parable, and a parable, for the kingdom of heaven is like unto this;" Comparably rich and sweet; the golden sceptre is here held out to us, with this word, What is thy petition, and it shall be granted? For he says, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. We had it before, ch. 14. 13. What would we more? The promise is as express as we can desire.

(1.) We are here taught how to seek; we must ask the Father in Christ's name; we must have an eye to God as a Father, and come as children to him; and to Christ as Mediator, and come as clients. Asking of the Father includes a sense of spiritual wants and a desire of spiritual blessings, with a conviction that they are to be had from God only. It includes also humility of address to him, with a believing confidence in him, as a Father able and ready to help us. Asking in Christ's name includes an accounting of our own unworthiness to receive any favour from God, and a complacency in the method God has taken of keeping up a correspondence with us by his Son, and an entire dependence upon Christ as the Lord our righteousness.

(2.) We are here told how we shall speed; He will give it you. What more can we wish for than to have what we seek, nay to have what we wish? What Christ purchased by the merit
of his death, he needed not for himself, but intended it for, and consigned it to, his faithful followers; and having given a valuable consideration for it, which was accepted in full, by this promise he draws a bill as it were upon the treasury in heaven, which we are to present by prayer, and in his name to ask for that which is purchased and promised, as well as for the true intent of the new covenant. Christ had promised them great illumination by the Spirit, but they must pray for it, and did so, Acts 1. 14. God will for this be inquired of. He had promised them perfection hereafter, but what shall they do in the mean time? They must continue praying. Perfect fruition is reserved for the land of our rest; asking and receiving are the comfort of the land of our pilgrimage.

2. Here is an invitation to them to petition. It is thought sufficient if great men permit addresses, but Christ calls upon us to petition, v. 24.

(1.) He looks back upon their practice hitherto; Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. That refers either, [1.] To the matter of their prayers; 'Ye have asked nothing comparatively, nothing to which ye must ask, and will ask when the Spirit is poured out.' See what a generous benefactor our Lord Jesus is, above all benefactors; he gives liberally, and is so far from upbraiding us with the frequency and largeness of his gifts, that he rather upbraids us with the seldomsness and straitness of our requests; 'Ye have asked nothing in comparison of what you may have, and what is permitted to us, to be given to you.' We are to ask often in an humble and fervent spirit. Or, [2.] To the name in which they prayed. They prayed many a prayer, but never so expressly in the name of Christ as now he was directing them to do; for he had not as yet offered up that great sacrifice, in the virtue of which our prayers were to be accepted, nor entered upon his intercession for us, the incense whereof was to perfume all our devotions, and so enable us to pray in his name. Hitherto they had cast out devils, and healed diseases, in the name of Christ, as a king and a prophet, but they could not as yet distinctly pray in his name as a priest.

(2.) He looks forward to their practice for the future; Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. Both will and purpose are here ascribed to Christ, that which they needed and he had promised. [2.] He assures them that they shall receive. What we ask from a principle of grace, God will graciously give; Ye shall receive it. There is something more in that than in the promise, that he will give it. He will not only give it, but give you to receive it, give you the comfort and benefit of it, a heart to eat of it, John 6. 2. [3.] That hereby their joy shall be full. Which speaks, First, The blessed effect of the prayer of faith; it helps to fill up the joy of faith. Would we have our joy full, as full as it is capable of being in this world, we must be much in prayer. When we are bids to rejoice evermore, it follows immediately, Pray without ceasing. See how high we are to aim in prayer—not only at peace, but joy, a full joy. So, Or, Secondly, The blessed effect of the answer of peace; 'Ask, and ye shall receive that which will fill your joy.' Christ's gifts, through Christ, fill the treasures of the soul, they fill its joys, Prov. 8. 21. 'Ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and ye shall receive it; and whereas other knowledge increases sorrow, (Eccl. 1. 18.) the knowledge he gives will increase, will fill, your joy.'

3. He explains to them the reasons why they might hope to speed, (v. 26, 27.) which are summed up in short by the apostle, (1 John 2. 1.) We have an advocate with the Father. (1.) We have an Advocate; as to that, Christ saw cause at present not to insist upon it, only to make the following encouragement shine the brighter;

"I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you. Suppose I should not tell you that I will intercede for you, should not undertake to solicit every particular cause you have depending there, yet it may be a general ground of comfort, that I have settled a correspondence between you and God, and that there are the grounds upon which you, and every one of you, may expect a special, a particular intercession for you new and living way into the holiest." He speaks as if they needed not any further favours, when he had prevailed for the gift of the Holy Ghost to make intercession within them, as a Spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father; as if they had no further need of him to pray for them now; but we shall find that he does more for us than he saith he will. Christ's promises extend either to the first of their promises, but Christ's go beyond them.

(2.) We have to do with a Father, which is so great an encouragement, that it does in a manner supersede the other; "For the Father himself loveth you, even us, he is a friend to you, and you cannot be better befriended." Note, The disciples of Christ are the beloved of God himself. Christ not only turned away God's wrath from us, and brought us into a covenant of peace and reconciliation, but purchased his favour for us, and brought us into a covenant of friendship.Observe what an emphasis is laid upon this, "The Father himself loveth you; who is perfectly happy in the enjoyment of himself, whose self-love is both his infinite rectitude, and his infinite blessedness; ye are his peculiar delight, and he is pleased to love you." So also, The Father himself. Christ is not only a Father in his own right, and by his almighty power, but he is the Father of us, that have been redeemed, and whose wrath you have incurred, and with whom you need an advocate, he himself now loves you.

Observe, [1.] Why the Father loved the disciples of Christ; because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God, that is, because ye are my disciples indeed; not as if the love began in their side, but when by his grace he has wrought in us a love to him, he is well pleased with the work of his own hands. See here, First, What is the character of Christ's disciples; they love him, because they believe he came out from God, is the only-begotten of the Father, and his high-commissioner to the world. Note, Faith in Christ works love to him, Gal. 5. 6. If we believe him to be the Son of God, we cannot help loving him; we cannot help loving himself; and if we believe him to be our Saviour, we cannot but love him as the most kind to us. Observe with what respect Christ is pleased to speak of his disciples' love to him, and how kindly he took it; he speaks of it as that which recommended them to his Father's favour; 'Ye have loved me, and believed in me, when the world has hated and rejected you; and ye shall be distinguished, who have thus distinguished yourselves.' Secondly, See what advantage Christ's faithful disciples have, the Father loves them, and that because they love Christ; so well pleased is he in them, that he is well pleased with all his friends.

(2.) What encouragement this gave them in prayer. They need not fear speedy, when they came to plead Christ's merit and intercession, it is not as if all the kindness were in Christ only, and in God nothing but wrath and fury; no, the matter is not so, the Father's love and good-will appointed Christ to be the Mediator; so that we owe Christ's merit to God's mercy in coming him, that is not good grace, but grace, and only grace, and Christ, and the Father, and all the eternal perfections, distinguishing, and confirming us in good thoughts of God. Believers, that love Christ, ought to know that God loves them, and therefore to come boldly to him as children to a loving Father.

23. I came forth from the Father, and
am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. 29. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. 30. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. 31. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? 32. Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Two things Christ here comforts his disciples with:

1. An assurance that, though he was leaving the world, he was returning to his Father, from whom he came. This he tells them to comfort them:

(1.) A plain declaration of Christ's mission from the Father, and his return to him; (v. 28.) I came forth from the Father, and am come, as you see, into the world. Again, I leave the world, as you will see shortly, and go to the Father. This is the conclusion of the whole matter. There was nothing he had more incalculable upon them, than these two things—whence he came, and whither he went; the Alpha and Omega of the mystery of redemption, (1 Tim. 3. 16.) that the Redeemer, in his entrance, was God manifest in the flesh, and, in his exit, was received up into glory. These two great truths are here, (1.) Contracted, and put into a few words. Brief summaries of Christian doctrine are of great use to young beginners. The principles of the oracles of God brought into a little compass in creeds and catechisms, have, like the beams of the sun concentrated in a burning-glass, conveyed divine light and heat with a wonderful power. Such we have, Job 28. 28. Ecle. 12. 13. 1 Tim. 1. 15. Tit. 2. 11. 12. 1 John 5. 11. much in a little. (2.) Compared, and set the one over against the other. There is an admirable harmony in divine truths; they both corroborate and illustrate one another; Christ's coming and his going do so: Christ had commenced his disciples for believing that he came forth from God, (v. 27.) and from thence infers the necessity and equity of his returning to God again, which therefore should not seem to them either strange or sad. Note, The due improvement of what we know and own would help us into the understanding of that which seems difficult and doubtful.

If we ask concerning the Redeemer, whence he came, and whither he went, we are here told, (1.) Whence he came forth from the Father, who sanctified and sealed him; and he came into this world, this lower world, this world of mankind, among whom by his incarnation he was pleased to incorporate himself. Here his business lay, and bither he came to attend it. He left his home for this strange country; his palace for this cottage; wonderful condescension! [2.] That, while he so had done his work on earth, "No more walk I in the world, and went back to his Father at his ascension. He was not forced away, but made it his own act and deed to leave the world, to return to it no more till he comes to put an end to it; yet still he is spiritually present with his church, and will be to the end.

2. The disciples' satisfaction in this declaration;

(v. 29, 30.) Lo, now speakest thou plainly. It should seem, this one word of Christ did them more good than all the rest, though he had said many things likely enough to fasten upon them. The Spirit, as the wind, blows when and where, and by what word, they please; perhaps a word that has been spoken once, you twice, and not perceived, yet, being often repeated, takes hold at last.

Two things they improved in by this saving:

(1.) In knowledge: Lo, now speakest thou plainly. When they were in darkness concerning what he said, they did not say, Lo, now speakest thou obscurely, as blaming him; but now that they apprehend his meaning, they give him glory for confiding to their capacity, Lo, now speakest thou plainly. Divine truths are then most likely to do good, when they are spoken plainly, 1 Cor. 2. 4. Observe how they triumphed, as the mathematician does, with his ax, even, when he had hit upon a demonstration he had long been in quest of: I have found it, I have found it. Note, when Christ is pleased to speak plainly to our souls, and to bring us with open face to behold his glory, we have reason to rejoice in it.

(2.) In faith: Now are we sure. Observe, [1.] What was the matter of their faith: They believed what he said. Do ye now think, you shall in their hearts, and answer the scriptures they had not confessed. Note, Those know Christ best, that know him by experience; that can say of his power, It works in me; of his love, He loved me. And this proves Christ not only to have a divine mission, but to be a divine person; that he is a Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, therefore the essential eternal Word, Heb. 4. 12, 13. He has made all the church know to know that he searches the reins and the heart, Rev. 2. 23. This confirmed the faith of the disciples here, as it made the first impression upon the woman of Samaria, that Christ told her all things that ever she did, (ch. 4. 29.) and upon Nathanael, that Christ saw him under the fig-tree, ch. 1. 48, 49.

These words, and needest not that any man should ask thee, may speak either, First, Christ's aptness to teach. He prevents us with his instructions, and is communicative of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that are hid in him, and needs not to be imported. Or, Secondly, His ability to teach; Thou needest not, as other teachers, to have the learners' doubts told thee, for thou knowest, without being told, what they stumble at. The best of teachers can only answer their doubts; Christ can answer both their doubts and their thoughts, what we are afraid to ask, as the disciples were, Mark 9. 32. Thus he can have compassion, Heb. 5. 2.

3. The gentle rebuke Christ gave the disciples for their confidence, that they now understood him, v. 31, 32. Observing how they triumphed in their attainments, he said, "Do ye now believe? Do ye now look upon yourselves as advanced and confirmed philosophers, while you make no more blunders? Alas! ye know not your own weakness; ye will very shortly be scattered every man to his own," &c. Here we have,

(1.) A question designed to put them upon consideration; Do ye now believe? [1.] "If now, why not sooner? Have ye not heard the same things many a time before? They who after many in-
1. [As a privilege peculiar to the Lord Jesus; the Father was so with him in his sufferings as he never was with any other.] When an undertaker comes, where will your faith be then? As far as there is constancy in our faith, there is cause to question the sincerity of it, and to ask, "Do we indeed believe?"

2. [A prediction of their fall; that, how confident sovver they were now of their own stability, in a little time they would all desert him; which was fulfilled; and that very desert, when, under a custom of the guards, all his disciples forsook him and fled, Matt. 26. 56. They were scattered, [1.]

From one another; they shifted every one for his own safety without any care or concern for each other. Troublesome times are times of scattering to christian societies; in the cloudy and dark day the flock of Christ is dispersed, Ezek. 34. 12. So Christ, as a society, is not visible. [2. Scattered from ye; Ye shall leave me alone. They should have been witnesses for him upon his trial, should have ministered to him in his sufferings; if they could have given him no comfort, they might have done him some credit; but they were ashamed of his chain, and afraid of sharing with him in his sufferings, and therefore deserted him in this great cause, as it is distressed by its enemies, is defended and supported by its friends. The disciples had continued with Christ in his other temptations, and yet turned their back upon him now; those that are tried, do not always prove trusty. If we at any time find our friends unkind to us, let us remember that Christ's were so to him.

3. [When he left him alone, they were scattered every man is his own; not to their own possessions or habitations, those were in Galilee; but to their own friends and acquaintance in Jerusalem; every one went his own way where he fancied he should be most safe. Every man to secure his own; himself and his own life. Note, These will not dare to suffer for their religion, that seek their own things more than the things of Christ, and that look upon the things of this world as their own property, and in which their happiness is bound up. Now observe here,

First, Christ knew before that his disciples would thus desert him in the critical moment, and yet he was still tender of them and in nothing unkind. We are ready to say of some, "How could we foresee in a moment what have been so prodigal of our favours to them?" Christ did foresee their's, and yet was kind to them.

Secondly, He told them of it, to be a rebufc to their exultation in their present attainments; "Do ye now believe? Be not high-minded, but fear; for you will find your faith so sorely shaken as to make it questionable whether it be sincere or no, in a little time." Note, Even then, when we are taking the comfort of our graces, it is good to be reminded of our danger from our corruptions. When our faith is strong, our love flaming, and evidences clear, yet we cannot infer from thence that to-morrow shall be as this day. Even then, when we have most reason to think we stand, yet we have reason enough to take heed lest we fall.

Thirdly, He spake of it as a thing very near. The hour was already come, in a manner, when they would be as shy of him as ever they had been fond of him. Note, A little time may produce great changes, both concerning us and in us.

3. [An assurance of his own comfort notwithstanding; Yet I am not alone. He would not be thought to be forsaking him, as if it were any real damage to him; for in our absence he should be sure of his Father's presence, which was instar omnium—every thing; The Father is with me. We may consider this,
they must expect trouble on earth, and ill-will from men. Note, It has been the lot of Christ's disciples to have been persecuted in this world. Men persecute them, because they are so good, and God corrects them because they are no better. Men design to cut them off from the earth, and God design by affliction to make them meet for heaven; and so between both they shall have tribulation.

3. The encouragement Christ gives them with reference hereunto; Behold of good cheer, &c. "I have overcome the world, saith he, have overcame the prince of the world, disarmed him, and cast him out; and still tendeth Satan under our feet. He overcame the children of this world, by the conversion of many to the faith and subjection of his kingdom, making them children of his kingdom. Which honoureth not his disciples to preach the gospel to all the world, "Be of good cheer," says he, "I have overcome the world as far as I have gone, and so shall you; though you have tribulation in the world, yet you shall gain your point, and captivate the world," Rev. 6. 2. He overcame the wicked of the world, for many a time he put his enemies to silence, to shame: "And he van of good cheer, for the Spirit will enable you to do so too." He overcame the evil things of the world by submitting to them; he endured the cross, despising it and the shame of it: and he overcame the good things of it by being wholly dead to them; its honours had no beauty in his eye, its pleasures no charms. Never was there such a conqueror of the world as Christ was, and we ought to be encouraged by it; (1.) Because Christ has overcome the world before us; so that we may lock upon it as a conquered enemy, that has many a time been baffled. Nay, (2.) He has conquered it for us, as the Captain of our salvation; we are interested in his victory; by his cross the world is crucified to us, which speaks it completely conquered and put into our possession; all is yours, even the world. Christ having overcome the world, believers have nothing to do but to pursue their victory, and divide the spoil; and this we do by faith, 1 John 5. 4. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

ST. JOHN, XVII.

CHAP. XVII.

This chapter is a prayer, it is the Lord's prayer, the Lord Jesus' prayer. There was one Lord's prayer, which he taught us to pray, and did not pray himself, for he needed not to pray for the forgiveness of sin; but this was proper, he having interceded for us to the Mediator, and is a sample of his intercession, and yet is of use to us both for instruction and encouragement in prayer. Observe, I. The circumstances of the prayer, v. 1. II. The prayer itself, which he makes for himself, v. 2. He prays for those that are his. And there see, (1.) The general plea with which he introduces his petitions for them, v. 6. 10. (2.) The particular petitions he puts up for them. (3.) That he made them, v. 17. 19. 23. (4.) That they might be sanctified, v. 17. 19. [3.] That they might be united, v. 11. and v. 20. 23. [3.] That they might be glorified, v. 24. 26.

1. THESE words speak Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4. I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Here we have, 1. The circumstances of this prayer, v. 1. Many a solemn prayer Christ made in the days of his flesh; (sometimes he continued all night in prayer;) but none of his prayers are recorded so fully as this. Observe, The time when he prayed this prayer; when he had spoken these words, had given the foregoing farewell to his disciples, he prayed this prayer in their hearing; so that,

1. It was a prayer after sermon; when he had spoken from God to them, he turned to speak to God for them. Note, These we preach to you must pray for. He that was to prophesy upon the dry trees, was to pray for the parching breath, and to breathe upon them. And the word preached should be prayed over, for God gives the increase.

2. It was a prayer after sacrament; after Christ and his disciples had eaten the passover and the Lord's supper together, and he had given them a suitable exhortation, he closed the solemnity with this prayer; that God would preserve the good impression of the ordinance upon them.

3. It was a family-prayer. Christ's disciples were his family, and, to set a good example before masters of families, he not only, as a son of Abraham, taught his household, (Gen. 18. 19.) but, as a son of David, blessed his household, (2 Sam. 6. 20.) prayed for them and with them.

4. It was a parting prayer; when we and our friends are parting, it is good to part with prayer. [John 14. 16.] Christ was parting by death, and that parting should be sanctified and sweetened by prayer. Dying Jacob blessed the twelve patriarchs, dying Moses, the twelve tribes, and so, here, dying Jesus the twelve apostles.

5. It was a prayer that was a sacrifice to his sacrifice which he was now about to offer on earth, specifying the favours and blessings designed to be purchased by the merit of his death for these, that were his; like a deed disposing the uses of a farm, and directing to what intents and purposes it shall bedevised. Christ prayed then as a priest now offering sacrifice, in the virtue of which all prayers were to be made.

6. It was a prayer that was a specimen of his intercession, which he ever lives to make for us within the veil. Not that in his exalted state he addresses himself to his Father by way of humble petition, as when he was on earth. No, his intercession in heaven is a presenting of his merit to his Father, with a suing out of the benefit of it for all his chosen ones.

2. The outward expression of fervent desire which he used in this prayer; he lifted up his eyes to heaven, as before, (ch. 11. 41.) not that Christ needed thus to engage his own attention, but he was pleased to sanctify this gesture to those that use it, and justify it against those that ridicule it. It is significant of the lifting up of the soul to God in prayer, Ps. 25. 1. Sursum corda, was anciently used as a call to prayer, Up with your hearts, up to heaven; thither we must direct our desires in prayer, and
thence we must expect to receive the good things we pray for.

II. The first part of the prayer itself, in which Christ prays for himself. Observe here,

1. He prays to God as a Father; He lifted up his eyes, and said, Father. Note, As prayer is to be made to God only, so it is our duty in prayer to call him a Father, and to call him our Father. All that have the Spirit of adoption, are taught to cry, Abba, Father, Rom. 8. 15. Gal. 4. 6. If God be our Father, we have liberty of access to him, ample room for confidence in him, and great expectations from him.

Christ calls him here holy Father, (v. 11.) and righteous Father, v. 25. For it will be of great use to us in prayer, both for our direction and encouragement, to call God as we hope to find him.

2. He prayed for himself first; though Christ, as God, was prayed to, Christ, as man, prayed; thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness. It was said to him, as it is said to us, Ask, and I will give thee, Ps. 2. 8. What he had purchased he must ask for; and shall we expect to have what we never merited, but have a thousand times forfeited, unless we pray for it? This puts an honour upon prayer, that it was the messenger Christ sent on his errands, the way in which he chose to express, with honour, his very soul, the great encouragement to praying people, and cause to hope that even the prayer of the destitute shall not be despised; time was, when He that is advocate for us, had a cause of his own to solicit, a great cause, on the success of which depended all his honour as Mediator; and this he was to solicit in the same method that is prescribed to us, by prayers and supplications, (Heb. 5. 7.) so that he knows the heart of a petitioner, (Exod. 23. 9.) he knows the way. Now observe,

(1.) Christ begun with prayer for himself, and afterward prayed for his disciples; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. We must love and pray for our neighbour as ourselves, and therefore must in a right manner love and pray for ourselves first.

(2.) He was much shorter in his prayer for himself than in his prayer for his disciples. Our prayers for the church must not be crowded into a corner of our prayers; in making supplication for all saints, we have room enough to enlarge, and should not straiten ourselves.

Now he has these two petitions which Christ puts up for himself, and they are two one—that he might be glorified. But this one petition, Glorify thou me, is twice put up, because it has a double reference. [1.] To the prosecution of his undertaking farther: Glorify me, that I may glorify thee, in doing what is agreed upon to be yet done, v. 1—5. And, [2.] To the performance of his undertaking hitherto: Glorify me, for I have glorified thee. I have done my part, and now the Lord do his, v. 4, 5.

[1.] Christ here prays to be glorified, in order to his glorifying God; (v. 1.) Glorify thy Son according to thy promise, that thy Son may glorify thee according to his undertaking. Here observe,

First, What he prays for—that he might be glorified in this world; "The hour is come in which the powers of darkness will continue to vilify thy Son, and now, Father, glorify him." The Father glorified the Son upon earth, i. Even in his sufferings, by the signs and wonders which attended them. When they that came to take him, were thunderstruck with a word, when Judas confessed him innocent, and sealed that confession with his own guilty blood, when the judge's wife asleep, and the judge himself surprised him, when the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple rent, then the Father not only justified, but glorified the Son, v. 2. Even by his sufferings; when he was crucified, he was magnified, he was glorified, ch. 13.

51. It was in his cross that he conquered Satan and death; his thorns were a crown, and Pilate in the inscription over his head wrote more than he thought. But, 2. Much more better was the following day, when he glorified the Son when he raised him from the dead, showed him openly to chosen witnesses, and poured out the Spirit to support and plead his cause, and set up his kingdom among men, then he glorified him. This he here prays for, and insists upon.

Secondly, What he pleads to enforce this request. He has a double plea, as God, as Mediator. It is in consideration of this, that the heathen are given him for his inheritance; for thou art my Son, Ps. 2. 7, 8. The devil had tempted him to renounce his sonship with an offer of the kingdoms of this world; but he rejected it with disdain, and depended upon his Father for his preference, and here applies himself to him for it. Note, They that have received the adoption of sons, may in faith pray for the inheritance of sons; if sanctified, then glorified; Father, glorify thy Son.

2. He pleads the time; The hour is come: the season prefixed to an hour. The hour of Christ's passion was determined in the counsel of God. He had often said his hour was not yet come; but now it was come, and he knew it. Man knows not his time, but the Father knows the hour, and has appointed this hour, (ch. 12. 27.) and here the hour; compare Mark 14. 35. ch. 16. 21. For, the hour of the Redeemer's death, which was also the hour of the Redeemer's birth, was the most signal and remarkable hour, and, without doubt, the most critical that ever was since the clock of time was first set a-going. Now it was the most hour as that, nor did ever any hour challenge such expectations of it before, nor such reflections upon it after.

(1.) "The hour is come, in the midst of which I need to be owned." Now is the hour when this grand affair is come to a crisis; after many a skirmish, the decisive battle between heaven and hell is now to be fought, and that great cause, in which God's honour and man's happiness are together embattled, must now be either won or lost for ever.

The two champions, David and Goliath, Michael and the dragon, are now entering the lists; the trumpet sounds for an engagement that will be irrevocably fatal either to the one or to the other;

"Now glorify thy Son, now give him victory over principalities and powers, now let the bruising of his body be the beginning of our health and comfort, now let thy Son be so upheld as not to fail or he discouraged," When Joshua went forth conquering and to conquer, it is said, The Lord magnified Joshua; so he glorified his Son, when he made the cress his triumphant chariot.

(2.) "The hour is come, in the close of which I expect to be crowned; the hour is come, when I am going to be glorified." Between him and that glory there intervened a bloody scene of suffering; but, being short, he speaks as if he made little of it; The hour is come that I must be glorified; and he did not expect it till then. Good Christians in a trying hour, particularly a dying hour, may thus plead; "Now the hour is come, stand by me, appear for me, now or never; now the earthly court is at hand, and the heavenly court is due, I should be glorified," 2 Cor. 5. 1. 3. He pleads the Father's own interest and concern therein—that thy Son may glorify thee; for he had consecrated his whole undertaking to his Father's honour; he desired to be carried triumphantly through his sufferings to his glory, that he might glorify the Father two ways. (1.) By the success of the cause, that was to be done. Father, glorify thy name, he said, expressed the great intention of his sufferings, which was to retrieve his Father's injured honour among men, and, by his satisfaction, to come
893. up to the glory of God, which man, by his sin, came short of; "Father, own me in my sufferings, that I may honour thee by them." (2.) By the doctrine of the cross, which was now shortly to be published to the world, by which God's kingdom was to be re-established among men. He prays that his Father would so grace his sufferings, and crown them, as not to take off the offence of the cross, but to make it to them that are saved, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. If God had not glorified Christ crucified, by raising him from the dead, his whole undertaking had been crushed; therefore go on, Lord, and glorify me.

Now hereby he hath taught us, [1.] What to say and aim at in our prayers, in all our designs and desires—and that, is the honour of God. If our chief end to glorify God, other things must be sought and attended to in subordination and subserviency to the Lord; "Do this and the other for thy servant, that thy servant may glorify thee. Give me health, that I may glorify thee with my body; success, that I may glorify thee with my estate," &c. Honour be thy name, must be our first petition, which must fix our end in all our other petitions, 1 Pet. 4. 11.

[2.] He hath taught us what to expect and hope for. If we sincerely set ourselves to glorify our Father, he will not be wanting to do that for us which is requisite to put us into a capacity of glorifying him; to give us the grace he knows sufficient, and the opportunity to exemplify the power which he believeth he may give us, and that is, that I may glorify thee with my estate," &c. Honour be thy name, must be our first petition, which must fix our end in all our other petitions, 1 Pet. 4. 11.

He pleads his commission; (v. 2, 3.) he desires to glorify his Father, in conformity to, and in pursuance of, the commission given him; "Glory thy Son, as thou hast given him power; glorify him in the execution of the powers thou hast given him; so it is connected with the petition; or, that thy Son may glorify thee according to the power given him; so it is connected with the plea. Now see here the power of the Mediator:

(1.) The original of his power: Thou hast given him power; he has it from God, to whom all power belongs. Man, in his fallen estate, not, in order to his recovery, be taken under a new model of government, which could not be erected but by a special commission under the broad seal of heaven, directed to the undertaker of that glorious work, and constituting him sole arbiter of the grand difference that was, and sole guarantee of the grand alliance that was to be, between God and man; so, as to this office, he received his power, which was to be executed in a way distinct from his power and government as Creator. Note, The church's king is no usurper, as the prince of this world is; Christ's right to rule is incontestable.

(2.) The extent of his power. He has power over all flesh. He has power over all flesh.

[1.] Over all mankind. He has power in and over the world of spirits, the powers of the upper worlds. Man, as an immortal soul, is in the world of spirit, and is a proper subject of the power of a Mediator, and of the Mediator himself. He has power over all flesh. He has power over all flesh.

[2.] Over mankind, considered as corrupt and fallen, for so he is called flesh, Gen. 6. 3. If he had not in this sense been flesh, he had not needed a Redeemer. Ovger this small race the Lord Jesus has all power; and all judgment, concerning them, is committed to him; power to bind or loose, acquit or condemn; power on earth to forgive sins, or not. Christ, as mediator, has the government of the whole world put into his hand. He is King of nations, has power even over those that know him not, nor obey his gospel; whom he does not rule, he overrules, Ps. 22. 28.—72. 8. Matt. 28. 18. ch. 3. 35.

(3.) The grand intention and design of this power; that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. Here is the mystery of our salvation laid open.

[1.] Here is the Father making over the elect to the Redeemer, and giving them to him as his charge and trust, as the crown and remembrance of his undertaking. He has a sovereign power over all the fallen race, but a peculiar interest in the chosen remnant; all the world is under his feet; but they were delivered into his hand.

[2.] Here is the Son undertaking to secure the happiness of those that were given him, that he should give eternal life to them. See how great the authority of the Redeemer is! He has lives and crowns to give, eternal lives that never die, immortal crowns that never fade. Now consider how great the Lord Jesus is, who has such preemptions in his gift; and how gracious he is in giving eternal life to those whom he undertakes to save. First, He sanctifies them in this world, gives them the spiritual life, which is eternal life in the bud and embryo, ch. 6. 4. 14. Grace in the soul, is heaven in that soul. Secondly, He will glorify them in the other world; their happiness shall be completed in the vision and fruition of God, in the full glory of the kingdom of glory, because it is the Redeemer himself who supposes all the other parts of his undertaking into the happiness of the happy, teaching them, satisfying for them, sanctifying them, and preparing them for that eternal life; and indeed, all the other were in order to this; we are called to his kingdom and glory, and begotten to the inheritance; what is last in execution was first in intention, and that is eternal life.

[3.] Here is the subserviency of the Redeemer's universal dominion to this. He has power over all flesh, on purpose that he might give eternal life to the select number. Note, Christ's dominion over the children of men, is in order to the salvation of the children of God. All things are for their sakes, 2 Cor. 4. 15. All Christ's laws, ordinances, and promises, which are given to all, are designed effectually to convey spiritual life, and secure eternal life, to all that were given to Christ; He is head over all things to the church. The administration of the kingdoms of providence and grace are put into the same hand, that all things may be made to centre for good to the called.

(4.) Here is a further explication of this grand design; (v. 3.) "This is life eternal, which I am empowered, and have undertaken to give; this is the nature of it, and this the way leading to it, to glorify the true God, and all the discoveries and principles of natural religion, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, as Mediator, and the doctrines and laws of that holy religion, which he instituted for the recovery of man out of his lost estate." Here is.

[1.] The great end which the christian religion seeks before us, and that is, eternal life, the happiness that is prepared in the invisible world for eternal God. This he was to reveal to all, and secure to all, that were given him. By the gospel, life and immortality are brought to light, are brought to hand, a life which transcends this as much in excellency as it does in duration.

[2.] The sure way of attaining this blessed end, which is, by the right knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: This is the only means to know them; which may be taken two ways. First, Life eternal lies in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ: the present principle of this life is the believing knowledge of God and Christ; the future perfection of that life will be the intuitive knowledge of God and Christ: they that are brought into union with Christ, and
live a life of communion with God in Christ, know, in some measure, by experience, what eternal life is, and will say, "If this be heaven, heaven is sweet." See Ps. 17. 15. Secondly, The knowledge of God and Christ leads to life eternal; this is the way in which Christ gives eternal life, by the knowledge of him that has called us; (2 Pet. 1. 3.) and this is the way he desires to receive. That is, we receive a knowledge of the life eternal by coming to Christ. The Christian religion shews the way to heaven, 1. By directing us to God, as the author and futility of our being; for Christ died to bring us to God, to know him as our Creator, and to love him, obey him, submit to him, and trust in him, as our owner, ruler, and benefactor, to devote ourselves to him as our heavenly Father, to enjoy his love and our part in him and direct all to his praise as our highest end; this is life eternal. God is here called the only true God, to distinguish him from the false gods of the heathen, which were counterfeiters and pretenders, not from the person of the Son, of whom it is expressly said, that he is the true God and eternal life. (1 John 5. 20.) and who in this text is proposed as the object of the same religious regard with the Father. It is certain there is but one only living and true God, and the God we adore is he. He is the true God, and not a mere name or notion; the only true God; and all that ever set up as rivals with him, are vanity and a lie; the service of him is the only true religion. 2. By directing us to Jesus Christ, as the Mediator between God and man; Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. If man had continued innocent, the knowledge of the only true God would have been life eternal to him; but now that he is fallen, there must be something more; now that we are under guilt, to know God, is to know him as a righteous judge, whose curse we are under; and nothing is more killing than this; and we are under the obligation to direct all our hopes and expectations to the God and Redeemer, by whom alone we can now have access to God; it is life eternal to believe in Christ; and this he has undertaken to give to as many as were given him. See ch. 6. 39, 40. They that are acquainted with God and Christ, are already in the suburbs of life eternal. [2.] Christ here prays to be glorified, in consideration of the glory that he has given or will give to him. (1.) Our Lord here speaks of his having given him to do by him that sent him; he came not into the world to live at ease, but to go about doing good, and to fulfil all righteousness. His Father gave him his work, his work in the vineyard; both appointed him to it, and assisted him in it. (2.) The work that was given him to do, he finished. Though he had not, as yet, gone through the last part of his undertaking, yet he was so near being made perfect through sufferings, that he might say, I have finished it; it was as good as done, he was giving it its finishing stroke, †towards I have finished it. The word signifies his performing every part of his undertaking in the most complete and perfect manner. (3.) He is here glorified his Father; he pleased him, he was pleased with him; it is the glory of God that his word is perfect, and the same is the glory of the Redeemer; what he is the author of, he will be the finisher of. It was a strange way for the Son to glorify the Father, by abasing himself, (that looked more likely to disparage him,) yet it was contrived that so he should glorify him; I have glorified thee on the earth, in order why as I am on earth could be the manifestation of thy glory. 2. It is recorded for example to all, that we may follow his example. (1.) We must make it our business to do the work God has appointed us to do, according to our capacity and the sphere of our activity; we must each of us do all the good we can in this world. (2.) We must aim at the glory of God in all we do. We cannot desire him to commend and honor us, which he has given unto the children of men, demanding only this quit-rent; on the earth, where we are in a state of probation and preparation for eternity. (3.) We must persevere herein to the end of our days; we must not sit down till we have finished our work, and accomplished, as a hireling, our day. 3. It is recorded for encouragement to all those that rest upon him. If he have finished the work that was given him to do, then he is a complete Saviour, and did not do his work by the halves. And he that finished his work for us, will finish it in us to the day of Christ. Secondly, See with what confidence he expects the joy set before him; (v. 5.) Now, O Father, glorify thou me, as what he depends upon, and can not be denied him. 1. See here what he prayed for; Glorify thou me, as before, v. 1. All repetitions in prayer are not to be counted vain repetitions; Christ prayed, saying the same words, (Matt. 26. 44.) and yet prayed more earnestly. What his Father had promised him, and he was assured of, yet he must pray for; promises are of no avail, unless they are earnestly prayed for, or the Lord a guide of our desires and the ground of our hopes. Christ's being glorified, includes all the honours, powers, and joys of his exalted state. See how it is described. (1.) It is a glory with God; not only, Glorify my name on earth, but Glorify me with thine own self. It was paradise, it was heaven, to be with his Father, and to see his glory, John 17. 5, 9. That the The glories of the exalted Redeemer were to be displayed within the veil, where the Father manifests his glory. The praises of the upper world are offered up to him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb in conjunction; (Rev. 5. 13.) and the prayers of the lower world draw out grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ in conjunction; and thus the Father has glorified him with himself. (2.) It is the glory he had with God before the world was. By this it appears, [1.] That Jesus Christ, as God, had a being before the world was, co-eternal with the Father; our religion acquaints us with one that was before all things, and by whom all things consist. [2.] That his glory with the Father was不及的, and as well as his existence as a Mediator. He was from eternity the brightness of his Father's glory, Heb. 1. 3. As God's making the world only declared his glory, but made no real additions to it; so Christ undertook the work of redemption, not because he needed glory, for he had a glory with the Father before the world, but because we needed glory. [3.] That Jesus Christ in his state of humiliation manifested himself of this glory, and drew a veil over it; though he was still God, yet he was God manifested in the flesh, not in his glory. He laid down this glory for a time, as a pawn or pledge that he would go through with his undertaking, according to the appointment of his Father. [4.] That in his exalted state he resumed this glory, and char himself again with his former robes of light.
Having performed his undertaking, he did, as it were, repossess pignus—take up his pawn, by this demand, Glorify thee, and I, and now, in consideration thereof, glorify thou me. For, 

(1.) There was an equity in it, and an admirable becomeliness, that if God were glorified in him, he should glorify God in himself, (Isa. 52.10.) 

(2.) It was according to the covenant between them, that if the Son would make his soul an offering for sin, he should divide the spoil with the serpent, (Isa. 53.12.) and the kingdom should be his; and this he had an eye to, and depended upon in his sufferings; it was for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, and now in his exalted state, he still expects the completing of his exaltation, because he perfected his undertaking, Heb. 10.13. 

(3.) It was the most proper evidence of his Father's accepting and approving the work he had finished. By the glorifying of Christ we are satisfied that God was satisfied, and therein a real demonstration was given that his Father was well pleased in him as his beloved Son. (4.) Thus we must be taught that those, and only those, who glorify God on earth, and persevere in the work God hath given them to do, shall be glorified with the Father when they shall be received into heaven. Not that it is an merit that glory, as Christ did, but our glorifying God is required as an evidence of our interest in Christ, through whom eternal life is God's free gift. 

6. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9. I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 

Christ, having prayed for himself, comes next to pray for those that are his, and he knew them by name, though he did not here name them. Now observe here, 

1. When he did not pray for; (v. 9.) I pray not for the world. Note, There is a world of people that Jesus Christ did not pray for. It is not meant of the world of mankind in general, (he prays for that here, (v. 21.) That the world may believe that thou hast sent me,) nor is it meant of the Gentiles, in distinction from the Jews; but the world is here opposed to the church, for which he had already prayed, (v. 17.) Glorify thee, and I, and now, in consideration thereof, glorify thou me. This world take the world for a heap of unwinnable corn in the floor, and God loves it, Christ prays for it, and dies for it, for a blessing is in it; but the Lord perfectly knowing them that are his, he eyes particularly them that were given him out of the world, extracts them; and then take the world for the remaining heap of rejected worthless chaff, and Christ neither prays for it, nor speaks for it, but despises it, and the wind drives it away. These are called the world, because they are governed by the spirit of this world, and have their portion in it; for these Christ does not pray; not that there are some things which he intercedes with God for on their behalf, as the dresser for the reprieve of the barren tree; but he does not pray for them in this prayer, they have no fruit or life in the blessings here prayed for. If they would not say, I pray against the world, as Elias made intercession against Israel; but, I pray not for them, I pass them by, and leave them to themselves; they are not written in the Lamb's book of life, and therefore not in the breast-plate of the great High-Priest. And miserable is the condition of such, as it was of those whom the prophet was forbidden to pray for, and more so, Jer. 7.16. We that know not who are chosen, who are passed by, must pray for all men, 1 Tim. 2.1, 4. While there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer. See 1 Sam. 12.23. 

II. Whom he did pray for; not for angels, but for the children of men. 1. He prays for those that were given him, meaning primarily the disciples that had attended him in the regeneration; but it is doubtless to be extended further, to all who come under the same character, who receive and believe the words of Christ. 

2. He prays for all that should believe on him; (v. 20.) and it is not only the petitions that follow, but those also which went before, that must be construed to extend to all believers, in every place, and every age; for he has a concern for them all, and calls things that are not as though they were. 

III. What encouragement he had to pray for them, and what the general pleas with which he introduces his petitions for them, and recommends them to his Father's favour; they are five. 

1. The charge he had received concerning them; 

Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; (v. 6.) and again, (v. 21.) Them which thou hast given me. The Father, that I now praying for, are such as thou hast intrusted with me, and what I have to say for them is in pursuance of the charge I have received concerning them. Now. 

(1.) This is meant primarily of the disciples that then were, who were given to Christ as his pupils, to be educated by him while he was on earth, and his agents to be employed for him in the传播 of his gospel, and that they had been given him in that capacity to be the learners of his doctrine, the witnesses of his life and miracles, and the monuments of his grace and favour, in order to their being the publishers of his gospel, and the planters of his church. When they left all to follow him, this was the secret spring of that strange resolution; they were given to him, else they had not given themselves to him. Note, These are the object and ministry, which are Christ's gift to the church, were first the Father's gift to Jesus Christ. As un-
We as a whole congregation, and to do the service of the tabernacle. See Ex. 4. 8, 11. Ps. 68, 18. Christ received this gift for the righteous, 

As this puts a great honour upon the ministry of the gospel, and magnifies that office, which is so much vilified; so it lays a mighty obligation upon the ministers of the gospel to devote themselves entirely to Christ's service, as being given to him.

(2.) But it is designed to extend to all the elect, for they are elsewhere said to be given to Christ; (ch. 6.) and by him, and he laid it so that those he was to save were given to him as his charge; to his care they were committed, from his hand they were expected, and concerning them he received commandments. He here shews,

1. That the Father had authority to give them; Thine they were. He did not give that which was none of his own, but cemented, that he had a good title to. The elect that the Father gave to Christ, were his own three ways: First, They were creatures, and their lives and beings were derived from him. When they were given to Christ to be vessels of honour, they were in his hand, as clay in the hand of the potter, to be disposed of as God's wisdom saw most for God's glory. Secondly, They were criminals, and their lives and beings were forfeited to him. In which respect he purchased them to bring them to Christ to be redeemed, that might have been made sacrifices to justice then when they were pitched upon to be the monuments of mercy; might justly have been delivered to the tormentors when they were delivered to the Saviour. Thirdly, They were chosen, and their lives and beings were designed for him; they were set apart for God, and were considered as his property. This he insists upon again, (v. 7.) All things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee; which, though it may take in all that appertained to his office as Mediator, yet seems especially to be meant of those that were given him; "They are of thee, their being is of thee as the God of nature, their well-being is of thee as the God of grace; they are all of thee, and therefore, Father, I beseech thee to give them life, that they may all be for thee." [2.] That he did accordingly give them to his Son; Thou gavest them me, as sheep to the shepherd, to be kept; as patients to the physician, to be cured; children to a tutor, to be educated; thus he will deliver up his charge; (Heb. 2. 13.) The children thou hast given me. They were delivered to Christ, First, That the election of grace might not be, detracted, that not one, no not the little ones might perish. That great concern must be 1.

in some one good hand, able to give sufficient security, that the purpose of God according to election might stand. Secondly, That the undertaking of Christ might not be fruitless; they were given to him as his seed, in whom he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, (Isa. 53. 10, 11.) and might vindicate his length, and extend his blood, for naught, and in vain, (Isa. 40. 4.) We may not suppose as Còred does, "Lord, keep my grace, keep my comforts, for thine they were, and thou gavest them me." 2. The care he had taken of them to teach them; (v. 6.) I have manifested thy name to them. I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, v. 8. Observe here,

That the design of Christ's doctrine, which was to manifest God's name, to declare him, (ch. 18.) to instruct the ignorant, and rectify the mistakes of a dark and foolish world concerning God, that he might be better loved and worshiped. (2.) His faithful discharge of this undertaking; I have done it. His fidelity appears, [1.] In the truth of his doctrine. It agreed exactly with the instructions he received from his Father. He gave not only the things, but the very words, that were given him. Ministers, in worthing their message, must have an eye to the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. [2.] In the tendency of his doctrine, which were manifest not in God's name. He did not seek himself, but, in all he did and said, aimed to magnify his Father. Note, First, It is Christ's prerogative to manifest God's name to the souls of the children of men. No man knows the Father, but he to whom the Son will reveal him, Matt. 11. 27. He only has acquaintance with the Father, and so is able to open the truth; and he only has access to the spirits of men, and is able to open them. Secondly, Ministers may publish the name of the Lord, (as Moses, Deut. 32. 3.) but Christ only can manifest that name. By the word of Christ, God is revealed to us; by the Spirit of Christ, God is revealed in us. Ministers may speak the words of God to us, but Christ can give us his words, can put them in us, as food, as, treasure. Secondly, Sooner or later, Christ will manifest God's name to all that were given him, and will give them his word, to be the seed of their new birth, the support of their spiritual life, and the earnest of their everlasting bliss.

3. The good effect of the care he had taken of them, and the pains he had taken with them; (v. 6.) They have kept thy word; (v. 7.) They have known all things are of thee; (v. 8.) They have received thou words, and embraced them, have given their consent and assent to them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and have believed that thou didst send me. Observe here,

1. What success the doctrine of Christ had among those that were given him, in several particulars: [1.] They have received the words which I gave them, as they found the seed, and the earth drinks in the rain. They attended to the words of Christ, apprehended in some measure the meaning of them, and were affected with them: they received thee impression of the word. The word was to them an engrafted word. [2.] They have kept thy word, have continued in it; they have conformed to it. Christ's commandment is then only kept, when it is obeyed. They then obeyed whom they considered the commands of Christ, ought to be themselves obser vant of them. It was requisite that they should keep what was committed to them, for it was to be transmitted by them to every place for every age. [3.] They have understood the word, and have been sensible on what ground they went in receiving and keeping it. They have been aware that they were the original Author of that holy religion which I am come to institute; that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. All Christ's offices and powers, all the gifts of the Spirit, all his graces and comforts, which God gave without measure to him, were all from God; contrived by his wisdom, appointed by his will, and designed by his grace, for his own glory in man's salvation. Note, It is a great satisfaction to us, in the reliance upon Christ, that he and all he is and has, all he said and did, all he is doing and will do, are of God, 1 Cor. 1. 30. We may therefore venture our souls upon Christ's mediation, for it has a good bottom. If the righteousness be of God's appointing, we shall be justified; if the grace be of his dispensing, we shall be sanctified. [4.] They have set their seal to it: They have known surely that I came out from God, v. 8. See here,

First, What is it to believe; it is to know surely, to know that it is so of a truth. The disciples were very weak and defective in knowledge; yet Christ, who knew them better than they knew themselves.
posses his word for them that they did believe.

Note, We may know surely that which we neither do nor can know fully; may know the certainty of the things which are not seen, though we cannot particularly describe the nature of them. We walk by faith, which knows surely, not yet by sight, which knows clearly.

Secondly, Secondly, it is we are to believe; that Jesus Christ came out from God, as he is the Son of God, in his person the image of the invisible God, and that God did send him; that in his undertaking he is the ambassador of the eternal King; so that the christian religion stands upon the same foot, and is of equal authority, with natural religion; and therefore all the doctrines of Christ are to be received as divine truths, all his commands obeyed as divine laws, and all his promises depended upon as divine securities.

(2.) How Jesus Christ speaks of this here; he enlarges upon it,

1. As pleased with it himself. Though the many instances of his disciples' dulness and weakness had grieved him, yet their constant adherence to him, their gradual improvements, and their great soul-love to the government and law of God, that delights in the proficiency of his scholars. He accepts the sincerity of their faith, and graciously passes by the infirmity of it. See how willing he is to make the best of us, and to say the best of us; thereby encouraging our faith in him, and teaching us charity to one another.

2. As pleading it with his Father. He is praying for those there were given him; and he pleads that they had given themselves to him. Note, The due improvement of grace received, is a good plea, according to the tenor of the new covenant, for further grace; so runs the promise, To him that hath shall be given. They that keep Christ's word, and believe on him, let Christ alone to commend them, and, which is more, to recommend them, to his Father.

3. He pleads the Father's own interest in them; (2.) If they were given him, for they are thine; and this by virtue of a joint and mutual interest, which he and the Father have in what pertained to each; All mine are thine, and thine are mine. Between the Father and Son there can be no dispute (as there is among the children of men) about meum and tuum—mine and thine, for the matter was settled from all eternity; all mine are thine, and thine are mine. Here is, (1.) The plea particularly urged for his disciples' interest. Theirs was an interest by their own choice, and repetitious prayer of the elect to Christ was so far from making them less the Father's, that it was in order to the making them the more so. Note, [1.] All that receive Christ's word, and believe in him, are taken into covenant-relation to the Father, and are looked upon as his; Christ presents them to him, and they, through Christ, present themselves to him. Christ has redeemed us, not to himself only, but to God, by his blood, Rev. 5. 9. They are first-fruits unto God, Rev. 14. 4.

(2.) This is a good plea in prayer, Christ here pleads it, They are thine; we may plead it for ourselves, I am thine, save me; and for others, (as Moses, Exod. 32. 11.) "They are thy people, They are thine; wilt thou not provide for thine own? Wilt thou not secure them, that they may not be run down by the devil and the world? Wilt thou not secure them, that they may not despise thee? They are thine, own them as thine." (2.) The foundation on which this plea is grounded; All mine are thine, and thine are mine. This speaks the Father and Son to be, [1.] One in essence. Every creature must say to God, All mine are thine; but none can say to him, All thine are mine, but he that is the same in substance with him, and equal in power and glory. [2.] One in interest; no separate or divided interests between them.

First, What the Father has, as Creator, is delivered over to the Son, to be used and disposed of in subserviency to his great undertaking. All things are delivered to him; (Matt. 11. 27.) the grant is so general, that nothing was excepted, but he that did put all things under him.

Secondly, What the Son has, as Redeemer, is designed for the Father, and his kingdom shall shortly be delivered up to him. All the benefits of redemption, purchased by the Son, are intended for the Father's praise, and in his glory all the lines of his undertaking centre; All mine are thine. The Son owns none for his that are not devoted to the service of the Father; nor will any thing be accepted as a piece of service to the christian religion, which clashes with the dictates of sacred religion. In a limited sense, every true believer may say, All thine are mine; if God be our's in covenant, all he is and has, is so far our's, that it shall be engaged for our good; and in an unlimited sense, every true believer does say, Lord, all mine are thine; all laid at his feet, to be serviceable to him. And then what we have may be comfortably committed to God's care and blessing, when it is cheerfully submitted to his command. "Lord, take care of what I have, for it is all thine." 5. He pleads his own concern in them; I am glorified in them—διὰ συγκαρδίας. (1.) I have been glorified in them; what little honour Christ had in this world, was among his disciples; he had been glorified by their attendance on him and obedience to him, their preaching and working miracles in his name, and therefore I rejoice, etc., for them. Note, These shall have an interest in Christ's intercession, in and by whom he is glorified.

(2.) "I am to be glorified in them, when I am gone to heaven; they are to bear up my name." The apostles preached and wrought miracles in Christ's name; the Spirit in them glorified Christ, (ch. 16. 14.) "I am glorified in them, and therefore," [1.] "I concern myself for them." What little interest Christ has in this degenerate world, lies in his church; and therefore it and all its affairs lie near his heart, within the veil. [2.] "Therefore I commit them to the Father, who has engaged to glorify the Son, and, upon that account, will have a gracious eye to those in whom he is glorified." That in which God and Christ are glorified, may, with humble confidence, be committed to God's special care.

11. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. 13. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.
After the general pleas with which Christ recommended his disciples to his Father's care, follow the particular petitions he puts up for them: and, 1. They all relate to spiritual blessings in heavenly things. He does not pray that they might be rich and great in the world, that they might raise estates, and get prebendaries, but that they might be kept from sin, and furnished with grace, and brought to heaven. The prosperity of the soul is the best prosperity; for, what relates to that, Christ came to purchase and bestow, and so teaches us to seek, in the first place, both for others and for ourselves. 2. They are such blessings as were suited to their present state and case, and their various sedigencies and occasions. Note, Christ's intercessions is a mean providence, in which Christ is acquainted with all the particulars of our wants and burthens, our dangers and difficulties, and knows how to accommodate his intercession to each, as to Peter's peril, which he himself was not aware of; (Luke 22. 32.) I have prayed for thee. 3. He is large and full in the petitions, orders them before his Father, and fills his mouth with arguments, to teach us fervency and importunity in prayer, to be large in our way well upon our crads at the throne of grace, wrestling as Jacob, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Now observe,

1. The request itself; Keep them from the world.

There were two ways of their being delivered from the world:

1. By taking them out of it; and he does not pray that they might be so delivered: I pray not that they should be taken out of the world; that is, (1.) "I pray not that they may speedily be removed by death." If the world will be vexations to them, the readiest way to secure them, would be to hasten them out of it to a better world, that will give them better treatment. Send chariots and horses of fire for them, to fetch them to heaven; Job, Elijah, Jonah, Moses, when that occurred which fretted them, prayed that they might be taken out of the world, and not for so hardy a race of disciples, for two reasons. [1.] Because he came to conquer, not to countenance, these intemperate heats and passions which make men impatient of life, and importunate for death. It is his will that we should take up our cross, and not avoid it. [2.] Because he had work for them to do in the world; the world, though sick of them, (Acts 22. 22.) and therefore not worthy of them, (Heb. 11. 39.) yet could ill spare them. In pity therefore to this dark world, Christ would not have these lights removed out of it, but continued in it, especially for the sake of those in the world, that were to believe in him through their world. Let not them be taken out of the world, when their Master is; they must each, in his own order, die a martyr, but not till they have finished that work of the world, (Heb. 11. 39.) yet could ill spare them. In pity therefore to this dark world, Christ would not have these lights removed out of it, a thing by no means to be desired, but dreaded rather, and laid to heart. Isa. 57. 1. Secondly, Though Christ loves his disciples, he does not presently send for them to heaven, as soon as they are effectually called, but leaves them for some time in this world, that they may do good, and glorify God upon earth, and be riven for here to help many good people are spared to live, because they can ill be spared to die. (2.) "I pray not that they may be totally freed and exempted from the troubles of this world, and taken out of the toil and terror of it in some place of ease and safety, there to live undisturbed; that is, I do not desire the preservation of their hands to that degree, which they may have in a less degree, by the preservation of their persons. Non ut omni molestia liberati atimum et delicias colant, sed ut inter media periculo salvi tamen maneat Dei auxilio.—Not that, being freed from all trouble, they may bask in luxurious ease, but that, by the help of God, they may be preserved in a state of danger; which is the state in which they are most used to think of Christ's grace, and have the best conflict with the world, that they may not be over come by it; not that, as Jeremiah wished, they might leave their people, and go from them, (Jer 9. 2.) but that, like Ezechiel, their faces may be strong against the faces of wicked men, Ezek. 3. 8. It is more the honour of a christian soldier by faith to overcome the world, than by a monastical vow to escape it. Note, It is the honour of a christian to serve him in a city than to serve him in a cell.

2. Another way is, by keeping them from the corruption that is in the world; and he prays they may be thus kept, v. 11, 15. Here are three branches of this petition:

(1.) Holy Father, keep those whom thou hast given me. Christ was now leaving them; but let them not so that their defence was departed from them; no, he does here, in their hearing, commit them to the custody of his Father and their Father. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all believers, that Christ himself has committed them to the care of God himself. Those cannot but be safe, whom the almighty God keeps, and he cannot but keep those whom the Son of his love commits to him; as he was broken in upon by the hardships they were in for the keeping of our souls to God, 1 Pet. 4. 19.

2 Tim. 1. 12. [1.] He here puts them under the divine protection, that they might not be run down by the malice of their enemies; that they and all their concerns might be the particular care of the divine providence; Keep their lives, till they have done their work; keep their comforts, and let not them be broken in upon by the hardships they were in with keep up their interest in the world, and let not that sink, To this prayer is owing the wonderful preservation of the gospel-ministry and gospel-church in the world unto this day; if God had not graciously kept both, and kept up both, they had been extinguished and lost long ago. [2.] He puts them under the divine tuition, that they might not themselves run away from their duty, and be delivered sides to the world; there would be none so happy in their servants, Keep them in their integrity, keep them disciples, keep them close to their duty. We need God's power not only to put us into a state of grace, but to keep us in it. See ch. 10. 28, 29. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

The titles he gives to him he prays to, and them he prays for, enforce the petition.

First, He speaks to God as a holy Father. In committing ourselves and others to the divine care, we may take encouragement, 1. From the attribute of his holiness, for that is engaged for the preservation of his holy ones; he hath sworn by his holiness, Ps. 89. 35. If he be a holy God, and hate sin, he will make those that are his, holy, and keep them from sin, who hate it too, and dread it as the greatest evil. 2. From this relation of a Father, wherein he is the true inheritor of Christ. If he be a Father, he will take care of his own children, will teach them and keep them; who else should?

Secondly, He speaks of them as those whom the Father had given him. What we receive as our Father's gifts, we may comfortably rent to our Father's care. Father, keep the graces and comforts thou hast given me; the children then had given to themselves, and the ministry, he had given to himself. (2.) Keep them through thine own name. That is, [1.] Keep them for thy name's sake; so some. Thy name and honour are concerned in their preservation as well as more, for both will suffer by it
if they either revolt or sin." The Old Testament saints often pleaded, for thy name's sake; and those may with comfort plead it, that are indeed more concerned for the honour of God's name than for any interest of their own.

[2.] Keep them in thy name; so others; the original is so, in το ἱερὸν τοῦ ὀνόματός σου. "Keep them in the knowledge and fear of thy name; keep them in the profession and service of thy name, whatever it cost them. Keep them in the interest of thy name, and let them ever be faithful to that; keep them in thy truths, in thine ordinances, in the way of thy commandments." 

[3.] Keep them by or through thy name; so others. "Keep them by thine own power, in thine own hand; keep them thyself, undertake for them, let them be thine own immediate care. Keep them by those means of preservation which the Lord hath appointed, and by which thou hast made thyself known. Keep them by thy word and ordinances; let thy name be their strong tower; thy tabernacle their pavilion." 

[4.] Keep them from the evil; or out of the evil. He had taught them to pray daily, Deliver us from evil, and this would encourage them to pray.

[1.] "Keep them from the evil one, the devil and all his children. Keep them from Satan as a tempter, that either he may not have leave to sift them, or that their faith may not fail. Keep them from him as a destroyer, that he may not drive them to despair." 

[2.] "Keep them from the evil thing, that is, sin; from every thing that looks like it, or leads to it. Keep them, that they do no evil," 2 Cor. 13. 7. Sin is that evil which, above any other, we should dread and deprecate.

[3.] "Keep them from the evil of the world, and of their tribulation in it, so that it may have no sting in it, no malignity;" not that they might be kept from affliction; but kept through it, that the property of their afflictions might be so altered that there might be no evil in them, nothing to do them any harm.

II. The reasons with which he enforces these requests for their preservation, which are five.

1. He pleads that hitherto he had kept them; (v. 12.) "While I was with them in the world, I have kept them in thy name, in the true faith of the gospel and the service of God; those that thou gavest me for my constant attendants I have kept, they are all safe, and none of them missing, none of them ruined; they are kept in the interest of thy name best, that the scripture might be fulfilled." Observe, 

(1.) Christ's faithful discharge of his undertaking concerning his disciples; while he was with them, he kept them, and his care concerning them was not in vain. He kept them in God's name, preserved them from falling into any dangerous errors or sins; from striking in with the Pharisees, who would have confounded him; kept them from the temptations of the devil, kept them from deserting him, and returning to the little all they had left for him; he had them still under his eye and care when he sent them to preach; went not his hearts with them? Many that followed him a while, took offence at something or other, and went off; but he kept the twelve, that they also should not go away. He kept them from falling into the hands of persecuting enemies that sought their lives; kept them when he surrendered himself, ch. 18. 9. While he was with them, he kept them in a visible manner by instructions still sounding in their ears, miracles still done before their eyes; when he was gone from them, they must be kept in a more spiritual manner. Sensible comforts and supports are sometimes given and sometimes withheld; but when they are withdrawn, yet they are not left com-

What Christ here says of his immediate followers, is true of all the saints while they are here in this world; Christ keeps them in God's name. It is implied, [1.] That they are weak, and cannot keep themselves; their own hands are not sufficient for them. [2.] That they are, in God's account, valuable and worth the keeping; precious in his sight and honourable; his treasure, his jewels. [3.] That their salvation is designed, for that it is that they are kept. [4.] That they are the charge of the Lord Jesus; for as his charge he keeps them, and exposed himself like the good Shepherd for the preservation of the sheep.

(2.) The comfortable account he gives of his undertaking; None of them is lost. Note, Jesus Christ will certainly keep all that he has given, so that none of them shall be totally and finally lost; they may think themselves lost, and may be nearly lost; (in imminent peril;) but it is the Father's will that he should lose none, and none he will lose; (ch. 6. 39.) so it will appear when they come altogether, and none of them shall be wanting.

(3.) A brand put upon Judas, as none of those whom he had undertaken to keep. He was among those that Judas was sent against, but he was not among them. He speaks of Judas as already lost, for he had abandoned the society of his Master and his fellow-disciples, and abandoned himself to the devil's guidance, and in a little time would go to his own place; he is as good as lost.

But the apostacy and ruin of Judas were no reproach at all to his master, or his family; for, [1.] He was the son of perdition, and therefore none of those that were given to Christ to be kept. He deserved perdition, and God left him to throw himself headlong into it. He was the son of the destroyer, as Cain, who was of that wicked one. That great enemy whom the Lord will consume, is called a son of perdition, because he is a man of sin, 2 Thess. 2. 3. It is an awful consideration, that one of the apostles proved a son of perdition. No man's place or name in the church, no man's privileges or opportunities of getting grace, no man's profession or external performances, will secure him from ruin, if his heart be not right with God; nor are any more likely to prove sons of perdition at last, after a plausible course of profession, than those that, like Judas, love the bag. But Christ's distinguishing Judas from those that were given to him; (for it is said he, excepting Judas,) intimates that the truth and true religion ought not to suffer for the treachery of those that are false to it, 1 John 2. 19.

(2.) The scripture was fulfilled; the sin of Judas was foreseen in God's counsel, and foretold in his word, and the event would certainly follow after the prediction as a consequence, though it cannot be said necessarily to follow from it as an effect. See Ps. 109. 8. - 60. 22. - 100. 8. One would be amazed, if the treachery of apostates, were we not told it before.

2. He pleads that he was now under a necessity of leaving them, and could no longer watch over them in the way that he had hitherto done it; (v. 11.) "Keep them now, that I may not lose the labour I bestowed upon them while I was with them. Keep them, that I may make you one with us as we are with each other." We shall have occasion to speak of that, v. 21. But see here, 

(1.) With what pleasure he speaks of his own departure. He expresses himself concerning it with an air of triumph and exultation, with reference both to the world he left, and the world he removed to.

[1.] "Now I am no more in the world. Now farewell to this provoking troublesome world, I have
joy in Christ; "It is my joy, joy of my giving, or rather joy that I am the matter of." (Christ is a Christian's joy, his chief, and joy in the world, with it, joy in Christ's everlasting, like him.) [2.] To build up our joy with diligence; for it is the duty as well as privilege of all true believers; no part of the Christian life is pressed upon us more earnestly, Phil. 3. 1—4. [3.] To aim at the perfection of this joy, that we may have it fulfilled in us, for this Christ would have it. [2.] He did thus solemnly commit them to his Father's care and keeping, and took them for witnesses that he did so; These things I speak in the world, while I am yet with them in the world. His intercession in heaven for their preservation would have been as effectual in itself; but saying this in the world, would be a greater satisfaction and encouragement to them, and the Lamb enable them to rejoice in tribulation. Note, [1.] Christ has not only treasured up comforts for his people, in providing for their future welfare, but has given out comforts to them, and said that which will be for their present satisfaction. He here condescended, in the presence of his disciples, to publish his last will and testament, and (which many a testator is wanting in) left the heirs of his church, as good, and as well as able, to secure them, and as well as secure, that they might have strong consolation. [2.] Christ's intercession for us is enough to fulfill our joy in him; nothing more effectual to silence all our fears and distrusts, and to furnish us with strong consolation, than this, that he always appears in the presence of God for us; therefore the apostle puts a yea rather upon the same, v. 34. And see Heb. 7. 25. 4. He pleads the ill usage they were likely to meet with in the world, for his sake; (v. 14.) "I have given them thy word, to be published to the world, and they have received it, have believed it themselves, and accepted the trust of transmitting it to the world; and therefore the world hath hated them, as also because they are not of the world, any more than I." Here we have (1.) The world's enmity to Christ's followers. While Christ was with them, though as yet they had given but little opposition to the world, yet it hates them, much more would it do so when by their more extensive preaching of the gospel they would turn the world upside down; "Father, stand their friend," says Christ, "for they are likely to have enemies; me they have hated, because the world's hatred is entailed upon them. In the midst of those fiery darts, let them be compassed with thy favour as with a shield." It is God's honour to take part with the weaker side, and to help the helpless. Lord be merciful to them, for men would swallow them up. (2.) The reasons of that enmity, which strengthen the plea. [1.] It is implied that one reason is, because they had received the word of God as it was sent them by the hand of Christ, when the greatest part of the world rejected it, and set themselves against them who were the preachers and professors of it. Note, They that receive Christ's good word and good word, must expect the world's ill will and ill word. Gossiping ministers have been in a particular manner hated by the world, because they call men out of the world, and separate them from it, and teach them not to conform to it, and so condemn the world; "Father, keep them, for it is for thy sake that they are exposed; they are sufferers for thee." Thus the psalmist pleads, For thy sake I have borne reproach, Ps. 69. 9. Note, Those that keep the word of Christ's patience, are entitled to special protection in the hour of temptation, Rev. 3. 10. That cause which makes a martyr, may well make a joyful sufferer.
First, it is the prayer of Christ for all that are his, that they may be sanctified; because he cannot for shame own them as his, either here or hereafter, if they never conformed them in his work, or present them to his Father, if they be not otherwise. Those that through grace are sanctified, have need to be sanctified more and more. Even disciples must pray for sanctifying grace; for if he that was the author of the good work be not the finisher of it, we are undone. Not to go forward is to go back ward; he that is holy, must be holy still, more and more; pressing forward, soaring upward, as those that have been sanctified. Fourthly, It is an encouragement to us in our prayers for sanctifying grace, that it is what Christ in terrors for, for us.

(2.) The means of conferring this grace—through thy truth, thy word is truth. Not that the Holy One of Israel is hereby limited to means, but in the counsel of power, among other things, it was settled and agreed, [1.] That all needful truth should be comprised and summed up in the word of God. Divine revelation, as it now stands in the written word, is not only pure truth without mixture, but entire truth without deficiency. [2.] That this word of truth should be the outward and ordinary means of our sanctification; not of itself, for then it would always have more sanctification in it than the Spirit commonly uses in beginning and carrying on that good work; it is the seed of the new birth, (1 Pet. 1. 23.) and the food of the new life, 1 Pet 2. 1, 2.

2. As ministers. "Sanctify them, set them apart for thyself and service; let their call to the apostleship be ratified in heaven." Prophets were said to be sanctified, Jer. 1. 5. Priests and Levites were so. Sanctify them; (1.) "Qualify them for the office, with christian graces and ministerial gifts, to make them able ministers of the New Testament." (2.) "Separate them to the office, Rom. 1. 1. I have called them, they have consented; Father, say Amen to it." (3.) "Own them in the office; let thy hand go along with them; sanctify them by or in truth, as truth is opposed to figure and worldly pomp; let those who have the office be so ceremonially, as the Levitical priests were, by anointing and sacrifice. Sanctify them to thy truth, the word of thy truth, to be the preachers of thy truth to the world; as the priests were sanctified to serve at the altar, so let them be to preach the gospel," 1 Cor. 9. 13, 14. Note. [1.] Jesus Christ intercedes for his ministers with a particular concern, and recommends to his Father's grace those stars he carries in his right hand. [2.] The great thing to be asked of God for gospel-ministers, is, that they may be sanctified, effectually separated from the world, entirely devoted to God, and experimentally acquainted with the influence of that word upon their own hearts, which they preach to others. Let them have the Urim and Thummim, light and glory, of the divine presence with them.

II. We have here two pleas or arguments to enforce the petition for the disciples' sanctification. 1. The mission they had from him; (v. 18.) "As thou hast sent me into the world, to be thine ambassador to the children of men, so now that I am recalled, have I sent them into the world, as my delegates. Now here, (1.) Christ speaks in great assurance of his own mission: They shall be sanctified—unto the world. The great Author of the christian religion had his commission and instructions from him who is the original and object of all religion. He was sent of God to say what he said, and do what he did, and be what he is to those that believe on him; which was his comfort in his undertaking, and may be our abun-
dantly, in our dependence upon him; his record was on high, from whence his mission was.

(2.) He speaks of the greatMultiplicity of the commission in which he had given his disciples; "So have I sent them on the same errand, and to carry on the same design; to preach the same doctrine that I have preached, and to confirm it with the same proofs, with a charge likewise to commit to other faithful men which was committed to them. He gave them their commission, (ch. 20. 21.) with reference to their provisions being in their office, that it comes from Christ, and that there is some affinity between the commission given to the ministers of reconciliation, and that given to the Mediator; he is called an apostle, (Heb. 3. 1.) a minister, (Rom. 15. 8.) a messenger, Mal. 3. 1. Only they are sent as servants, he as a Son.

Now this comes in here as a reason, [1.] Why Christ could not comply so much for them, and laid their case so near his heart; because he had himself put them into a difficult office, which required great abilities for the due discharge of it. Note, Whom Christ sends he will stand by, and interest himself in those that are employed for him; what he calls us out to, he will fit us out for, and bear us out in. [2.] Why he committed them to his Father; because he was concerned in the highest manner in the mission being in prosecution of his, and as it were an assignment out of Christ received gifts for men, (Ps. 68. 18.) and then gave them to men; (Eph. 4. 8.) and therefore pray aid of his Father to warrant and uphold those gifts, and confirm his grant of them. The Father sanctified him when he sent him into the world, ch. 10. 36. Now they being sent as he was, let them also be sanctified.

2. The merit he had for them is another thing here pleaded; (v. 19.) For their sakes I sanctify myself. Here is,

1. Christ's designation of himself to the work and office of Mediator; I sanctified myself: he entirely devoted himself to the undertaking, and all the parts of it, especially that which he was now going about—the offering up of himself without spot unto God, by the eternal Spirit. He, as the priest and altar, sanctified himself as the sacrifice. When he said, Father, glorify thy name; and, Father, thy will be done; and, Father, I commit my spirit into thy hands; he paid down the satisfaction he had engaged to make, and so sanctified himself. This he pleads with his Father, for his intercession is more than necessary, when he and the church are satisfied by his own blood he entered into the holy place, Heb. 9. 12. As the High-Priest, on the day of atonement, sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice at the same time that he burnt incense within the veil, Lev. 16. 12, 14.

2. Christ's design of kindness to his disciples herein; it is for their sakes, that they may be sanctified, that is, that they may be martyrs; so some. "I sacrifice myself, that they may be sanctified to the praise of God, and the church's good." Paul speaks of his being offered, 2 Tim. 4. 6. Phil. 2. 17. Whatever there is in the death of the saints, that is precious in the sight of the Lord, it is owing to the death of the Lord Jesus. But I rather take it most generally, that they may be saints and ministers duly qualified and accepted of God.

[1.] The office of the minister is the purchase of Christ's blood; the dote of the blessed fruits of his satisfaction, and owes its virtue and value to Christ's merit. The priests under the law were consecrated with the blood of bulls and goats, but gospel-ministers with the blood of Jesus.

[2.] The real holiness of all good Christians is the fruit of Christ's death, by which the gift of the Holy Ghost was given them; for himself; for the church, to sanctify it, Eph. 3. 16. And be that designed the end, designed also the means, that they might be sanctified by the truth, the truth which Christ came into the world to bear witness to, and administered to them. The world of truth receives its sanctifying virtue and power from the death of Christ. Some read it, that they be sanctified in truth, that is, truly; for as God must be served, so, in order to that, we must be sanctified, in the spirit, and in truth. And this Christ has prayed for, for all that are his; for this is his will, even their sanctification, which encourages them to pray for it.

20. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; 21. That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23. In them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved me.

Next to their purity he prays for their unity; for the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable; and amity is then amiable indeed, when it is like the ointment on Aaron's holy head, and the dew on Zion's holy hill. Observe,

1. Who are included in this prayer; (v. 20.) Not these only, but these only that are now my disciples. (the eleven, the seventy, with others, men and women that followed him when he was here on earth,) But for them also which shall believe on me through their word, either preached by them in their own day, or written by them for the generations to come; I pray for them all, that they all may be one in their interest in this prayer, and may all receive benefit by it. Note here,

Those, and those only, are interested in the mediation of Christ, that do, or shall, believe in him. This is that by which they are described, and it comprehends all the character and duty of a christian. They that lived then, saw, and believed, but they in after-ages have not seen, and yet have believed.

3. It is through the word that souls are brought to believe on Christ, and it is for this end that Christ appointed the scriptures to be written, and a standing ministry to continue in the church, while the church stands, that is, while the world stands, for the raising up of a seed.

4. Jesus Christ intercedes not only for great and eminent believers, but for the meanest and weakest; not for those only that are to be employed in the highest posts of trust and honour in his kingdom, but for all, even those that in the eye of the world are inconceivable. As the Divine Providence extends itself to the meanest creature, so does the Divine Grace to the meanest creation. Jesus, in the name of the Shepherd, has an eye even to the foot of the flock.

5. Jesus Christ in his mediation had an actual re
The oneness that is between the Father and the Son, which is mentioned again and again, v. 11, 21, 23, 24.

(1.) It is taken for granted, that the Father and Son are one, in nature and essence, equal in power and glory, and mutual endowments. The Father loveth the Son, and the Son always pleased the Father. They are one in design, and one in operation. The intimacy of this oneness is expressed in these words, Thou in me, and I in thee. This he often mentions for his support under his present sufferings, when his enemies were ready to fall upon him, and his friends to fall off from him; yet he was one Father and one Father in him.

(2.) This is insisted on in Christ's prayer for his disciples' oneness.

[1.] As the pattern of that oneness, showing how he desired they might be one. Believers are one, in some measure, as God and Christ are one; for, First, The union of believers is a strict and close union; they are united by a divine nature, by the power of divine grace, in pursuance of the divine counsels. Secondly, It is a holy union, in the Holy Spirit, for holy ends; not a body politic for any secular purpose. Thirdly, It is, and will be at last, a complete union. Father and Son have the same attributes, properties, and perfections; so have believers now, as far as they are sanctified, and when grace shall be perfected in glory, they will be exactly correspondent to each other, all changed into the same image.

[2.] As the centre of that oneness; that they may be one in us, all meeting here. There is one God and one Mediator; and herein believers are one, that they all agree to depend upon the favour of this one God as their felicity, and the merit of this one Mediator as their righteousness. That is a compulsory, not an honorary, oneness; it is an oneness in God as the end, and Christ as the way. All who are truly united to God and Christ, who are one, will soon be united to one another.

[3.] As a plea for that oneness. The Creator and Redeemer are one in interest and design; but to what purpose are they so, if all believers were not one body with Christ, and did not jointly receive grace and favour from him, as he had received it for them? Christ's design was to reduce revolted mankind to God: "Father," says he, "let all that believe, be one, that in one body they may be reconciled," (Eph. 2, 13, 16) which speaks of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the church; that great mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, (Eph. 3, 6) to which I think this prayer of Christ principally refers, it being one great thing he aimed at in his dying; and I wonder none of the expositors I have met with do so apply it. "Father, let the Gentiles that believe be incorporated with the believing Jews, and make of two one new man."

Those words, I in them, and thou in me, shew what that union is, which is so necessary, not only to the beauty, but to the very being, of his church. First, Union with Christ; I in them. Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers, is the life and soul of the new man. Secondly, Union with God through him; Thou in me; so as by me to be in them. Thirdly, Union with each other, resulting from those; that they hereby may be made perfect in one. We are complete in him.

2. The design of Christ in all his communications of light and grace to them; (v. 22) "The glory which they gave me, as the trustee or channel of conveyance, I have accordingly given them, to this intent, that they may be one, as we are one; so that those gifts will be in vain, if they be not one." Now these gifts are either,

(1.) Those that were conferred upon the apostles,
and first planters of the church. The glory of being God's ambassadors to the world; the glory of working miracles; the glory of gathering a church out of the world, and erecting the throne of God's kingdom among men; this glory was given to Christ, and some of the honour he put upon them when he sent them to disciple all nations.

Or, (2.) This glory was given in common to all believers, the glory of being in covenant with the Father, and accepted of him; of being laid in his bosom, and designed for a place at his right hand, was the glory which the Father gave to the Redeemer, and he has confirmed it to the redeemed. 1. This honour, he says, he hath given them, because he hath intended it for them, settled it upon them. 2. This was given him, to give them; it was conveyed to him in trust for them, and he was faithful to him that appointed him. 3. He gave it them, that they might be one. First, To entitle them to the privilege of unity, that by virtue of their common relation to one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ, they might be truly denominated one. The gift of the Spirit, that great glory which the Father gave to the Son, by him to be given to all believers, makes them one, for he works all in all, 1 Cor. 12. 4. 2. Secondly, To engage them to the duty of unity. That in consideration of their agreement and communion in one creed and one covenant, one Spirit and one Bible; in consideration of what they have in one God and one Christ, and of what they hope for in heaven, they may be of one mind and one mouth. Worldly glory sets men at variance; for if some be advanced, others are eclipsed, and therefore, while the disciples dreamed of a temporal kingdom, they were ever and anon quarrelling: but spiritual honours being conferred alike upon all Christ's subjects, they being all made to our God kings and priests, there is no occasion for content or emulation. The more Christians are taken up with the glory Christ has given them, the less desirous they will be of vain-glory, and, consequently, the less disposed to quarrel.

3. He pleading the happy influence their oneness would have upon others, and the furtherance it would give to the public good. This is twice urged; (v. 21.) that the world may believe that thou hast sent me in his name. (v. 23.) Thou hast sent me. The world should know it; for without knowledge there can be no true belief. Believers must know what they believe, and why and wherefore they believe it. They who believe at a venture, venture too far. Now Christ here shews,

(1.) His good-will to the world of mankind in general. Herein he is of his Father's mind, as we are sure there is in every thing, that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Tim. 2. 4. 2 Pet. 3. 9. Therefore it is his will that all means possible should be used, and no stone left unturned, for the conviction and conversion of the world. We know not who are chosen, but we must in our places do our utmost to further men's salvation, and take heed of doing any thing to hinder it.

(2.) The good fruit of the church's oneness; it will be an evidence of the truth of Christianity, and a means of bringing many to embrace it.

[1.] In general, it will recommend Christianity to the world, and to the good opinion of those that are without.

First, The embodying of christians in one society by the gospel-charter, will greatly promote Christianity, when the world shall see so many of these that were its children, called out of its family, distinguished from others, and changed from what they themselves sometimes were; when they shall see this society raised by the foolishness of preaching, and kept up by miracles of divine providence and grace, and how admirably well it is modelled and constituted, they will be ready to say, We will go with you, for we see that God is with you.

Secondly, The uniting of christians in love and charity, is the beauty of their profession, and invites others to draw near to them, and to see the love that was and amongst those prime-primitive christians, Acts 2. 42, 43.—4. 32, 33. When Christianity, instead of causing quarrels about itself, makes all other strife to cease, when it cools the fiery, smooths the rugged, and disposes men to be kind and loving, courteous and beneficent, to all men; studious to preserve and promote peace in all relations and societies; this will make men more willing to embrace either of natural religion or natural affection in them.

[2.] In particular, it will beget in men good thoughts, First, Of Christ: They will know and believe that thou hast sent me. By this it will appear that Christ was sent of God, and that his doctrine was divine, in that his religion prevails to join so many of different capacities, temperaments, and interests, in other things, in one body by faith, with one heart by love. Certainly he was sent by the God of power, who fashions men's hearts alike, and the God of love and peace; when the worshippers of God are one, he is one, and his name one.

Secondly, Of christians: They will know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Here is, 1. The privilege of believers; the Father self loveth them with a love resembling his love to his Son, for they are loved in him with an everlasting love. 2. The evidence of their interest in this privilege, and that is, their being one. By this it will appear that God loves us, if we love one another with a pure heart; for wherever the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, it will change it into the same image. See how much good it would do to the world, to know better how dear to God all good christians are! The Jews had a saying, If the world did but know the worth of good men, they would hodge them about with pearls. Those that have so much of God's love, should have more of our's.

24. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

25. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

26. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Here is,

I. A petition for the glorifying of all those that were given to Christ, (v. 24.) not only these apostles, but all believers; Father, I will that they may be with me. Observe,

The connection of this request with those foregoing. He had pray'd that God would preserve, sanctify, and unfit them; and now he prays that he would crown all his gifts with their glorification. In this method we must pray, first for grace, and then for gifts; Ps. 84. 10. Else this bittid God gives. Far be it from the only wise God to come under the imputation, either of that foolish builder, who, without a foundation, built upon the sand, as he would, if he should glory any whom he has
not first sanctified; or, of that foolish builder, who began to build, and was not able to finish, as he would, if he should sanctify any, and not glorify them.

2. The manner of the request; Father, I will. Here, as before, he addresses himself to God as a Father, and therein we must do likewise; but when he says I will, he speaks a language peculiar to himself, and such as does not become ordinary petitioners, but very well became him who paid for what he prayed for.

[1.] It speaks the authority of his intercession in great matters; for he was with power in heaven, as well as on earth. He entering with his own blood into the holy place, his intercession there has an uncontrollable efficacy. He intercedes as a king, for he is a priest upon his throne, (like Melchizedek,) a king-priest.

[2.] It speaks his particular authority in this matter; he had a power to give eternal life, (v. 2.) and, pursuant to that power, he says, Father, I will. Though now he took upon him the form of a servant, yet that power being to be most illustriously exerted when he shall come the second time in the glory of a judge, to say, Come, ye blessed, having that in his eye, he might well say, Father, I will.

3. The request itself—that all the elect might come to be with him in heaven at last, to see his glory, though he is now only seen in part, and by faith; not only in heaven, but in the places of his presence. (1.) Under what notion we are to hope for heaven, wherein does that happiness consist? Three things make heaven:

[1.] It is to be where Christ is; where I am; in the paradise, whither Christ's soul went at death; in the third heaven, whither his soul and body went at his ascension—where I am, am to be shortly, and to be eternally. In this world we are but in transitus—on our passage; there we truly are, where we are to be for ever; so Christ reckoned, and so must we.

[2.] It is to be with him where he is; this is no tautology, but intimates that we shall not only be in the same happy place where Christ is, but that the happiness of the place will consist in his presence, that is, the fulness of his joy. The very heaven of heavens is to be with Christ, when we shall be in company with him, and communion with him, Phil. 1. 23.

[3.] It is to behold his glory, which the Father has given him. Observe, First, The glory of the Redeemer is the brightness of heaven. That glory, before which angels cover their faces, was his glory, ch. 12. 41. The Lamb is the light of the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21. 23. Christ will come in the glory of his Father, for he is the brightness of his glory. God shows his glory there, as he does his grace here, through Christ. "The Father has given me this glory;" he was as yet in his low estate; but it was very sure, and very near.

Secondly, The felicity of the redeemed consists very much in the beholding of that glory; they will have the immediate view of his glorious person; I shall see God in my flesh, Job 19. 26, 27. They will have a clear insight into his glorious undertaking, as it will be then accomplished; they will see into those springs of love, from whence flow all the streams of grace; they shall have an appropriating sight of Christ's glory, (Oxer fulget radiis maris—The wife shines with the radiance of her husband,) and an assimilating sight; they shall be changed into the same image, in glory, to God, 2 Cor. 3. 18. (2.) Upon what ground we are to hope for heaven; no other than purely the mediation and intercession of Christ, because he hath said, Father, I will. Our sanctification is our evidence, for he that has this hope in him, purifies himself; but it is the will of Christ that is our title, by which will we are sanctified, Heb. 10. 10. Christ speaks here, as if he did not count his own happiness complete unless he had his elect to share with him in it, for it is he brings the many together, but makes the Captain of their salvation perfect, Heb. 2. 10.

4. The argument to back this request; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. This is a reason. (1.) Why he expected this glory himself; Thou wilt give it me, for thou lovedst me. The honour and power given to the Son as Mediator, were founded in the Father's love to him; (ch. 5. 30.) the Father presages his son, is infinitely well pleased in his undertaking, and therefore has given all things into his hand; and the matter being concerted in the divine counsels from eternity, it is said to love him as Mediator, before the foundation of the world. Or, (2.) Why he expected that those who were given him should be with him to share in his glory; "Thou lovedst me, and them in me, and canst deny nothing I ask for thee." The conclusion of the prayer, which is designed to enforce all the petitions for the disciples, especially the last, that they may be glorified.

Two things he insists upon, and pleads: 1. The respect he had to his Father, v. 25. Observe, (1.) The title he gives to God; Righteous Father. When he prayed that they might be sanctified, as being his people, he calls him holy Father; when he prays that they might be glorified, he calls him righteous Father; for it is a crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give. God's righteousness was engaged for the giving out of all that good which the Father had promised, and the Son had purchased.

(2.) The character he gives of the world that lay in wickedness; The world has not known thee. Note, Though God overspreads the world of mankind, this is the darkness they sit in. Now this is urged here, [1.] To shew that these disciples needed the aids of special grace, both because of the necessity of their work—they were to bring a world that knew not God to the knowledge of him; and also because of the difficulty of their work—they must bring light to those that rebelled against the light; therefore keep them. [2.] To shew that they were qualified for further peculiar favours, for they had that knowledge of God, which the world had not.

(3.) The plea he insists upon for himself; but I have known thee. Christ knew the Father so as no one else ever did; knew upon what grounds he went in his undertaking, knew his Father's mind in every thing, and therefore, in this prayer, came with him with confidence, as we do to one we know. Christ is here sung out blessings for those that were here his; pursuing this petition, when he had said, The world has not known thee, one would expect it should follow, but they have known thee; no, their knowledge was not to be boasted of; but I have known thee; which intimates that there is nothing in us to recommend us to God's interest in us, but all our communication and intercourse with him, result from, and depend upon, Christ's interest and intercourse. We are unworthy, but he is worthy.

[4.] The plea he insists upon for his disciples; and they have known that thou hast sent me; and, [1.] Hereby they are distinguished from the unbelieving world. When multitudes, to whom Christ was sent, and his grace offered, would not believe that God had sent him, and believed it, and were not ashamed to own it. Note, To know and believe in Jesus Christ, in the midst of a world that persists in ignorance and infidelity, is highly pleasing to God, and shall certainly be crowned with distinguishing glory. Singular faith qualifies for singular favours.
[2.] Hereby they are interested in the mediation of Christ, and partake of the benefit of his acquaintance with the Father; "I have known thee, immediately and perfectly; and those, though they have not so known thee, nor been capable of knowing thee, yet they have known that thou hast sent me, have known that which was required of them to know, have known the Creator in the Redeemer. Knowing Christ as sent of God, they have, in him, known the Father, and are introduced to an acquaintance with him; therefore, Father, look after them for my sake."

The respect he had to his disciples; (v. 26.) "I have declared unto them thy name. [1.] This he had done for those that were his immediate followers. All the time that he went in and out among them, he made it his business to declare his Father's name to them, and to beget in them a veneration for it. The tendency of all his sermons and miracles, was, to advance his Father's honour, and to spread the knowledge of him, ch. 1. 18. [2.] This he has done for all that believe on him; for they had not been brought to believe, if Christ had not made known to them the manner of his Father's name. Note, We are indebted to Christ for all the knowledge we have of the Father's name; he declares it, and he opens the understanding to receive that revelation. Secondly, Those whom Christ recommends to the favour of God, he first leads into an acquaintance with God.

[2.] What he intended to do yet further for them; I will declare it. To the disciples he designed to give further instructions after his resurrection, (Acts i. 3.) and to bring them into a much more intimate acquaintance with divine things, by the pouring out of the Spirit after his ascension; and to all believers, into whose hearts he hath shined, he shines more and more. Where Christ has declared his Father's name, he will declare it; for to him that hath shall be given; and they that know God, both need and desire to know more of him. This is fully pleaded for them: "Father, own and favour them, for they will own and honour thee." (3.) What he aimed at in all this; not to fill their heads with curious speculations, and furnish them with something to talk of among the learned, but to secure and advance their real happiness in two things:

[1.] Communion with God; "Therefore I have given them the knowledge of thy name, of all that whereby thou hast made thyself known, that thy love, even that whereby thou hast loved me, may be, not only toward them, but in them;" that is,

First, "Let them have the fruits of that love for their sanctification; let the Spirit of love, with which thou hast filled me, be in them." Christ declares his Father's name to believers, that with that divine light darted into their minds, a divine love may be shed abroad in their hearts, to be in them a commanding, constraining principle of holiness, that they may partake of a divine nature. When God's love to us comes to be in us, it is like the virtue which the leadstone gives the needle, inclining it to move toward the pole; it draws out the soul toward God, in pure and devout affections, which are as "the light of life, the very life of" believers (Ps. 18. 10.), "Let them have the taste and relish of that love for their consolation; let them not only be interested in the love of God, by having God's name declared to them, but, by a further declaration of it, let them have the comfort of that interest; that they may not only know God, but know that they know him." 1 John 2. 3. It is the love of God thus shed abroad in the heart, that fills it with joy, Rom. 5. 3, 5. This God has provided for, that we may not only be satisfied with his loving kindness, but be satisfied of it; and so may live a life of complacency in God, and communion with him; this we must pray for, this we must press after; if we have it, we must thank Christ for it; if we want it, we may thank ourselves.

[2.] Union with Christ in order hereunto; and in the Father also. There is no getting into the love of God but through Christ, nor can any person be in that love but by abiding in Christ, that is, having him to abide in us; nor can we have the sense and apprehension of that love but by our experience of the in-dwelling of Christ, that is, the Spirit of Christ in our hearts. It is Christ in us that is the only hope of glory, that will not make us ashamed, Col. 1. 27. All our communion with God, the reception of his love to us, and our return of love to him again, passes through the hands of the Lord Jesus, and the comfort of both is owing purely to him. Christ had said but a little before, I in them; (v. 23. and here it is repeated again, (though the sense was complete without it,) and the prayer closed with it, to show how much the heart of Christ was set upon it; all his petitions centre in this, and this the prayer of Jesus, the Son of David, are ended; "I in them; let me have this, and I desire no more. It is the glory of the Redeemer to dwell in the redeemed; it is his rest for ever, and he has desired it. Let us therefore make sure our union with Christ, and then take the comfort of his intercession. This prayer had an end, but that he ever lives to make.

CHAP. XVIII.

Hitherto this evangelist has recorded little of the history of Christ, only so far as was requisite to introduce his discourse; but now that the time drew nigh that Jesus must die, he is very particular in relating the circumstances of his sufferings, and some which the others had omitted, especially his sayings. So far were his followers from being ashamed of his cross, or endeavouring to conceal it, that this was it which, both by word and writing, they were most industrious to proclaim, and gloried in it. This chapter relates, I. How Christ was arrested in the garden, and surrendered himself a prisoner to the impeachment against him. II. How he was abused in the High-Priest's court, and how Peter, in the mean time, denied him, v. 18... 27. III. How he was prosecuted before Pilate, and examined by him, and put in election with Barabbas for the favour of the people, and lost it, v. 28... 40.

1. WHEN Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. 2. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: fo: Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples. 3. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the Chief Priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5. They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the
ground. 7. Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9. That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them whom thou gavest me I have lost none. 10. Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the High-Priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. 11. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? 12. Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him.

The hour was now come that the Captain of our salvation, who was to be made perfect by sufferings, should suffer. And he went through the darkness of the trance upon the encounter. The day of recompence is in his heart, and the year of his redemption is come, and his own arm works the salvation, for he has no second. Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight.

1. Our Lord Jesus, like a bold champion, takes the field first; (v. 1, 2.) When he had spoken these words, he was parted from his followers, and so finished his testimony, he would lose no time, but went forth immediately out of the house, out of the city, by moon-light, for the passover was observed at the full moon, with his disciples, (the eleven, for Judas was otherwise employed,) and he went over the brook Cedron, which runs between Jerusalem and the mount of Olives, where was a garden, not ofjt kinds, but some friend's, who allowed him the liberty of it. Observe,

1. That our Lord Jesus entered upon his sufferings when he had spoken these words, as Matt. 26. 1. When he had finished these sayings. Here it is intimated,

(1.) That our Lord Jesus took his work before him. The office of the priest was to teach, and pray, and offer sacrifice. Christ, after teaching and praying, appends himself to make atonement. Christ had said all he had to say as a prophet, and now he addresses himself to the discharge of his office as a priest, to make his soul an offering for sin; and when he had gone through that, he entered upon his kingly office.

(2.) That having by his sermon prepared his disciples for this hour of trial, and by his prayer prepared himself for it, he then courageously went out to meet it. When he had put on his armour, he entered the lists, and not till then. Let those that suffer according to the will of God, in a good cause, with a good conscience, and having a clear call to it, comfort themselves with this, that Christ will not engage those that are his in any conflict, but he will first do that for them which is necessary to prepare them for it; and if we receive Christ's instructions and comforts, and he interested in his intercession, we may go up under what temptation we venture through the greatest hardships in the way of duty.

2. That he went forth with his disciples. Judas knew what house he was in, in the city, and he could have said and met his sufferings there; but,

(1.) He would do as he was wont to do, and not after his method, either to meet the cross or to miss it, when his hour was come. It was his custom when he was at Jerusalem, after he had spent the day in public work, to retire at night to the mount of Olives; there his quarters were, in the skirts of the city, for they would not make room for him in the palaces, in the heart of the town. This being his custom, he would not be put out of his method by the foresight of his sufferings, but, as Daniel, did then just as he did aforetime. Dan. 6. 10.

(2.) He was as unwilling that there should be an uproar among the people, as his enemies were, for that was not his design. It was seen in the city, and a tumult raised thereby, even chief might have been done, and a deal of blood shed, and therefore he withdrew. Note, When we find ourselves involved in trouble, we should be afraid of involving others with us. It is no disgrace to the followers of Christ to fall tamely. They who aim at honour from men, value themselves upon a reputation to the world. In this they do not suffer, but they who know that their blood is precious to God, and that not a drop of it shall be shed but upon a valuable consideration, need not stand upon such terms.

(3.) He would set us an example in the beginning of his passion, as he did at the end of it, of retirement from the world. Let us go forth to him without the camp, and bear his reproach. Heb. 13. 13. We must lay aside, and leave behind, the controversies, and cares, and comforts, of cities, even holy cities, if we would cheerfully take up our cross, and keep up our communion with God therein.

3. That he went over the brook Cedron; he must go over that to go to the mount of Olives; but the notice taken of it intimates that there was something in it significant; and it points, (1.) At David's prophecy concerning the Messiah, (Ps. 110. 4.) That he shall drink of the brook in the way; the brook of suffering in the way to his glory and our salvation, signified by the brook of Cedron; the black brook, so called, either from the darkness of the valley it ran through, or the colour of the water, tainted with the dirt of the city; such a brook Christ drank of, when it lay in the way of our redemption, and therefore shall he lift up the head, his own and our's. (2.) At David's pattern, as a type of the Messiah. In his flight from Absalom, particular notice is taken of his passing over the brook Cedron, and going up by the ascent of mount Olivet, weeping; and all that were with him in tears too. 2 Sam. 13. 23, 30. The Son of David, being driven out by the rebellious Jews, who would not have him to reign over them, (and Judas, like Ahabophel, being in the plot against him,) he passed over the brook in meanness and humiliation, attended by a company of true mourners. The godly kings of Judah had burnt and destroyed the idols they found at the brook Cedron; (Asa, 2 Chron. 15. 16. Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 30. 14. Josiah, 2 Kings 23. 4, 6.) into that brook the abominable things were cast. Christ, being now made sin for us, that he might be dealt with, and take it away, began his passion by the same brook. Mount Olivet, where Christ began his sufferings, lay on the east side of Jerusalem; mount Calvary, where he finished them, on the west; for in them he had an eye to such as should come from the east and the west.

4. That he entered into a garden. This circumstance is taken notice of only by this evangelist, that Christ's suff'ers may stay to serve or cry. It had been the garden of Eden sin began, there the curse was pronounced, there the Redeemer was promised, and therefore in a garden that promised seed entered the lists with the old serpent. Christ was buried also in a garden. (1.) Let us, when we walk in our gardens, take occasion from thence to meditate on Christ's sufferings in a garden, to which we owe all the pleasure we have in our gardens, for by them the curse upon the ground for man's sake was removed. (2.) When we are in the midst of our possessions and enjoyments, we must keep up an expecta
tion of troubles, for our gardens of delight are in a vale of tears.

5. That he had his disciples with him, (1.) Because he was not seeing them with him when he retired for prayer. (2.) They must be witnesses of his sufferings, and his patience under them, that they might with the more assurance and affection preach them to the world, (Luke 24. 48.) and be prepared to suffer themselves. (3.) He would take them into the danger to shew them their weakness, notwithstanding the promises they had made already. Christ sometimes puts himself into difficulties, that he may magnify himself in their deliverance.

6. That Judas the traitor knew the place, knew it to be the place of his usual retirement, and, probably, by some word Christ had dropped, knew that he intended to be there that night, for want of a better closet. A solitary garden is a proper place for meditation and prayer, and, after a passover, a proper time to retire for private devotion, that we may pray over the impressions made, and the vows renewed, and cleanse the nail.

Mention is made of Judas’s knowing the place,
(1.) To aggravate the sin of Judas, that he would betray his Master, notwithstanding the intimate acquaintance he had with him; nay, and that he would not act it discriminatorily, as this would give him an opportunity of betraying him; a generous mind would have scorned to do so base a thing! Thus has Christ’s holy religion been wounded in the house of its friends, so as it could not have been wounded anywhere else. Many an apostate could not have been so profane as he is, if he had not been a professor; could not have ridiculed scriptures and ordinances, if he had not known them.

(2.) To magnify the love of Christ, that, though he knew where the traitor would seek him, thither he went to be found of him, now that he knew his hour was come. Thus he shews himself willing to suffer and die for us. What he did was not by constraint, but by consent; though as man he said, Let this cup pass away; as Mediator he said, “Lo, I come! I come with a good will.” It was late in the night, (we may suppose it eight or nine o’clock,) when Christ went out to the garden; for it was not only his meat and drink, but his rest and sleep, to do the will of him that sent him. When others were going to bed, he was going to prayer, going to suffer.

11. The Captain of our salvation having taken the field, the enemy presently comes upon the spot, and a furious battle is joined, under the direction and command, commissioned by the chief priests, especially those among them that were Pharisees, who were the most bitter enemies to Christ. This evangelist passes over Christ’s agony, because the other three had fully related it, and presently introduces Judas and his company that came to seize him. Observe,

1. The persons employed in this action—a band of men, or band of soldiers. (1.) Here is a multitude engaged against Christ—a band of men, or (2.) A number of men; a regiment, a Roman band, which some think was five hundred men, others a thousand. Christ’s friends were few, his enemies many. Let us therefore not follow a multitude to do evil, nor fear a multitude designing evil to us, that we may be for us.

(2.) His band consisted of Gentiles, Roman soldiers; a detachment out of the guards that were posted in the tower of Antonia, to be a curb upon the city; the officers of the chief priests, either their domestic servants, or the officers of their courts, were Jews; these had an enmity to each other, but were united against Christ, who came to reconcile both to God in one body.

(3.) It is a commissioned multitude, not a popular tumult; no, they have received orders from the chief priests, upon whose suggestions to the governor that this Jesus was a dangerous man, it is likely, they had a warrant from him to take him up, for they feared the people. See what enemies Christ and his gospel have. They are likely to have, numerous and potent, and therefore formidable: ecclesiastical and civil powers combined against them, Ps. 2. 1, 2. Christ said it would be so, (Matt. 10. 18.) and found it so.

(4.) All under the direction of Judas; he received this band of men, it is probable that he desired it, telling them to come as the first was, to send a good force, and being as ambitious of the honour of commanding in chief in this expedition, as he was covetous of the wages of this unrighteousness. He thought himself bravely preferred from coming in the rear of the contemptible twelve, to be placed at the head of these formidable hundreds; he never made such a figure before, and promised himself, perhaps, that this should not be the last time, but he should be rewarded with a captain’s commission, or better, if he succeeded well in this enterprise.

2. The preparation they had made for an attack; they came with lanterns, and torches, and weapons.
(1.) If he should abscond, though they had moonlight, they would have occasion for their lights; but they might have spared these; the second Adam was not driven to send a light, as the first was, to send figures, either for fear or shame, among the trees of the garden. It was folly to light a candle, to seek the sun by.

(2.) If he should resist, they would have occasion for their arms; the weapons of his warfare were spiritual, and at those weapons he had often beaten them, and put them to silence, and therefore they have now recourse to other weapons, swords and staves.

III. Our Lord Jesus gloriously repulsed the first onset of the enemy, v. 4—6. Where observe,
1. How he received them, with all the mildness imaginable toward them, and all the calmness imaginable in himself.

(1.) He met them with a very soft and mild question; (v. 4.) Knowing all things that should come upon him, and therefore not at all surprised with this alarm, with a wonderful intrepidity and presence of mind, undisturbed and undaunted, he went forth to meet them, and, as if he had been unconcerned, softly asked, “Whom seek ye? What is the matter? What means this bustle at this time of night?” See here, [1.] Christ’s foresight of his sufferings; he knew all those things that should come upon him, for he had obliged himself to suffer them; unless we had strength, as Christ had, to bear the discovery, we should not covet to know what shall come upon us; it would but anticipate our pain; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; yet it will do us good to expect sufferings in general, so that when they come, we may say, “It is but what we looked for, the cost we sat down and counted upon.” [2.] Christ’s willingness to suffer; he did not run away from them, but went out to meet them, and reached forth his hand to take the bitter cup. When the people would have forced him to a crown, and offered to make him a king of Galilee, he withdrew, and hid himself; (ch. 6. 15.) but when they came to force him to a cross, he offered himself; for he came to this world to suffer, and went to the cross to redeem. This was his patience, purposely to expose ourselves to trouble, for we know not what our hour is come; but we are called to suffering, when we have no way to avoid it, but by sin; and when it comes to that, let none of these things move us, for they cannot hurt us.

(2.) He met them with a very calm and mild answer, when they told him whom they were in quest of, v. 5. “They said, Jesus of Nazareth; and he said, I am he.”

[1.] It should seem, their eyes were held, that they
could not know him. It is highly probable that many of
the Roman band, at least the officers of the temple, had
ever seen him, so as to satisfy their curiosity; Judas,
evertheless, to be sure, knew him well enough, and
yet none of them could pretend to say, Thou art the
man we seek. Thus he shewed them the folly of
bringing lights to see for them, for he could make
them not to know him, when they saw him; he has
herself showed us how easily he can infatuate the
counsels of his enemies, and make them lose them-
selves, when they are seeking mischief.
[2.] In their enquiries for him they called him Jesus
of Nazareth, which was the only title they knew him by;
and, probably, he was so called in their warrant.
It was a name of reproach given him, to darken the
mind of the world against him. It appears that they
knew him not, whence he was; for if they had known, surely they would not have per-
suaded him.
[3.] He fairly answers them, I am he. He did
not improve the advantage he had against them by
their blindness, as Elisha did against the Syrians, 
telling them, This is not the way, neither is this the
city;—but improved his answer so as to excite his
willingness to suffer. Though they called him Jesus
of Nazareth, he answered to the name, for he despised the reproach; he might have said, I am not
he, for he was Jesus of Bethlehem; but he would
by no means allow equivocations. He has hereby
taught us to own him, whatever it cost us; not to be
ashamed of him or his words; but even in difficult
times, to confess Christ unfeignedly, and manfully to
fight the battle of his banner. Jesus of Nazareth
is the glorious name of the blessed God, (Exod. 3.
14.) and the honour of that name is justly challenged
by the blessed Jesus.
[4.] Particular notice is taken, in a parenthesis,
that Judas stood with them. He that used to stand
with them followed Christ, now stood with those
that fought against him. This describes an apostate;
he is one that changes sides, he herbs himself with
those with whom his heart always was, and with
whom he shall have his lot in the judgment-day.
This is mentioned, First, To shew the impudence of
Judas. One would wonder where he got the confi-
dence with which he now faced his master, and was
not ashamed, neither could he blush; Satan in his
heart gave him a where's face-head. Secondly, To
shew that Judas was particularly hindered, at a time
when all others were shown plainly and he
stood back, to follow the aggressors; it was an arrow levelled at
the traitor's conscience, and pierced him to
the quick; for Christ's coming and his voice will be more
terrible to apostates and betrayers than to sinners of
any other class.
2. See how he terrified them, and obliged them to
retire; (v. 6.) They went backward, and, like men
under struck, fell to the ground. It should seem
they did not fall forward, as humbling themselves
before him, and yielding to him, but backward, as
standing it out to the utmost. Thus Christ was de-
cided to be more than a man, even then when he was
trumped upon as a worm, and no man. This
word, I am he, had revived his disciples, and raised
them up; (Matt. 14. 27.) but the same word strikes his
enemies dead, and makes them all show plainly; (v.
7.) When he could have done with them; when he
struck them down, he could have struck them dead;
when he spake to them to ground, he could have
spoke them to hell, and have sent them, like Korah's
companions, the next way thither; but he would not
do so. [1.] Because the hour of his suffering was
come, and he would not put it by; he would only
show that his life was not forced from him, but
laid it down of himself, as he had said. [2.] Because
he would give an instance of his patience and his compassion
ate love to his very enemies. In striking them down, and no more, he gave them both a call to repent, and
space to repent; but their hearts were hardened, and
all was in vain. (2.) What he will do at last with all his implacable
enemies, that will not repent to give him glory;
they shall flee, they shall fall before him. Now the
temporal judgment, verses 18, 19. How he will
make them turn their back, and fall 20. 8. And
it will be accomplished more and more; with the breath
of his mouth he will slay the wicked, 2 Thess. 2.
8. Rev. 19. 21. Quod judicatorius facet, qui judicandus
hoc facit.—What will he do when he shall come to
judge, seeing he did this when he came to be judged? Anselm.
3. Having given his enemies a repulse, he gives his friends a protection, and that by his word too, v.
7—9. where we may observe.
1. How he continued to expose himself to their rage, v. 7. They did not lie long where they fell, but,
by divine permission, got up again; it is only in
the other world that God's judgments are everlasting.
When they were down, one would have thought Christ stern, and have made him stop; when they
were up again, one would have thought they should
have let fall their pursuit; but we still find, (1.)
They are as eager as ever to seize. It is in
some confusion and disorder that they recover them-
selves, they cannot imagine what ailed them that
they could not keep their ground, but will impute it to
any thing rather than Christ's power. Note, There
are hearts so very hard in sin, that nothing will
be upon them that he may take with them. He is as
willing as ever to seize. When they were
fallen before him, he did not insult over them, but,
seeing them at a loss, asked them the same
question, Whom seek ye? And they gave him the
same answer, Jesus of Nazareth. In his repeating
the question, he seems to come yet closer to their
consciences; • Do ye not know whom ye seek? Are
ye not aware that ye are in an error, and will ye
muddle with your match? Have ye not had enough
of it, but will ye try the other struggle? Did ever any
harden his heart against God and prosper?" In
their repeating the same answer, they showed an
obstinacy in their wicked way; they still called him
Jesus of Nazareth, with as much disdain as ever,
and Judas as unrelenting as any of them. Let us
therefore fear to commit steps at first in a
similar way, our hearts be hardened.
2. How he contrived to secure his disciples from
their rage. He improved this advantage against
them for the protection of his followers; when he
shews his courage with reference to himself, I have
told you that I am he, he shews his care for his
disciples, Let these go their way. He speaks this as
a command to them, rather than a contract with
them, for they lay at his mercy, not he at their's.
He charges them therefore as one having authority;
"Let these go their way; it is at your peril if ye
muddle with them." This aggravated the sin of the
disciples in forsaking him, and particularly Peter's
denying him, that Christ had given them this pass,
or warrant of protection, and yet they had not faith
and courage enough to rely upon that, but let them
become to such base and sorry shifts for their
security. When Christ said, Let these go their way, he intended,
(1.) To manifest his affectionate concern for his disciples; when he exposed himself, he excused them,
because they were not as yet fit to suffer; their faith was weak, and their spirits low, and it would
have been as much as their souls, and the lives of
thousands of his followers, were worth, to bring them into such
sufferings now. New wine must not be put into old bottles.
And besides, they had other work to do; they must go
their way, for they are to go into all the world, to

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preach the gospel; *Destroy them not, for a blessing is in them.* Now herein, [1.] Christ gives us a great comfort to say him; for though he has allotted us sufferings, yet he considers our frame, will wisely time the cross, and proportion it to our strength, and will deliver the guilty out of temptation, either from it, or through it. [2.] He gives us a good example of love to our brethren and concern for their welfare. We must not consult our own ease and safety only, but others' as well as our own, and in some cases more than our own. There is a generous and heroic love, which will enable us to *lay down our lives for the brethren,* 1 John 3. 16.

(2.) He intended to give a specimen of his undertaking as Mediator. When he offered himself to suffer and die, it was that we might escape. He was our *sacrifice:—a sacrifice in our stead,* when he said, *Lo, I come, to take away the sins of the world.* He that would not have *the word* for the word of their country, and *the word* which *gave me, I have lost none.* Christ, by fulfilling that word in this particular, gave an assurance that it should be accomplished in the full extent of it, not only for them that were now with him, but for *all* that believed in him, through the word, *in the way* of the word. Though Christ's keeping of them was meant especially of the preservation of their souls from sin and apostasy, yet it is here applied to the preservation of their natural lives, and very fitly, for even the body was a part of Christ's charge and care; *he is to raise it up at the last day,* and *therefore to preserve that as well as the spirit and soul,* 1 Thess. 5. 23. 2 Tim. 4. 18. Christ will preserve his natural life for the service to which it is designed; *it is given him to be used for him,* and he will not lose the service of it, but will be magnified in it, *whether life or death;* it shall be held in life as long as any use is to be made of it. Christ's witnesses shall not die till they have given their evidence. But that is not all; *this preservation of the disciples was in the tendency of it,* a spiritual preservation; they were now so weak in faith and resolution, that, in all probability, if they had been called out to suffer at this time, they would have shamed themselves and their Master, and some of them, at least the weaker of them, would have been lost; and therefore, that he might *lose none, he would not expose them.* The safety and preservation of the saints is owing, not only to this divine grace in proportioning the strength to the trial, but *the providence in proportioning the trial to the strength.*

V. Having provided for the safety of his disciples, he rebukes the rashness of one of them, and reproves the violence of his persecutors, ver. 10, 11, where we have,

1. Peter's rashness. He had a sword; *it is not likely that he wore one constantly as a gentleman,* but they had two swords among them all. (Luke 22. 38.) and Peter was intrusted with one, and he drew it, for now, if ever, he thought it was his time to use it, and he smote one of the High-Priest's servants, who, it is likely, was one of the forerunners, and aiming, it is likely, to cleave him down the head, missed his blow, and only cut off his right ear. The servant's name is not given, as we may gather certainty of the narrative, is recorded; it was Malchus, or Malchuth, Neh. 10. 4.

(1.) We must here acknowledge Peter's good will; he had an honest zeal for his Master, though now misguided; he had lately promised to venture his life for him, and would now make his words good. Probably, it exaggerated Peter to see Judas at that rate of his gang; his baseness excited Peter's boldness, and though he did draw his sword, he did not aim at his head.

(2.) Yet we must acknowledge Peter's ill conduct; and though his good intention did excuse, yet it would not justify him. [1.] He had no warrant from his Master for what he did. Christ never commanded his disciples to *wait the word of command,* and not cut out—run it; before they expose themselves to sufferings, *they must see to it,* not only that their cause be good, but their call clear. [2.] He transgressed the duty of his place, and *rejected the powers that were,* which Christ had never countenanced, but forbidden, under the pretense of his followers' *wonder* for his *healing* to *follow him,* as a *beast of burden.* [3.] He exposed his Master's suffering, and, notwithstanding the rebuke he had for it once, is ready to repeat, Master, *spare thyself;* *suffering be far from thee:* though Christ had told him that he must and would suffer, and that his hour was now come; thus, when he seemed to fight for Christ, he fought against him. [4.] He broke the capitulation his master had lately made with the Romans. *Let us go our way,* he not only indicted for their safety, but in effect *passed his word for their good behaviour,* that they should *go away peaceably;* this Peter heard, and yet would not be bound by. As we may be guilty of a sinful cowardice when we are called to appear, so we may be of a shiffl forwardness when we are called to retire. [5.] He foolishly revealed the providence of his master; if he had not counseled himself, out of this eraged multitude; if he had cut off Malchus's head when he cut off his ear, we may suppose the soldiers would have fallen upon all the disciples, and have hewed them to pieces, and would have represented Christ as no better than Barabbas. Thus many have been guilty of self-destruction, in their zeal for self-preservation. [6.] Peter played the coward so soon after this, (denying his Master,) that we have reason to think that he would not have done this, but that he saw his Master cause them to *fall on the ground,* and then he could deal with them; but when he saw him surrender himself notwithstanding, his courage failed him then; whereas the trueChristian hero will appear in the cause of Christ, not only when it is prevailing, but when it seems to be declining; will be on the right side, though it be not the rising side.

(3.) We must acknowledge God's over-ruling providence in directing the stroke, (so that it should do no more execution, but only cut off his ear, which was rather marking him than maiming him,) as also in giving Christ an opportunity to manifest his power and goodness in healing the hurt, Luke 22. 51. Thus what was in danger of turning to Christ's reproach was now turned to the flourishing of his occasions of much honour, even among his adversaries.

2. The rebuke his Master gave him; (v. 11.) *Put up thy sword into the sheath,* or scabbard; it is a gentle reproof, because it was his zeal that carried him beyond the bounds of discretion; he did not aggravate the matter, only bid him do so no more. Many think, when they are in grief and distress, it is not the cross, if they could but grieve about it; but Christ has here set us an example of meekness in sufferings. Peter must put up his sword, for it was the sword of the Spirit that was to be committed to him; *weapons of warfare not carnal, yet mighty.* When Christ with a word felled the aggressors, he showed Peter how he should be armed, with a sword, *quick and powerful,* and exposed them to be hit and hasty with those about them; but Christ has here set us an example of much to his honour, even among his adversaries.

3. The reason for this rebuke; The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it? Matthew relates another reason which Christ gave for this rebuke, but John preserves this, which he had omitted; in which Christ gives us,

(1.) A full proof of his own submission to his Father's will. Of all that was amiss in what Peter did, he seems to resent nothing so much as that he would
have hindered his sufferings now that his hour was come: "What, Peter, wilt thou step in between the cup and the life? Get thee hence, Satan." If Christ be determined to suffer and die, it is presumption for Peter in word or deed to oppose it: Shall I not drink it? The manner of expression speaks a settled resolution, and that he would not have the contrary thought to the contrary. He was willing to drink of this cup, though it was a bitter cup, an infusion of the wormwood and the gall, the cup of trembling, a bloody cup, the dregs of the cup of the Lord's wrath, Isa. 51. 22. He drank it, that he might put into our hands the cup of salvation, the cup of consolation, the cup of blessing; and therefore he is willing to drink it, because his Father put it into his hand. If his Father will have it so, it is for the best, and be it so.

(2.) A fair pattern to us of submission to God's will in every thing that concerns us. We must pledge Christ in the cup that he drank of, (Matt. 20. 23.) and must argue ourselves into a compliance. [1.] It is but a cup; a small matter comparatively, be it what it will. It is not a sea, a red sea, for it is not hell; it is light, and but for a moment. [2.] It is a cup that is given us; sufferings are gifts. [3.] It is given us by a Father, who has a Father's authority, and does us no wrong; a Father's affection, and means us no hurt.

VI. Having entirely reconciled himself to the dispensation, he calmly surrendered, and yielded himself. 

v. 1. Then the chief priests and the elders and the scribes met together; and they took counsel what they might do to Jesus: for they feared the people. This was very contrary to the conduct of the counsel before. They had thought that he was the murderer of the people, and that he was a seducer of the people to evil, and the destroyer of the temple, etc. But they find, on the contrary, that he has done all this for the people, and that he does not satisfy their principles, though it be contrary to their will, or to their pleasure. This is most like the conduct of a Father, who has a Father's authority, and means us no hurt. For mothers have a mother's authority, and mean us no hurt. When mothers do not like what we do, we have a right to say, It is but a cup; a small matter comparatively, be it what it will. It is not a sea, a red sea, for it is not hell; it is light, and but for a moment. It is a cup that is given us; sufferings are gifts. It is given us by a Father, who has a Father's authority, and does us no wrong; a Father's affection, and means us no hurt.

v. 2. Now what is the particular of his sufferings? This particular of his sufferings is taken notice of by this evangelical, that, as soon as he was taken, he was bound, pinioned, handruffled; tradition says, "They bound him with such cruelty, that the blood started out at his fingers' ends; and having bound his hands behind him, they clapped an iron chain about his neck, and with that dragged him along." See Gerhard. Harm. cap. 5.

(1.) This speaks the spite of his persecutors. They bound him. [1.] That they might torment him, and put him in pain, as they bound Samson to afflict him. [2.] That they might disgrace him, and make him a laughing-stock to the Pharisees, and to the public, and to the world. Christ, though free-born, [3.] That they might prevent his escape, Judas having hidden them hold him fast. See their folly, that they should think to fetter that power which had but just now proved itself omnipotent! [4.] They bound him as one already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [5.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [6.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [7.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [8.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [9.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [10.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound. [11.] They bound him, as a man already condemned, for they were resolved to prosecute him to the death, and that he should die as a malefactor, with his hands bound.

(2.) Christ's being bound was very significant; in this, as in other things, there was a mystery. [1.] Before they bound him, he had bound himself by his own undertaking to do the work and office of a Mediator; he was already bound to the horns of the altar, with cords of his own love to man, and duty to his Father, else their cords would not have held him. [2.] We were bound with the cords of our magnificences, (Prov. 5. 22.) with the yoke of our transgressions, Lam. 1. 14. Guilt is a bond on the soul, by which we are bound over to the judgment of God; corruption is a bond on the soul, by which we are bound under the power of Satan. Christ, being made sin for us, to free us from these bonds, himself submitted to be bound for us, else his bonds would be no bond hand and foot, and reserved in chains of darkness. To his bonds we owe our liberty, his confinement was our enlargement; thus the Son maketh us free. [3.] The types and prophecies of the Old Testament were herein accomplished; Isaac was bound, that he might be sacrificed; Joseph was bound, and the iron entered into his soul, in order to his being brought from prison to reign, Ps. 105. 18. Samson was bound in order to his slaying more of the Philistines at his death than he had done in his life. And the Messiah was prophesied of as a prisoner, Isa. 53. 8. [4.] Christ was bound, that he might bind us to duty and obedience. His bonds for us are bonds upon us, by which we are ever obliged to love him, and serve him. Paul's salvation to his friends, is Christ's love unto our bonds, (Col. 4. 18.) remember them as bonds with him from all sin, and to all duty. [5.] Christ's bonds for us were designed to make our bonds for him easy to us, if at any time we be so called out to suffer for him, to sanctify and sweeten them, and put honour upon them; these enabled Paul and Silas to sing in the stocks, and Ignatius to call his bonds for Christ spiritual bonds. Eph. 3d p. 21.

13. And led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the High-Priest that same year. 14. Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people. 15. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the High-Priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the High-Priest. 16. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the High-Priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. 17. Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. 18. And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves, and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself. 19. The High-Priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. 20. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whether the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. 21. Why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me, what I
have said unto them: behold, they know what I said. 22. And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the High-Priest so? 23. Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me? 24. Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the High-Priest. 25. And Simon Peter stood and warded himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. 26. One of the servants of the High-Priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? 27. Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.

We have here an account of Christ's arraignment before the High-Priest, and some passages that occurred therein, which were omitted by the other evangelists; Peter's denying of him, which the other evangelists had given the story of entire by itself, is interwoven with the other passages. The crime laid to his charge, having relation to religion, the judges of the spiritual court took it to fall directly under their cognizance; both Jews and Gentiles seized him, and so both Jews and Gentiles tried and condemned him, for he died for the sins of both. Let us go over the story in order.

1. Having seized him, they led him away to Annas first, before they brought him to the court, that was sat, expecting him, in the house of Caiaphas, v. 13.

1. They led him away, led him in triumph, as a trophy of their victory; led him as a lamb to the slaughter, and they led him through the sheep-gate, spoken of Neh. 3. 1. For through that they went from the mount of Olives into Jerusalem. They hurried him away with violence, as if he had been the worst and vilest of malefactors. We had been led away of our own impetuous lust, and led captive by Satan at his will, and, that we might be rescued, Christ was led captive by Satan's agents and instruments.

2. They led him away to their masters that sent them; it was now about midnight, and one would think they should have put him in ward, (Lев. 24. 12.) should have led him to some prison, till it was a proper time to call a court; but he is hurried away immediately, not to the justices of peace, to be certified by them of his crime, but to be condemned, not only by the judges, but to be condemned, as some third; so extremely violent was the prosecution, partly because they feared a rescue, which they would thus not only leave no time for, but give a terror to; partly because they greedily thirsted after Christ's blood, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.

3. They led him to Annas first; probably, his house lay in the way, and was convenient for them to refresh themselves, and, as some third, to be paid for their service. I suppose Annas was old and infirm, and could not be present in council with the rest at that time of night, and yet earnestly desired to see the prey. To gratify him therefore with the assurance of their success, that the old man might sleep the better, and to receive his blessing for it, they produce their prisoner before him. It is said to see them that are old and sickly, when they cannot commit sin as formerly, taking pleasure in them that do. Dr. Lightfoot thinks Annas was not present, because he was to attend early that morning in the temple, and fasting the Passover day to be offered, whether they were without blemish: if so, there was a significance in it, that Christ, the great Sacrifice, was presented to him, and sent away bound, as approved and ready for the altar.

4. This Annas was father-in-law to Caiaphas the High-Priest; this kindred by marriage between them, could not be reckoned a matter of evil, ordering that this piece of respect should be done to Annas, to favour him with the first sight of the prisoner; or why Annas was willing to countenance Caiaphas in a matter his heart was so much upon. Note, Acquaintance and alliance with wicked people are a great confirmation to many in their wicked ways.

1. Annas did not long detain them, being as willing as any of them to have the prosecution pushed on, and therefore sent him bound to Caiaphas to his house, which was appointed for the rendezvous of the Sanhedrim upon this occasion; or to the usual place in the temple, where the High-Priest kept his court; this is mentioned, v. 24. But our translators intimate in the margin, that it should come in here, and, accordingly, read it there, Annas had sent him.

1. The power of Caiaphas intimated; (v. 13.) He was High-Priest that same year. The High-Priest's commission was during life; but there were now such frequent changes by the simoniacal arts of aspiring men with the government, that it was become almost an annual office, a presage of its final period approaching; while they were holding one another, and was overturning all them, that he might come, whose right it was. Caiaphas was High-Priest that same year when Messiah was to be cut off; which intimates, (1.) That when a bad thing was to be done by a High-Priest, according to the fore-knowledge of God, Providence so ordered it, that a bad man should be in the chair to do it. (2.) That, when God would make it to appear what corruption there was in the heart of a bad man, he put him into a place of power, where he had temptation and opportunity to exert it. It was the ruin of Caiaphas, that he was High-Priest that year, and so became a ringleader in the putting of Christ to death. Many a man's advancement has lost him his reputation, and he had not been dishonoured if he had not been preferred.

2. The office of Caiaphas, which is intimated, (v. 14.) by the repeating of what he had said some time before, that, right or wrong, guilty or innocent, it was expedient that one man should die for the people: which refers to the story, ch. 11. 50. This comes in here, to shew, (1.) What a bad man he was; this was that Caiaphas that governed himself and the church by rules of policy, in defiance of the rules of equity, (2.) What ill usage Christ was likely to meet with in his court, when his case was adjudged before he was heard, and they were already resolved what to do with him; he must die; so that his trial was a jest. Thus the enemies of Christ's gospel are resolved, true or false, to run it down. (3.) It is a testimony to the innocence of our Lord Jesus, from the mouth of one of his worst enemies, who owned that he fell a sacrifice to public good and that it was not just he should die, but expedient only.

3. The concurrence of Annas in the prosecution of Christ. He made himself a partner in guilt, (1.) With the captain and officers, that without law or mercy had bound him; for he approved it by continuing him bound, when he should have leaved him, he not being convicted of any crime, in hoping attempting an escape. If we do not what we can, to undo what others have ill done, we are accessi-
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Now, [1.] This other disciple, whoever he was, shewed a respect to Peter, in introducing him, not only to grapple with the Master's curiosity and affection, but to give him an opportunity of being serviceable to his Master upon his trial, if there were occasion. Those that have a real kindness for Christ and his ways, though their temper may be reserved, and their circumstances lead them to be cautious and retired, yet, if their faith be sincere, they will discover, when they are called to it, which is their inclination, by his service and profession. They care nothing good turn. Peter perhaps had formerly introduced this disciple into conversation with Christ, and now he requires his kindness, and is not ashamed to own him, though, it should seem, he had at this time but a poor downcast appearance.

[2.] But this kindness proved no kindness, nay a great disadvantagement; by letting him into the High-Priest's hall, he let him into temptation, and the consequence was bad. Note, The courtesy of our friends often prove a snare to us, through a mis-guided affection.

2. Peter, being got in, was immediately assaulted with the temptation, and foiled by it, v. 17. Observe here, (1.) How slight the attack was. It was a silly maid, of so small account, that she was only able to keep Christ. He could have withstood this 
main's disciples? Probably, suspecting it by his sheeplike look, and coming in timorously. We should many a time better maintain a good cause, if we had a good heart on it, and could put a good face on it. Peter had had some reason to take the alarm, if Malchus had set upon him, and had said, This is he that cut off my ear, and I will have his head for it;" but when a maid only asked him, Art not thou one of them? he might without danger have answered, And what if I am? Suppose the servants had ridiculed him, and insulted over him, upon it, those can bear but little for Christ, that cannot bear that; that is but running with the footmen.

(2.) How speedy the surrender was; without taking time to recollect himself, he suddenly answered, I am not. If he had had the boldness of the lion, he would have said, "It is my honour that I am so;" or if he had had the wisdom of the serpent, he would have kept silence at this time, for it was an evil time. But all his care being for his own safety, he thought he could not secure that but by a peremptory denial, I am not; he not only denies it, but even fluddles it, and scars its words, lest he should.

(3.) Yet he goes further into the temptation; v. 18. And the servants and officers stood there, and Peter with them.

[1.] See how the servants made much of themselves; the night being cold, they made a fire in the hall, not for their masters, (they were so eager in persecuting Christ, that they forgot cold,) but for themselves to warm them, and what became of Christ, all their care was to sit and warm themselves, Amos 6. 6.

[2.] See how Peter herded himself with them, and made one among them. He sat and warmed himself.

First, It was a fault had enough, that he did not attend his Master, and appear for him at the upper end of the hall, where he was. It was a fault, because he was a witness for him, and have confronted the false witnesses that swore against him, if his Master had called him; however, he might have been a witness to him, might have taken an exact notice of what passed, that he might relate it to the other disciples, who could none of them get in to hear the trial; he might have learned by his Master's example how to carry himself when it should come to his turn to suffer thus:
yet neither his conscience nor his curiosity could bring him into the court, but he sits by, as, if like Galileo, he cared for none of these things. And yet at the same time we have reason to think his heart was as full of grief and concern as it could hold, but he had no courage to own it. *Lord, lead us not into temptation.*

Secondly, It was much worse, that he joined himself with those that were his Master’s enemies; *he stood with them,* and *warned himself;* that was a poor excuse for joining with them. A little thing will draw those into bad company, that will be drawn to it by the love of a good price. If Peter’s zeal for his Master had not frozen, but had continued in the heat it seemed to be of but a few hours before, he had not had occasion to wound himself now. Peter was much to be blamed.

1. Because he *associated himself* with these wicked men, and kept company with them. Doubtless, they were diverting themselves with this night’s expedition, scoffing at Christ, at what he had said, at what he had done, and triumphing in their victory over him; and what sort of entertainment would this give to Peter? If he said as they said, or by silence gave consent, he involved himself in sin; if not, he exposed himself to danger. If Peter had not so much courage as to appear publicly for his Master, yet he might have had so much devotion as to retire into a corner, and weep in secret, if his Master’s sufferings were for forsaking him; if he could not have done good, he might have kept out of the way of doing hurt. It is better to abscond than appear to no purpose, or bad purpose.

2. Because he desired to be thought *one of them,* that he might not be suspected to be a disciple of Christ. *Is this Peter? What a contradiction is this to the prayer of every good man, Gather not my soul among sinners.* Yet the *practise* of the *prophets* is not so absurd as David among the Philistines. They that deprecate the lot of the scornful hereafter, should dread the *seat of the scornful* now. It is ill warming ourselves with those with whom we are in danger of burning ourselves, Ps. 141. 4.

IV. Peter, Christ’s friend, having began to deny him, the High-Priest, his enemy, begins to accuse him. *Why tell you of me this thing?* He had told him to deny him, v. 19-21. It should seem, the first attempt was to prove him a seducer, and a teacher of false doctrine, which this evangelist relates; and when they failed in the proof of that, then they charged him with blasphemy, which is related by the other evangelists, and therefore omitted here. *Observe,*

1. The articles or heads upon which Christ was examined, (v. 19.) concerning his *disciples and his doctrine.* *Observe,*

1. The irregularity of the process; it was against all law and equity; they seize him as a criminal, and now that he is their prisoner, they have nothing to lay to his charge; no libel, no prosecutor; but the judge must himself be the prosecutor, and the prisoner himself the witness, and, against all reason and justice, is put on to be his own accuser.

2. The High-Priest then, *saw therefore,* which seems to refer to v. 14.) because he had resolved that Christ must be sacrificed to their private malice under colour of the public good, therefore he examined him upon those interrogatories which would touch his life. He examined him,

1. Concerning his disciples, that he might charge him with sedition, and represent him as dangerous to the Roman government as well as to the Jewish church. He asked him who were his disciples—what number they were—of what country—what were their names and characters? Insinuating that his scholars were designed for soldiers, and would in time become a formidable body.

Some think his question concerning his disciples, was, “What is now become of them all? Where are they? Why do they not appear?” Upbraiding him with their cowardice in deserting him; thus adding to the affliction of it. There was something significant in this, that Christ’s calling and owning his disciples was the first thing laid to his charge, for it was for their sakes that he sanctified himself and suffered.

2. Concerning his doctrine, that they might charge him with heresy, and bring him under the penalty of the law against false prophets, Deut. 18. 20. (v. 22.) The doctrine was properly cognizable in that court, (Deut. 17. 12.) there was no principle a prophet should not perish but at Jerusalem, where that court sat. They could not prove any false doctrine upon him; but they hoped to extort something from him, which they might distort to his prejudice, and to make him an *offender for some word or other,* Isa. 29. 21. They said nothing to him concerning his miracles, by which he had done so much good, and proved his doctrine beyond contradiction, because of these they were sure they could take no hold. Thus the adversaries of Christ, while they are industriously quarrelling with his truth, wilfully shut their eyes against the evidences of it, and take no notice of them.

2. The appeal Christ made, in answer to these interrogatories. (1.) As to his *disciples,* he said nothing against them; if his doctrine was sound and good, his having *disciples to whom to communicate it,* was no more than what was practised and allowed by their own doctors.

If Calaphas, in asking him concerning his disciples, designed to ensnare him, and bring them into trouble, it was in kindness to them that he said nothing of them, for he had said, *Let these go their way,* if he meant to upbraud him with their cowardice, no wonder that he said nothing, for

Pudet hie opportu nobilis,
Et die potuisse, et non potuisse refelli—
Shame attaches, when charges are exhibited that cannot be refuted;

He would say nothing to condemn them, and could say nothing to justify them. (2.) As to his *doctrine,* he said nothing in particular, but in general referred himself to the things that heard him, being not only made manifest to God, but made manifest also in their consciences, v. 20, 21.

1. He tacitly charges his judges with illegal proceedings; he does not indeed speak evil of the rulers of the people, nor say now to these princes, Ye are wicked; but he appeals to the settled rules of their own court, whether they dealt fairly by him? *Do we indeed judge righteous judgment?* Ps. 58. 1. So here, *Why ask ye me?* Which implies two absurdities in judgment: First, “Why ask ye me now concerning my doctrine, when ye have already condemned it?” They had made an order of court for the excommunicating of all that owned him, (ch. 9. 22.) had issued out a proclamation for the apprehending of him; and now they come to ask what his doctrine is. Thus was he condemned, as his doctrine, and cause commonly are, unheard. Secondly, “Why ask ye me? Must I accuse myself, when ye have no evidence against me.”

2. He insists upon his fair and open dealing with them in the publication of his doctrine, and justifies himself with that. The crime which the Sanhedrim by the law was to inquire after, was the clan destine spreading of dangerous doctrines, enticing secretly, Deut. 17. 3. As to this, therefore, Christ charges himself very fully:

First, As to the manner of his preaching; he spake openly, ανοικια δεδουλωμενο— with freedom and plainness of speech; he did not deliver things ambiguously, as Apollo did his oracles. Those that would under
mune the truth and spread corrupt notions, do it by sly insinuations, putting queries, starting difficulties, and asserting nothing; but Christ explained himself fully, with, Verily, verily, I say unto you; his reproofs were free and bold, and his testimonies express against the corruptions of the age.

Secondly, As to the persons he preached to; he spake to the world, to all that he was to hear, and were willing to hear him, high or low, learned or unlearned, Jew or Gentile, friend or foe; his doctrine feared not the censure of a mixed multitude; nor did he grudge the knowledge of it to any, (as the masters of some rare invention commonly do,) but freely communicated it, as the sun does his beams.

Thirdly, As to the places he preached in; when he was in the country, he preached ordinarily in the synagogues—the places of meeting for worship, and on the sabbath-day—the time of meeting; when he came up to Jerusalem, he preached the same doctrine in the temple at the time of the solemn feasts, when the Jews from all parts assembled there; though he often preached in private houses, and on mountains, and by the sea-side, to show that his words were not confined to temples and synagogues; yet what he preached in private, was the very same with what he delivered publicly. Note, The doctrine of Christ, purely and plainly preached, needs not be ashamed to appear in the most numerous assembly, for it carries its own strength and beauty along with it. What Christ's faithful ministers say, they would be willing all the world should hear; wisdom cries in the places of congregations, Prov. 1. 21.—8. 9.—9. 3.

Fourthly, As to the doctrine itself; he said nothing in secret, contrary to what he said in public, but only by way of repetition and explication; in secret have I said nothing; as if he had been either suspicious of the truth of it, or conscious of any ill design in it. He sought no corners, for he feared no colours, nor said any thing that he needed to be ashamed of; what he did speak in private to his disciples, he ordered them to proclaim on the house-tops, Matt. 10. 27. God saith of himself, (Isa. 45. 19.) I have not spoken in secret; his commandment is not hidden, Deut. 30. 11. And the righteousness of faith speaks in like manner, Rom. 10. 6. Veritas nihil metuit nisi abscondi—Truth fears nothing but concealment. Tertullian.

[3.] He appeals to them that had heard him, and declares they might be examined what doctrine he had preached, and whether it had that dangerous tendency that was surmised; "As they that heard me, what I said unto them; some of them may be in court, or may be sent out for of their beds." He means not his friends and followers, who might be presumed to speak in his favour, but, Ask any impartial hearer; ask your own officers. Some think he pointed at the Sanhedrim; and then he knew what I said, referring to the report which they had made of his preaching, (ch. 7. 46.) Never man shake like this man. Nay, you may ask some upon the bench; for it is probable that some of them had heard him, and been put to silence by him. Note, The doctrine of Christ may safely appeal to all that know it, and has so much right and reason on its side, that they who will judge impartially, cannot but be afraid to do it.

V. While the judges were examining him, the servants that stood by, were abusing him, v. 22, 23.

1. It was a base affront which one of the officers gave him; though he spake with so much calmness and convincing evidence, this insolent fellow struck him with the palm of his hand, probably on the side of his head or face, saying, Answerest thou the High-Priest so? As if he had behaved himself rudely to the court.

(1.) He struck him, woii jnpevt—he gave him a blow. Some think it signifies a blow with a rod or wand, from jAsxt, or with the staff, which was the badge of his office. Now the scripture was fulfilled, (Isa. 50. 6.) I gave my cheeks, J;JiXnju, (so the Seventy,) to blows, the word here used. And Mic. 5. 1. They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod. and the chiefe officer with his sceptre. (2.) He smote, and thus they were willing he should hear, and be smitten with the cheek reproachfully. It was unjust to strike one that neither said nor did amiss; it was insolent for a mean servant to strike one that was confessedly a person of account; it was cowardly to strike one that had his hands tied; and barbarous to strike a prisoner at the bar. Here was a breach of the peace in the face of the court, and yet the judges courted it. Contusion of face was our due; but Christ here took it himself; "Upon me be the curse, the shame."

(2.) He checked him in a haughty imperious manner; Answerest thou the High-Priest so? As if the blessed Jesus were not good enough to speak to his master, or not wise enough to know how to speak to him, but, like a rude and ignorant prisoner, must be controlled by the jailer, and taught how to behave. It was one of Christ's friends who smote him, Malchus, who owed to Christ the healing of his ear, and the saving of his head, and yet made him this ill return. But, whoever it was, it was done to please the High-Priest, and to curry favour with him; for what he said, speaks a jealousy for the dignity of the High-Priest. Wicked rulers will not want wicked servants, who will help forward the affliction of the poor, whom their masters persecute; think of a successor of this High-Priest, that commanded the by-standers to smite Paul thus on the mouth, Acts 25. 2. Some think this officer took himself to be affected by Christ's appeal to those about him concerning his doctrine, as if he would have vouched him to be a witness; and perhaps he was one of those officers that had spoken honourably of him, (ch. 7. 46.) and lest he should not be a witness, he thought it necessary to strike him. Tell him, a Christ bore this affront with wonderful meekness and patience; (v. 23.) If I have spoken evil, in what I have now said, hear witness of the evil. Observe it to the court, and let them judge of him, who are the proper judges; but if well, and as it did become me, why smitest thou me? Christ could have answered him with a miracle of wrath, could have struck him dead, or killed him; he no more was lifted up against him. But this was the day of his patience and suffering, and he answered him with the meekness of wisdom, to teach us not to avenge ourselves, not to render railing for railing, but with the innocency of the dove, to bear injuries, even then when with the wisdom of the serpent, as our Saviour, we shew the injustice of them, and appeal to the magistrate concerning them, (ch. 11.)" Let this be the other cheek, by which it appears that that rule, Matt. 5. 39, is not to be understood literally; a man may possibly turn the other cheek, and yet have his heart full of malice; but, comparing Christ's precept with his pattern, we learn, That in such cases we must not be our own avengers, nor judges in our own cause; we must rather receive than give the second blow, when we are not ourselves to defend ourselves, but not to avenge ourselves; the magistrate (if it be necessary for the preserving of the public peace, and the restraining and terrifying of evil-doers) is to be the avenger, Rom. 13. 4. (2.) Our resentment of injuries done us, must always be rational, and never passionate; such Christ's here was; when he suffered, he reasoned, but threatened not. He fairly expostulated with him that did him the injury, and so may we. (3.) When we are called out to suffering, we must accommodate ourselves to the inconve-
sences of a suffering state, with patience, and by one indignity done us be prepared to receive another, and to make the best of it.

VI. While the servants were thus abusing him, Peter was proceeding to deny him, v. 25-27. It is a sad story, and none of the least of Christ's sufferings.

1. He repeated the sin the second time, v. 25. While he was warming himself with the servants, as one of them, they asked him, "Art not thou one of his disciples? What dost thou here among us?"

He, perhaps, hearing that Christ was examined about his disciples, and fearing he should be seized, or at least smitten, as his Master was, if he should own it, flatly denied it; and said, I am not. (1.) It was his great folly to thrust himself into the temptation, by continuing in the company of those that were unsuitable for him, and that he had nothing to do with. He said to warm himself; but they that warm themselves with evil-doers, grow cold toward good people and good things; and they that are fond of the devil's fire-side, are in danger of the devil's fire. God at last stood on his Master's side, and have warmed himself better than here, at the fire of his Master's love, which many waters could not quench, Cant. 8. 6, 7.

He might there have warmed himself with zeal for his Master, and indignation at his persecutors; but he chose rather to warm with them, than to warm against them. But how could one (one disciple) be warm alone? Exod. 3. 11, 12.

(2.) It was a great unhappiness that he was again assaulted by the temptation; and no other could be expected, for this was a place, this an hour, of temptation. When the judge asked Christ about his disciples, probably the servants took the hint, and challenged Peter for one of them, "Answer to thy name. See here, [1.] The subtility of the tempter in running down one whom he saw falling, and mustering to offer a greater force against him; not a maid now, but all the servants. Note, Yielding to one temptation invites another, and perhaps a stronger. Satan redoubles his attacks when we give ground. [2.] The danger of bad company. We commonly study to approve ourselves to those with whom we choose to associate ourselves; their good word we value ourselves upon, and covet to stand right in their estimation. But who are we that we can gain our praise, and govern ourselves accordingly; we are therefore concerned to make the first choice well, and not to mingle ourselves with those whom we cannot please without displeasing God.

(3.) It was his great weakness, nay, it was his great wickedness, to yield to the temptation, and to say, I am not one of his disciples, as one ashamed of that which was his honour, and afraid of suffering for it, which would have been yet more his honour. See how the fear of man brings a snare. When Christ was admired, and caressed, and treated with respect, Peter pleased himself, and perhaps prided himself, in this, that he was a disciple of Christ, and so put in for a share in the honours done his Master; but thus many who seem fond of the reputation of religion when it is in fashion, are ashamed of the reproach of it; but we must take it for better and worse.

2. He repeated the sin the third time, v. 26, 27. Here he was attacked by one of the servants, who was kinsman to Malchus, who, when he heard Peter deny himself to be a disciple of Christ, gave him the lie with great assurance. "Did not I see thee in the garden, Peter?" Peter might have said, "Witness of Peter's." Peter then denied again, as if he knew nothing of Christ, nothing of the garden, nothing of all this matter.

(1.) This third assault of the temptation was more severe than the former; before, his relation to Christ was only suspected, here, it is proved upon him by one that saw him with Jesus, and saw him draw his sword in his defence. Note, They who by sin-think to help themselves out of trouble, do but entangle and embarrass themselves the more. Dare to be brave, for, trust will come when either he or any per-haps tell the matter which we seek to conceal with a lie. Notice is taken of this servant's being akin to Malchus, because that circumstance would make it the more a terror to Peter; "Now," thinks he, "I am gone, my business is done, there needs no other witness or prosecutor." We should not, if we can help it, make any man in particular our enemy, because that would greatly complicate matters; some of his relations may have us at their mercy. He that may need a friend, should not make a foe. But observe, though here was sufficient evidence against Peter, and sufficient provocation given by his denial, to have prosecuted him, yet he escapes, has no harm done him, nor attempted to be done. Note, We are often drawn into sin by groundless causeless fears, which there is no occasion for, and which a small degree of wisdom and resolution would make nothing of.

(2.) His yielding to it was no less base than the former; He denied again. See here, [1.] The nature of sin in general; the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of it, Heb. 3. 13. It was a strange degree of effrontery that Peter was arrived to on a sudden, that he could with such assurance say, A lie he was at so clear a disproof; but the beginning of sin is as the letting forth of water; when once the fence is broken, men easily go from bad to worse.

[2.] Of the sin of lying in particular; it is a fruitful sin, and upon that account exceeding sinful; one he needs another to support it, and that another. It is a rule in the devil's politics, Male facia, male factse tegere, ne perjuravit—to cover sin with sin, in order to escape, or to wear a disproof.

(3.) The hint given him for the awakening of his conscience was seasonable and happy; Immediately the cock crew; and this is all that here is said of his repentance, it being recorded by the other evangelists. This brought him to himself, by bringing to his mind the words of Christ. See here, [1.] The care Christ has of those that are his, not with-lying their faults; though they faiy to be his, yet he does not utterly disown them, not utterly cast off. [2.] The advantage of having faithful remembrancers near us, who, though they cannot tell us more than we know already, yet may remind us of that which we know, but have forgotten. The crowing of the cock to others was an accidental thing, and had no significancy; but to Peter it was the voice of God, and had a blessed tendency to awake his conscience, by putting him in mind of the word of Christ.

28. Then led they Jesus from Caiphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover.

29. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? 30. They answered and said unto him. If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. 31. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: 32. That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he
should die. 33. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? 34. Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell thee of me? 35. Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. 37. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou savest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all. 39. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 40. Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

We have here an account of Christ's arraignment before Pilate, the Roman governor, in the praetorium, (a Latin word made Greek,) the prætor's house, or hall of judgment; thither they hurried him, to get him condemned in the Roman court, and executed by the Roman power. Being resolved on his death, they took this course, 1. That he might be put to death the more legally and regularly, according to the present constitution of their government, since they became a province of the empire; not stoned in a popular tumult, as Stephen, but put to death with the present formalities of justice. Thus he was treated as a malefactor, being made sin for us. 2. That he might be put to death more safely. If they could engage the Roman government in the matter, which the people stood in awe of, there would be little danger of an uproar. 3. That he might be put to death with more reproach to himself. The death of the cross, which the Romans commonly used, being of all other the most ignominious, they were desirous by it to put an indefinite mark of infamy upon him, and so to sink his reputation for ever. 4. That they hurried upon Cruelty him. 4. That he might be put to death with less reproach to them. It was an inviolable thing to put one to death, that had done so much good in the world, and therefore they were willing to throw the odium upon the Roman government, to make that the less acceptable to the people, and save themselves from the reproach. Thus many are more afraid of the scandal of an ill thing, than of the sin of it. See Acts 5. 28.

Two things are here observed concerning the prosecution:

1. Their policy and industry in the prosecution; It was early; some think about two or three in the morning; others about five or six; when most people were in their beds; and so there would be the less danger of opposition from the people that were for Christ; while, at the same time, they had their agents about, to call those together, whom they could influence, and thus bring against him being much their heart was upon it, and how violent they were in the prosecution! Now that they had him in their hands, they would lose no time till they had him upon the cross, but denied themselves their natural rest, to push on this matter! See Mic. 2. 1.

2. Their superstition and vile hypocrisy; The chief priests and elders, though they came along with the third to death, yet did not go into the judgment hall, because it was the house of an un circumcised Gentile, lest they should be defiled, but kept out of doors, that they might eat the passover, nor the passover feast, upon the sacrifices which were offered on the fifteenth day, the Chasugah, as they called it, the passover-bullocks, spoken of Deut. 16. 2. 2 Chron. 30. 24.—33. 8, 9. These they were to eat of, and therefore would not go into the court, for fear of touching a Gentile, and thereby contracting, not a legal, but only a traditional pollution. This they scrupled, but made no scruple of breaking through all the laws of equity, to persecute Christ to the death. They strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel.

Let us now see what passed at the judgment hall. Here is,

1. Pilate's conference with the prosecutors; they are called first, and stated what they had to say against the prisoner, as was very fit, v. 29—32.

2. The judge calls for the indictment. Because they would not come into the hall, he went out to them into the court before the house, to talk with them. Looking upon Pilate as a magistrate, that we may give every one his due, here are three things commendable in him:

1. His diligent and close application to business. If it had been upon a good occasion, it had been very well that he was willing to be called up early to the judgment seat. Men in public trusts must not love their ease.

2. His condescension to the humour of the people, and receding from the honour of his place, to gratify their scruples. He might have said, "If they be so nice as not to come in to me, let them go home as they came;" by the same rule as we might say, "If the complaint scruple to put off his hat to the magistrate, let not his complaint be heard;" but Pilate insists not upon it, bears with them, and goes out to them; for when it is for good, we should become all things to all men.

3. His adherence to the rule of justice, in demanding the accusation, suspecting the prosecution to be malicious; "What accusation bring ye against this man? What is the crime which ye charge him with, and what proof have ye of it?" It was a law of nature, before Valerius Pubicola made it a Roman law, No quo justitiae se mandatae—That no one should be condemned unheard. See Acts 25. 16, 17. It is unreasonable to commit a man, without alleging some cause in the warrant, and much more to arraign a man, when there is no bill of indictment found against him.

2. The prosecutors demand judgment against him, upon a general surmise that he was a criminal; not alleging, much less proving, the things wherein he particularly charged, death or bonds; (v. 30.) If he were not a malefactor, or evil-doer, we would not have delivered him to thee to be condemned. This speaks them.

1. Very rude and uncivil to Pilate, a company of ill-natured men, that acknowledged to despise dominion. When Pilate was so complaisant to them, as to come out to treat with them, yet they were to the highest
degree out of humour with him. He put the most reasonable question to them that could be; but if it had been less, they could not have answered him with more disdain. 

(2.) Very sly and malicious towards our Lord Jesus; right or wrong, they will have him to be a malefactor, and treated as one. We are to presume a man innocent till he is proved guilty, but they will presume him guilty, who could prove himself innocent. They cannot say, “He is a traitor, a murderer.” Therefore, they would have him put to death, but they say, “He is an evil-doer.” He is an evil-doer, who went about doing good! Let those be called whom he had cured, and fed and taught; whom he had rescued from devils, and raised from death; and let them be asked whether he were an evil-doer or no? Note, It is no new thing for the best of benefactors to be branded and run down as the worst of malefactors.

(3.) Very proud and conceited of themselves, and their own judgment and justice, as if their delivering a man up, under the general character of a malefactor, were sufficient for the civil magistrate to ground a judicial sentence upon, than which what could be more haughty? 

5. The judge remained him to their own court; (v. 20.) “Theye him, and judge him according to your own law, and do not trouble me with him.” 

Now, 

(1.) Some think Pilate herein complimented them, acknowledging the remains of their power, and allowing them to exert it. Corporal punishment they might inflict, as scourging in their synagogues; whether capital or no, is uncertain; But, it saith Pilate, “go as far as your law will allow you, and if you go further, it shall be connived at.” This he said, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, but unwilling to do them the service they required. 

(2.) Others think he bantered them, and upbraided them with their present state of weakness and subjection. They would be the sole judges of the guilt; “Pray,” saith Pilate, “if you will be so, go on as you have begun; you have found him guilty by your own law, condemn him, if you dare, by your own laws, to carry on the humour.” Nothing is more absurd, nor more deservings to be exposed, than for those to pretend to dictate, and boast of their wisdom, who are weak and in subordinate stations, and whose lot it is to be dictated to. Some think Pilate here reflects upon the law of Moses, as if that allowed them that which the Roman law would not by means of the Confessors of a man unheard; “It may be, your law will suffer such a thing, but our’s will not.” Thus, through their corruptions, the law of God was blasphemed; and so is his gospel too. 

4. They disowned any authority as judges, and (since it must be so) are content to be prosecutors. They now grow less insolent and more submissive, and own, “It is not lawful for us to put any man to death, whatever less punishment we may inflict, and this is a malefactor whom we would have the blood of.” 

(1.) Some think they had lost their power to give judgment in matters of life and death, only by their own carelessness, and cowardly yielding to the dawning iniquities of the age; so Dr. Lightfoot. &c. “It is not in our power to pass sentence of death upon any, as we do, we shall have the mob about us immediately.” 

(2.) Others think their power was taken from them by the Romans, because they had not used it well, or because it was thought too great a trust to be lodged in the hands of a conquered and yet an unsubdued people. Their acknowledgment of this they designed for a compliment to Pilate, and to atone for their rudeness; (v. 30.) but it amounts to a full evidence that the scourgery was departed from Judah, and therefore that now the Messiah was come. Gen. 49. 10. If the Jews have no power to put any man to death, where is the scourgery? Yet they ask not, Where is the Shiloh? 

(3.) However, there was a providence in it, that either they should have no power to put any man to death, or should decline the exercise but upon this occasion, That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die: 3. Observe. 

[1.] In general, that even they who designed the defeating of Christ’s sayings, beyond their intention, were made serviceable to the fulfilling of them by an over-ruling hand of God. No word of Christ shall fall to the ground; he can never either deceive or be deceived. Even the chief priests, while they persecuted him as a deceived, had their spirits so directed as to help to prove him true, herein shewing that by taking other measures they might have defeated his predictions. Hoseb. they meant not so, Isa. 10. 7.

[2.] Those sayings of Christ in particular were fulfilled, which he had spoken concerning his own death. Two sayings of Christ concerning his death were fulfilled, by the Jews’ declining to judge him according to their law. First, He had said that he should be crucified to the Gentiles, and that they should put him to death; (Matt. 20. 19. Mark 10. 33. Luke 18. 32.) and hereby that saying was fulfilled. Secondly, He had said that he should be crucified, (Matt. 20. 19.—26. 2.) lifted up., ch. 3. 14.—12. 32. Now if they had judged him by their laws, he had been stoned; burning, strangling, and beheading, were in some cases used among the Jews, but never crucifying. It was therefore necessary that Christ should be put to death by the Romans, that, being hanged upon a tree, he might be made a curse for us, (Gal. 3. 13.) and his hands and feet might be pierced. As the Roman power had brought him to be born at Bethlehem, so now to die upon a cross, and both according to the scriptures. It is likewise determined concerning us, though not discovered to us, what death we shall die, which should free us from all disquieting cares about that matter; “Lord, what, and when, and how, thou hast appointed.” 

II. Here is Pilate’s conference with the prisoner, v. 33, &c. where we have, 

1. The prisoner set to the bar. Pilate, after he had conferred with the chief priests at his door, entered into the hall, and called for Jesus to be brought in. He had no care of him, but only that he might be disturbed by the noise, but ordered him to be brought into the hall; for he made no difficulty of going in among the Gentiles. We by sin were become liable to the judgment of God, and were to be brought before his bar; therefore, Christ, being made sin, and a curse for us, was arraigned as a criminal. Pilate entered into judgment with him, the Gentiles therefore enter into judgment with us.

2. His examination. The other evangelists tell us that his accusers had laid it to his charge, that he perverted the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and upon this he is examined. 

(1.) Here is a question put to him, with a design to ensnare him, and to find out something, upon which to ground an accusation: “Art thou the King of the Jews? and is it true, that thou sayest, thou art the king of the Jews?” v. 11. It was much talked of, and so long expected? Messiah, the Prince; art thou he? Dost thou pretend to be he? Dost thou call thyself, and wouldest thou be thought so?” For he was far from imagining that really he was so, or making a question of that. Some think Pilate asked this with an air of scorn and contempt; “What! Art thou a king, who makest so mean a figure! Art thou the king of the Jews, by whom thou art thus hated and
persecuted? Art thou king de jure—of right, while the emperor is only king de facto—in fact?" Since it could not be proved he ever said it, he would constrain him to say it now, that he might proceed upon his cross, and have a sentence delivered.

(2.) Christ answers this question with another; not for evasion, but as an intimation to Pilate to consider what he did, and upon what grounds he went; (v. 34.) "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or of me, and dost thou ask it only to oblige them?"

[1] "It is plain that thou hast no reason to say that of thyself." Pilate was obliged by his office to take care of the interests of the Roman government, but he could not say that that was in any danger, or suffered any damage, from any thing our Lord Jesus had ever said or done. He never appeared in worldly pomp, never assumed any secular power, never acted as a judge or divider; never were any traitorous principles or practices objected to him, nor any thing that might give the least umbrage or suspicion.

[2] "If others tell it thee of me, to incense thee against me, thou oughtest to consider who they are, and upon what principles they go, and whether they who represent me as an enemy to Caesar, are not really such themselves, and therefore use this only as a pretence to cover their malice; which, if so, ought to be well weighed by a judge that would do justice." Nay, if Pilate had been as inquisitive as he ought to have been in this matter, he would have found that the true reason why the chief priests were outrageous against Jesus, was, because he did not set up a temporal kingdom in opposition to the Roman power; if he would have done that, and would have wrought miracles to bring them out of the Roman bondage, as Moses did to bring them out of the Egyptian, they would have been so far from siding with the Romans against him, that they would have made him their king, and have fought under him against the Romans; but he not answering this expectation of their's, they charged that upon him, which they themselves most notoriously guilty of—disaffection to, and design against, the present government; and thus such an information as this fit to be believed?

(3.) Pilate resents Christ's answer, and takes it very heinously, v. 35. This is a direct answer to Christ's question, v. 34.

[1.] Christ had asked him, whether he spake of himself? "No," says he; "Am I a Jew, that thou suspectest me to be in the plot against thee? I know nothing of the Messiah, nor desire to know, and therefore interest not myself in the dispute which is to the Messiah, and who not, it is all alike to me." Observe, with what disdain Pilate asks, Am I a Jew? The Jews were, upon many accounts, an honourable people; but, having corrupted the covenant of their God, he made them contemptible and base before all the people, (Mal. 2. 8, 9.) so that a man of sense and honour reckoned it a scandal to be counted a Jew. This is the word of a priest, ought to be regarded; and therefore I have nothing to do but to proceed upon their information." Thus Christ, in his religion, still suffers by those that are of his own nation, even the priests, that profess relation to him, but do not live up to their profession.

[2.] Christ had declined answering that question, Art thou the King of the Jews? And therefore Pilate puts another question to him more general, What hast thou done? What provocation hast thou given to thy own nation, and particularly the priests, to be so violent against thee? Surely there cannot be all this smoke but there is some fire, what is it?

(4.) Christ, in his next reply, gives a more full and direct answer to Pilate's former question, Art thou a king? Explaining in what sense he was a king, but not such a king as was any ways dangerous to the Roman government, not a secular king, for his interest was not supported by secular methods, v. 37. Observe, 

[1.] An account of the nature and constitution of Christ's kingdom; it is not of this world; it is expressed negatively what it is not, to rectify the present mistakes concerning it; but the positive is implied, it is the kingdom of heaven, and belongs to another world; he is a king, and has a kingdom, but not of this world. First, Its rise is not from this world: the kingdoms of men arise out of the sea and the earth, (Dan. 7. 2.) its kingdom is not by succession, election, or conquest, but by the immediate and special designation of the divine will and counsel. Secondly, Its nature is not worldly; it is a kingdom within men, (Luke 17. 21.) set up in their hearts and consciences, does not proceed from any carnal or secular interest, but is a kingdom spiritual, and all its glory within. The many nations of state in Christ's kingdom have not the spirit of the world, I Cor. 2. 12. Thirdly, Its guards and supports are not worldly; its weapons are spiritual; it needed not, nor used, secular force to maintain and advance it, nor was it carried on in a way hurtful to kings or princes; it did not in the least interfere with the prerogatives of princes, or their property or their subjects; it tended not to alter any national establishment in secular things, nor opposed any kingdom but that of sin and Satan. Fourthly, Its tendency and design are not worldly. Christ aimed not, nor would allow his disciples to aim, at the pomp and power of the great men of the earth. Fithly, Its subjects, though they are in the world, ye are not of the world; they are called and chosen out of the world, are heir from a world to another world; they are neither the world's pupils, nor its darlings; neither governed by its wisdom, nor enriched with its wealth.

[2.] An evidence of the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom produced. If he had designed an opposition to the government, he would have fought them at their own weapons, and would have repelled force with force of the same nature; but he did not take this course; If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, and my kingdom be ruined by them. But, First, His followers did not offer to fight, there was no uproar, no attempt to rescue him, though the town was now full of Galileans, his friends and countrymen, and they generally armed; at the preparation for the next occasion, was enough to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Secondly, He did not order them to fight; nay, he forbade them; which was an evidence, both that he did not depend upon worldly aids, (for he could have summoned legions of angels into his service, which shewed that his kingdom was from above,) as also that he did not dread the popular opposition, for he was very willing to be delivered to the Jews, as knowing that that which would have been the destruction of any worldly kingdom, would be the advancement and establishment of his; justly therefore does he conclude, Now you may see my kingdom is not from hence; in the world, but not of it.
(5.) In answer to Pilate's further query, he replies yet more directly, (v. 37.) where we have, "Art thou a king then? Thou speakest of a kingdom thou hast; art thou then, in any sense, a king? And what colour hast thou for such a claim? Explain thyself." [1.] The good confession which our Lord Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate, in answer to this; (1 Tim. 6. 13.) Thou sayest that I am a king, that is, It is as thou sayest, I am a king; for I came to bear witness of the truth. First, He grants himself to be a king, though not in the sense that Pilate meant it. The Messiah was expected to be the character of a king, Messiah the Prince; and therefore, and hastily, Pilate supposed that he was the Christ, he would not disown to Pilate that he was a king, lest he should seem inconsistent with himself. Note, Though Christ took upon him the form of a servant, yet even then he justly claimed the honour and authority of a king. Secondly, He explains himself, and shews how he is a king; as he came to bear witness of the truth, he rules in the powers and by the power of truth. If he had meant himself a temporal prince, he would have said, For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, to rule the nations, to conquer kings, and take possession of kingdoms; no, he came to be a witness for the God that made the world, and against sin that ruins the world, and in the substance of his testimony he sets up, and keeps up, his kingdom within, and it is to be heard witness to should be a witness to the people, and, as such, a leader and commander to the people, Isa. 55. 4. Christ's kingdom was not of this world, in which truth falleth, (Isa. 59. 15.) Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare—He that cannot dissemble, knows not how to reign, but of that world in which truth reigneth. Generally, Christ's cradd into the world, and his business in the kingdom, were to bear witness to the truth. First, To reveal it, to discover to the world that which otherwise could not have been known concerning God and his will, and good-will to men, ch. 1. 18. 17. 26. Secondly, To confirm it, Rom. 15. 8. By his miracles he bare witness to the truth of religion, the truth of divine revelation, and of God's perfections and providence, and the truth of his Messiah and covenant, that all men through him might believe. Now by doing this he is a king, and sets up a kingdom.

1. The foundation and power, the spirit and genius, of Christ's kingdom, is truth, divine truth. When he said, I am the truth, he said, in effect, I am a king. He conquers by the convincing evidence of truth, he rules by the commanding power of truth, and in his majesty rides prosperous, because of truth, Ps. 45. 4. It is with his truth that he shall judge the people, Ps. 96. 13. It is the sceptre of his kingdom; he draws with the cords of a man, with truth revealed to us, and received by us, in the love of it; and thus he brings thoughts into obedience. He came a light into the world, and rules as the sun by light.

2. The subjects of this kingdom are those that are of the truth. All that by the grace of God are rescued from under the power of the father of lies, and are disposed to receive the truth, and submit to the power and influence of it, will hear Christ's voice, will become his subjects, and will bear faith and true allegiance to him. Every one that has any real sense of religion, will entertain the christian religion, and they belong to his kingdom; by the power of truth he makes them willing, Ps. 110. 3. All that are in love with truth, will hear the voice of Christ, for greater, better, surer, sweeter truths can no where be found, than are found in Christ, by whom grace and truth came; so that by hearing Christ's voice, we know that we are of the truth, 1 John 3. 19.

(6.) Pilate, hereupon puts a good question to him, but does not stay for an answer, v. 38. He said, What is truth? and immediately went out again. [1.] It is certain that this was a good question, and could not be put to one that was better able to answer it. Truth is that hearl of great priče, which the human understanding so late desires and is in quest of; for it cannot rest but in that which is, or at least is apprehended to be, truth. When we search the scriptures, and attend the ministry of the word, it must be with this inquiry, What is truth? and with this prayer, Lead me in thy truth; into all truth. But many put this question, that have not patience and constancy enough to persevere in their search after truth; or no humility and sincerity enough to receive it when they have found it, 2 Tim. 3. 7. Thus many deal with their own consciences; they ask them those needful questions, "What am I?" "What have I done?" but will not take time for an answer.

[2.] It is uncertain with what design Pilate asked this question.

First, Perhaps he spoke it as a scholar, as one that began to think well of Christ, and to lock upon him with some respect, and desired to be informed what new notions he advanced, and what improvements he pretended to in religion and learning. But while he desired to hear some new truth from him, as Herod to see some miracle, the clamour and outrage of the priests' mob at his gate, obliged him abruptly to put an end to all that would have been said.

Secondly, Some think he speaks it as a judge, inquiring further into the cause now brought before him; "Let me into this mystery, and tell me what the truth of it is, the true state of this matter."

Thirdly, Others think he speaks it as a scoldor, in a peering way; "Thou talkest of truth; castst thou tell what truth is, or give me a definition of it? Thus he makes a jest of the everlasting gospel, that great truth, which the chief priests hated and persecuted, and which Christ was now witnessing to, and suffering for; and, like men of no religion, who take a pleasure in bantering all religions, he ridicules both sides; and therefore Christ made him no reply. Answer not a fool according to his folly: cast not pearls before swine. But though Christ would not deal with Pilate, he had his disciples, and by them has told us, ch. 14. 6.

III. The result of both these conferences with the prisoners and the prisoner, (v. 38—40.) in two things:

1. The judge appeared his friend, and favourable to him, for;

(1.) He publicly declared him innocent; (v. 38.) Upon that whole matter, I find in him no fault at all. He supposes there might be some controversy in religion between him and them, wherein he was as likely to be in the right as they; but nothing criminal appears against him. This solemn declaration of Christ's innocency, was, [1.] For the justification and honour of the Lord Jesus. By this it appears, though that he was treated as the worst of malefactors, he had never merited such treatment. [2.] For the explaining of the design and intention of his death; that he did not die for any sin of his own, even in the judgment of the judge himself, and therefore he died as a sacrifice for our sins, and that, even in the judgment of the prosecutors themselves, one man should die for the people, ch. 11. 30. This is that he did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth, (Isa. 59. 9.) who were to be cut down, nor for filthy lucre, Dan. 9. 26. [3.] For the exonerating the sin of the Jews that prosecuted him with so much violence. If a prisoner has had a fair trial, and has been acquitted by those that are proper judges of the crime, especially if there be none to suspect them partial in his favour, he must
be believed innocent, and his accusers are bound to acquiesce. But our Lord Jesus, though brought in Not guilty, is still run down as a malefactor, and his blood thirsted for.

(2.) He proposed an expedient for his discharge; (v. 39.) You have a custom, that I should release you a prisoner at the passover; shall it be this King of the Jews? He proposed this not to the chief priests, (he knew they would never agree to it,) but to the multitude; it was an appeal to the people, as appears, Matt. 27. 25. Probably, he had heard how this Jesus had been attended but the other day with the hosannas of the common people; he therefore looked upon him to be the darling of the multitude, and the envy only of the rulers, and therefore he made no doubt but they would demand the release of Jesus, and that would stop the mouth of the prosecutors, and all would be well.

[1.] He allows their custom, for which, perhaps, they had had a long prescription, in honour of the passover, which was a memorial of their release. But it was adding to God's words, as if he had not instituted enough for the due commemoration of that deliverance, and, though an act of mercy, might be injustice to the public, Prov. 17. 15.

[2.] He offers to release Jesus to them, according to the custom that had been; he had the honesty and courage that became a judge; he said not he would name an innocent person to be competitor with a notorious criminal for this favour; if he found no fault in him, he was bound in conscience to discharge him. But he was willing to trim the matter, and please all sides; and was governed more by worldly wisdom than by the rules of equity.

2. The people appeared his enemies, and implacable enemies. (v. 40.) They cried all again and again, Not this man, let him be released, but Barabbas. Observe,

(1.) How fierce and outrageous they were. Pilate proposed the thing to them calmly, as worthy their mature consideration, but they resolved it in a heat, and gave in their resolution with clamour and noise, and in the utmost confusion. Note, The enemies of Christ's holy religion cry it down, and so hope to run it down; witness the outcry at Ephesus, Acts 19. 34. But those who think the worse of things or persons, merely for their being thus exclaimed against, have a very small share of constancy and consideration. Nay, there is cause to suspect a deficiency of reason and justice on that side which calls in the assistance of popular tumult.

(2.) How foolish and absurd they were, intimated in the short account here given of the other candidate; Now Barabbas was a robber; and therefore [1.] A breaker of the law of God; and yet he shall be spared, rather than one who reproved the pride, avarice, and tyranny of the priests and elders. Though Barabbas be a robber, he will not rob them of Moses's seat, nor of their traditions, and then no matter. [2.] He was an enemy to the public safety, and personal property. The least robber (Job 30. 5. Men cried after them as after a thief,) yet here it is for one. Thus they do, who prefer their sins before Christ. Sin is a robber, every base lust is a robber, and yet foolishly chosen rather than Christ, who would truly enrich us.

CHAP. XIX.

Though in the history hitherto this evangelist seems industriously to have declined the recording of such passages as had been related by the other evangelists, yet when he comes to the sufferings and death of Christ, instead of passing them over in a few words, and without consideration of his Master's claim and errors, and looking upon them as the blemishes of his story, there he repeats what had been before related, with considerable enlargements, as one that desired to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; to glorify in nothing save in the cross of Christ. In the story of this chapter, we have, 1. The remainder of Christ's trial before Pilate, which was tumultuous and confused, v. 1. 15. II. Sentence given, and execution done upon it, v. 16. 18. III. The title over his head, v. 19. 22. IV. The parting of his garments, v. 23. 24. V. The care he took of his mother, v. 25. 27. VI. The giving him vinegar to drink, v. 28. 29. VII. His dying word, v. 30. VIII. The placing of his side, v. 31. 32. IX. The burial of his body, v. 33. 42. 0 that in meditating on these things, we may experimentally know the power of Christ's death, and the fellowship of his sufferings!

1. THEN Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. 2. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe. 3. And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands. 4. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. 5. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! 6. When the Chief Priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. 7. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. 8. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; 9. And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer. 10. Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? 11. Jesus answered, Thou coudest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. 12. And from henceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar. 13. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14. And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king. 15. But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.

Here is a further account of the unfair trial which they gave to our Lord Jesus. The prosecutors carry ing it on with great confusion among the people, and the judge with great confusion in his own breast.
between both the narrative is such as is not easily reduced to a method; we must therefore take the parts of it as they lie.

1. The judge abuses the prisoner, though he declares him innocent, and hopes thereby to pacify the prosecutors; wherein his intention, if indeed it were such, was no more justified in his proceedings, which were palpably unjust.

1. He ordered him to be whipped as a criminal, v. 1. Pilate, seeing the people so outrageous, and being disappointed in his project of releasing him upon the people’s choice, took Jesus, and scourged him; that is, appointed the lictors that attended him, to do it. But in his opinion, that Pilate scourged Jesus himself with the lictors, or that the soldiers struck him, is Hark him, and scourged him, that it might be done favourably. Matthew and Mark mention his scourging after his condemnation, but here it appears to have been before. St. Luke speaks of Pilate’s offering to chastise him, and let him go; which must be before sentence. This scourging of him was designed only to pacify the Jews, and in it Pilate put a compliment upon them, that he would take his word against his own sentiments so far. The Roman scourgings were ordinarily very severe, not limited, as among the Jews, to forty stripes; yet this pain and shame Christ submitted to for our sakes.

(1.) That the scripture might be fulfilled, which spake of his being stricken, smitten, and afflicted, and the chastisement of our peace being upon him; (Isa. 53. 4.) but Christ under went the stripes for us, bearing the rod of his Father’s wrath, Lam. 3. 1. Pilate’s design in scourging him, was, that he might not be condemned, which did not take effect, but intimidated what was God’s design, that his being scourged might prevent our being condemned, we having fellowship in his sufferings, and that did take effect: the physician scourged, and so the patient healed.

(2.) That by his stripes we might be healed, 1 Pet. 2. 24. We deserved to have been chastised with whips and scorpions, and to be beaten with many stripes, having known our Lord’s will and not done it; but Christ under went the stripes for us, bearing the rod of his Father’s wrath, Lam. 3. 1. The soldiers, who were the governor’s life-guard, put a crown of thorns upon his head; such a crown fittest for such a king; they put on him a purplie robe, some old threadbare coat of that colour, which they thought good enough to be the badge of his royalty; and they complimented him with, Hail, King of the Jews; (Gal. and in the people like king,) and then smote him with their hands. (1.) See here the baseness and injustice of Pilate, that he would suffer one whom he believed an innocent person, and if so, an excellent person, to be thus abused and trampled on by his own servants. They who are under the arrest of the law, ought to be under the protection of it: and their being secular is to be the worse. But Pilate did this, [1.] To oblige his soldiers’ merce, or perhaps his own too, notwithstanding the gravity of the matter expected in a judge. Herod, as well as his men of war, had just before done the same, Luke 23. 11. It was as good as a stage-play to them, now that it was a festival time; as the Philistines made sport with Samson. [2.] To oblige the Jews’ malicious humour, and to gratify them, who desired that all possible disgrace might be done to Christ, and the utmost indignities put upon him.

(2.) See here the rudeness and insolence of the soldiers, how perfectly lost they were to all justice and humanity, and how they could not justly consider his proceedings, which were palpably unjust.

[1.] They clothe him with a mocking robe, as if it were a shame and a jest, and nothing but a public and open disgrace to any one, who was the object of a crazed imagination. And as Christ is here represented a king in conceit only; so is his religion as a concern in conceit only, and God and the soul, sin and duty, heaven and hell, are with them all chimeras.

[2.] They crown him with thorns, as if it were a perfect penance, and the greatest pain and hardship in the world; as if to submit to the concept of God and conscience were to thrust one’s head into a thicket of thorns; but this is an unjust imputation; thorns and snares are in the way of the froward, but roses and laurels in religion’s ways.

(3.) See here the wonderful condensation of our Lord Jesus in his sufferings for us. Great and generous minds can bear anything better than ignominy; any toil, any pain, any loss, rather than reproach; and in that he had patience. Herein he conformed to the image of the Father. See and admire, [1.] The invincible patience of a sufferer, leaving us an example of contentment and courage, evenness and easiness of spirit, under the greatest hardships we may meet with in the way of duty. [2.] The invincible love and kindness of a Saviour, who not only cheerfully and resolutely went through all this, but voluntarily undertook it for us and for our salvation. Herein he conformed to the image of the Father. See and admire, [1.] The invincible patience of a sufferer, leaving us an example of contentment and courage, evenness and easiness of spirit, under the greatest hardships we may meet with in the way of duty. [2.] The invincible love and kindness of a Saviour, who not only cheerfully and resolutely went through all this, but voluntarily undertook it for us and for our salvation. Herein he conformed to the image of the Father.

II. Pilate, having thus abused the prisoner, presents him to the prosecutors, in hope that they would now be satisfied, and drop the prosecution, v. 4, 5. Here he proposes two things to their consideration: 1. That he had not found any thing in him, which made him obnoxious to the Roman government; (v. 4.) I find no fault in him: spoilers never sparing — to make a fool of him, there is no fault, or cause of accusation. Upon further inquiry, he repeats the declaration he had made, ch. 18. 38. Hereby he condemns himself; if he found no fault in him, why did he scourge him, why did he suffer him to be abused? None ought to suffer ill but those that do ill; yet thus many banter and abuse religion, who yet, if they be serious, cannot but own they find no fault in it. If he and his soldiers undertook to bring him into the hands of his prosecutors, and not immediately to let him go, why did he take him in?
and save his conscience by not crucifying him, behold he does both; whereas, if he had at first refused to give them over, the governors, or officers, or servants, who must say as they said, joined with them in crying, Crucify him, crucify him. The common people perhaps would have acquiesced in Pilate's declaration of his innocence, but their leaders, the priests, caused them to err. Now by this it appears that their malice against Christ was, (1.) Unreasonable and most absurd, in that they offer not to make good their charge against him, or to object against the judgment of Pilate on the matter, but, though he be innocent, he must be crucified. (2.) It was insatiable and very cruel. Neither the extremity of his scourging, nor his patience under it, nor the tender expostulations of the judge, could mollify them in the least; no, nor could the jest into which Pilate turned the case, put them into a pleasant humour. [3.] It was violent and exceeding resolute; they would have it their own way, and hazard the safety of the city, and their own safety, rather than abate of the utmost of their demands. Were they so violent in running down our Lord Jesus, and in crying, Crucify him, crucify him; and shall we not be vigorous and zealous in advancing his name, and in crying, Crown him, crown him? Did their hatred of him sharpen their endeavours against him, and shall not our love to him quicken our endeavours for him and his kingdom? 5. The evil Pilate gave to the great and still insisting upon the prisoner's innocence; "Take ye him, and crucify him, if he must be crucified." This is spoken ironically, he knew they could not, they durst not, crucify him; but it is as if he should say, "You shall not make me a drudge to your malice; I cannot with a safe conscience crucify him." A good resolve, if he could but have stuck to it. He found no fault in him, and therefore should not have continued to parley with the prosecutors. They that would be safe from sin, should be deaf to temptation. Nay, he should have secured the prisoner from their insults. What was he armed with power for, but to protect the injured? The guards of governors ought to be the guards of justice. But Pilate had not courage enough to act according to his conscience; and his cowardice betrayed him into a snare.

5. The further colour which the prosecutors gave to their demand; (v. 7.) We have a law, and by our law, if it were but in our power to execute it, he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. Now here observe,

(1.) They make their boast of the law, even then, when through breaking the law they dishonoured God, as is charged upon the Jews, Rom. 2. 23. They had indeed an excellent law, far exceeding the statutes and judgments of other nations; but in vain did they boast of their law, when they abused it to such bad purposes.

(2.) They discover a restless and inveterate malice against our Lord Jesus. When they could not incense Pilate against him by alleging that he pretended himself a king, or by reproaching him, that he pretended himself a God. Thus they turn every stone to take him off.

(3.) They pervert the law, and make that the instrument of their malice. Some think they refer to a law made particularly against Christ, as if, being a law, it must be executed right or wrong; whereas there is a woe to them that decree unrighteous decree, and that write the grievousness which they have prescribed, Isa. 10. 1. See Mic. 6. 16. But it should rather seem they refer to the law of Moses; and if so, [1.] It was true that blasphemers, idolaters, and false prophets, were to be put to death by that law. Whoever falsely pretended to be the Son of God, was guilty of blasphemy, Lev. 24. 16. But then, [2.] It was false that he pretended to be the Son of God, for they inquired into the proofs he produced of his being so. If he said that he was the Son of God, and the scope and tendency of his doctrine were not to draw people from God, but to bring them to him, and he confirmed his mission and doctrine by miracles, as undoubtedly he did beyond contradiction, by their law they ought to have arrested him. (Deut. 18. 18, 19.) And if they did not, they were to be put to death. This is very true, if they had been his honour, and might have been their happiness, if they had not stood in their own light, they impute to him as a crime, for which he ought to die; yet if he ought to die by their law, he ought not to be crucified, for that was no death inflicted by their law.

IV. The judge brings the prisoner again to his trial, upon this new suggestion. Observe,
1. The concern Pilate was in, when he heard this alleged; (v. 8.) when he heard that his prisoner pretended not to royalty only, but to deity, he was the more afraid. This embarrassed him more than ever, and made the case more difficult both ways; for, (1.) There was the more danger of offending the people, if he should acquit him, for he knew jealously that people were for the unity of the godhead, and what aversion they now had to other gods; and therefore, though he might hope to pacify their rage against a pretended king, he could never reconcile them to a pretended god. "If this be at the bottom of the tumult," thinks Pilate, "it will not be turned off with my chief; nor will it be easy to account for the raising of his own conscience, if he should condemn him. 'Is he one?' (thinks Pilate) "that makes himself the Son of God; and what if it should prove that he is so? What will become of me then?" Even natural conscience makes men afraid of being found fighting against God. The heathen had some fabulous traditions of incarnate deities appearing sometimes in mean circumstances, and treated by some who were paid dear for their so doing. Pilate fears, lest he should thus run himself into a premi- nire.

2. His further examination of our Lord Jesus thereupon, v. 9. That he might give the prosecutors all the fair play they could desire, he resumed the debate, went into the judgment hall, and asked (1.) Whence art thou? (2.) Art thou a king? Observe,

(1.) The place he chose for this examination; he went into the judgment hall for privacy, that he might be out of the noise and clamour of the crowd, and might examine the thing the more closely. They that would find out the truth as it is in Jesus, must get out of the noise of prejudice, and retire as it were into the judgment hall, to converse with Christ himself.

(2.) The question he put to him: Whence art thou? Art thou from men or from heaven? From beneath or from above? He had before asked directly, Art thou a king? But here he does not directly ask, Art thou the Son of God? lest he should seem to meddle with divine things too boldly: but in general, Whence art thou? Where wast thou? and in what world hast thou a being, before thy coming into this world?

(3.) The silence of our Lord Jesus when he was examined upon this head: but Jesus gave him no answer. This was not a sullen silence, in contempt of the court, nor was it because he knew not what to say; but,

[1.] It was a patient silence, that the scripture might be fulfilled: as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, Isa. 53. 7. This silence loudly spake his submission to his Father's will in his present sufferings, which he thus accommodated himself to, and composed himself to bear. He was silent, because he would say nothing to hinder his sufferings. If Christ had avowed himself a God as plainly as he avowed himself a king, it is probable that he would not have condemned him; (for he was afraid, at the mention of it by the prosecutors;) and the Romans, though they triumphed over the kings of the nations they conquered, yet stood in awe of their gods. See 1 Cor. 2. 8. If they had known him to be the Lord of glory, they would not have crucified him; and how then must we have been obedient? [2.] It was a prudent silence. When the chief priests asked him, Art thou the Son of the Blessed? He answered, I am, for he knew they went upon the scriptures of the Old Testament which spoke of the Messiah: but when Pilate asked him, he knew he did not understand his own question, having no notion of the Messiah, and of his being the Son of God, and therefore to what purpose should he reply to him whose head was filled with the Judaism theology, to which he would have turned his answer?

(4.) The haughty check which Pilate gave for his silence; (v. 10.) "Sperkest thou not unto me? Doest thou put such an affront on me as to stand mute? What, knowest thou not, that, as president of the province, I have power, and if I think fit, to crucify thee; and have power, if I think fit, to release thee?" Observe here,

[1.] How Pilate magnifies himself, and boasts of his own authority, as not inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is said, that whoso he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, Dan. 5. 19.

Men in power are apt to be puffed up with their power, and the more absolute and arbitrary it is, the more it gratifies their pride, and humours that. But he magnifies his power to an exorbitant degree, when he boasts that he had power to crucify one whom he had declared innocent, for no prince or potentate has authority to do wrong. "Id fere- mus, quod fuerat sumpsimus,—We can only do that which we can justly do.

[2.] How he tramples upon our blessed Saviour: Spekest thou not unto me? He reflects upon him, First, As if he were undutiful and disrespectful to those in authority, not speaking when he was spoken to. Secondly, As if he had been ungrateful to one that had given him life; "Sperkest thou not to me when I had behooved thee to live?"

As if he were narrow for himself; "Wilt thou not speak to clear thyself to one that is willing to clear thee?" If Christ had indeed sought to save his life, now had been his time to have spoken; but that which he had to do, was, to lay down his life.

(5.) Christ's pertinent answer to this check, v. 11. He,

[1.] He boldly rebukes his arrogance, and rectifies his mistake; "As thou lookest and talkest, thou couldst have no power at all against me: no power to scourge, no power to crucify, except it were given thee from above." Though Christ did not think fit to answer him when he was imperfect, (then answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like him,) yet he did think fit to answer him when he was imperfect; then answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit, Prov. 26. 4. 5. When Pilate used his power, Christ silently submitted to it; but when he grew proud of it, he made him know himself; "All the power thou hast, is given thee from above;" which may be taken in either sense.

First, As reminding him that his power in general, as a magistrate, was a limited power, and he could do no more than God would suffer him to do. God is the fountain of power; and the powers that are, as they are ordained by him, and derived from him, so are subject to him. They ought to go no further than his law directs them; they can go no further than his providence permits them. They are God's hand, and his sword, Ps. 17. 15. Though the oppressor may have power against him that he shall be overthrown, yet still it is but a tool, Isa. 10. 5. 15. Let the proud oppressors know that there is a higher than they, to whom they are accountable, Exe. 5. 8. And let this silence the murmurings of the oppressed, It is the Lord; (God has bid Shimei curse David;) and let it comfort them, that their persecutors can do no more than God will let them. See Isa. 11. 9.

Secondly, As informing him that his power against him in particular, and all the efforts of that power, were by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, Acts 2. 23. Pilate never fancied himself to look so great as now, when he sat in judgment upon such a prisoner as this, who was looked upon by many as the Son of God and King of Israel, and had
the fate of so great a man at his disposal; but Christ lets him know that he was herein but an instrument in God's hand, and could do nothing against him but by the appointment of heaven, Acts 4, 27, 28.

[2.] He mildly excuses and extenuates his sin, in comparison with the sin of the ringleaders; "Therefore he that delivered me unto thee, lies under greater guilt; for thou as a magistrate hast power from above, and art in thy place, thy sin is less than theirs, who, from envy and malice, urge thee to abuse thy power."

First, It is plainly intimated that what Pilate did, was sin, a great sin, and that the force which the Jews put upon him, and which he put upon himself in it, would not justify him. Christ hereby intended a hint for the awakening of his conscience, and the intense of the fear he was now under. The guilt of others will not acquit us, nor will it if we are not in the great day to say, that others were worse than we, for we are not to be judged by comparison, but must bear our own burthen.

Secondly, Yet their's that delivered him to Pilate, was the greater sin; by this it appears that all sins are not equal, but some more heinous than others; some comparatively, as gnats, others as camels; some heinous, others as beams; some as pence, others as pounds. He that delivered Christ to Pilate, was either,

1. The people of the Jews, who cried out, Crucify him, crucify him; they had seen Christ's miracles, which Pilate had not: to them the Messiah was first sent, they were his own, and to them who were now enslaved, a Redeemer should have been most welcome, and therefore it was much worse in them to appear against him than in Pilate.

2. Or rather he means Caiaphas in particular, who was at the head of the conspiracy against Christ, and first advised his death, ch. 11. 49, 50. The sin of Caiaphas was abundantly greater than the sin of Pilate. Caiaphas prosecuted Christ from pure enmity to him and his doctrine, deliberately and of malice prepense. Pilate condemned him purely for fear of the people, and it was a hasty resolution which he had not time to cool upon.

3. Some think Christ means Judas; for though he did not immediately deliver him into the hands of Pilate, yet he betrayed him to those that did. The sin of Judas was, upon many accounts, greater than the sin of Pilate. Pilate was a stranger to Christ, Judas was his friend and follower. Pilate found no fault in Christ, but Judas knew well a deal of good by him. Pilate, though bribed, was not bribed, but Judas took a reward against the innocent; the sin of Judas was a leading sin, and let in all that followed. He was a guide to them that took Jesus. So great was the sin of Judas, that vengeance suffered him not to live; but when Christ said this, or soon after, he was gone to his own place.

V. Pilate struggles with the Jews to deliver Jesus out of their hands, but in vain. We hear no more after this of any thing that passed between Pilate and the prisoner; what remains, lay between him and the prosecutors.

1. Pilate seems more zealous than before to get Jesus discharged; (v. 12.) from thenceforth, from this time, and for this reason, because Christ had given him that answer, (v. 11.) which, though it had a rebuke in it, ye: he took it kindly; and though Christ, in the discourse of sin, he said to him, he sinned in that he did not have the spirit to submit to endure the cross, and bear witness of Christ; yet he continued to find no fault in Christ, but sought to release him, desired it, endeavoured it; he sought to release him, he contrived how to do it handsomely and safely, and so as not to disoblige the priests. It never does well, when our resolutions to do our duty are swallowed up in projects how to do it plausibly and conveniently. If Pilate's policy had not prevailed above his justice, he would not have been long seeking to release him, but would have done it; Fiat justitia, valet, quod officium justitiae done, though heaven itself should fail. 2. The Jews were more furious than ever, and more violent to get Jesus crucified. Still they carry on their design with noise and clamour as before; so now they cried out. They would have it thought that the commonalty was against him, and therefore laboured to get him cried down by a multitude, and tried to have him hanged, and to pack a mob, while a fair poll had been granted, I doubt not but it would have been carried by a great majority for the releasing of him. A few madmen may out-shout many wise men, and then fancy themselves to speak the sense (when it is but the nonsense) of a nation, or of all mankind; but it is not so easy a thing to change the sense of the people as it is to misrepresented it, and to change their cry. Now that Christ was in the hands of his enemies, his friends were shy and silent, and disappeared; and those that were against him, were forward to shew themselves so, and this gave the chief priests an opportunity to represent it as the concurring vote of all the Jews, that he should be crucified. In this outcry they endeavoured two things.

1. To blacken the prisoner as an enemy to Caesar. He had refused the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them, had declared his kingdom not to be of this world, and yet they will have it that he speaks against Caesar; at, he opposes Caesar; invades his dignity and sovereignty. It has always been the artifice of the enemies of religion, to represent it as hurtful to kings and provinces, when it would be highly beneficial to both.

2. To frighten the judge, as no friend to Caesar; "If thou let this man go unpunished, and let him go on, thou art not Caesar's friend, and therefore false to thy trust and the duty of thy place, and obnoxious to the emperor's displeasure, and liable to be turned out." They intimated a threatening that they would inform against him, and get him displaced; and here they touched him in a sensible and very tender part. But of all people those Jews should not have pretended a concern for Caesar, who were themselves so ill affected to him and his government. They should not talk of being friends to Caesar, who were themselves such back friends to him; yet thus a pretended zeal for that which is good, often serves to cover a real malice against that which is better.

3. When other expedients had been tried in vain, Pilate slightly endeavoured to banter them out of their fury, and yet, in doing that, betrayed himself to them, and yielded to the rapid stream, v. 13-15. After he had stood it out a great while, and seemed now as if he would have made a vigorous resistance upon that attack, (v. 12.) he basely surrendered. Observe here,

1. What was it that shocked Pilate; (v. 13.) when he heard that saying, that he could not be true to Caesar's honour, nor sure of Caesar's favour, if he did not put Jesus to death, then he thought it was time to look about him. All they had said to prove Christ a malefactor, and that therefore it was Pilate's duty to condemn him, did not move him, but he still kept to his conviction of Christ's innocency; but when they urged that it was his interest to hang him, he was made a prisoner of their arguments. They that bind up their happiness in the favour of men, make themselves an easy prey to the temptations of Satan.

2. What preparation was made for a definitive sentence upon this matter; Pilate brought Jesus forth, and he himself in great state took the chair; we may suppose that he called for his robes, that he might look big, and then he sat down in the judg-
ment seat. He was condemned with all the ceremony that could be. [1.] To bring us off at God's bar, and that all believers through Christ, being judged here, might be acquitted in the court of heaven. [2.] To take off the terror of pompous judgments, which his Master had stood there before him.

Notice is here taken of the place and time.

First, The place where Christ was condemned; in a place called the Pólemum, but in Hebrew, Gabbathá, probably the place where he used to sit to the sacrifices. Some make Gabbathá signify an inclosed place, fenced off from the insults of the people, whom therefore he did the less need to fear; others, an elevated place, raised that all might see him.

Secondly, The time, v. 14. It was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour. Observe, 1. The day; it was the preparation of the passover, that is, for the passover-sabbath, and the solemnities of that, as a hint of the day of the feast of unleavened bread. This is plain from Luke 23. 54. It was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. So that this preparation was for the sabbath. Note, Before the passover there ought to be preparation. This is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin in persecuting Christ with so much malice and fury; it was, when they should have been purging out the old leaven, to remember for to passover; but the better the day the worse the deed.

2. The hour; it was about the sixth hour. Some ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts read it about the third hour, which agrees with Mark 15. 25. And it appears by Matt. 27. 43. that he was upon the cross before the sixth hour. But it should seem more in line here, not as a precise determination of the time, but as an additional aggravation of the sin of his prosecutors, that they were pushing on the prosecution, not only on a solemn day, the day of the preparation, but from the third to the sixth hour, which was, as we call it, church-time; on that day they were employed in this wickedness, so that for this day, though they were priests, they dropped the temple-service, for they did not leave Christ when he was crucified, but they went on to crucify him, which frightened them away. Some think that the sixth hour, with this evangelist, is, according to the Roman reckoning and our six of the clock in the morning, answering to the Jews' first hour of the day; this is very probable, that Christ's trial before Pilate was at the height about six in the morning, which was then a little after sun-rising.

(3.) The encounter Pilate had with the Jews, both priests and people, before he proceeded to give judgment, endeavouring in vain to stem the tide of their rage.

[1.] He saith unto the Jews, Behold your King. This is a reproach to them for the absurdity and malice of their insinuó, that this Jesus made himself a king; “Behold your King, him whom you are about to crucify, and I say this is a man likely to be dangerous to the government.” I am satisfied he is not, and you may be so too, and let him alone.” Some think he hereby upbraids them with their secret disaffection to César; “You would have this man to be your king, if he would but have headed a rebellion against César.” But Pilate, though he was far from meaning so, seems as if he were speaking in answer to the Jews. Christ now crowned with thorns here, is, as it were, a little king, as we are told of all kings, who are governors of the people; “Behold your King, the King which God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion,” but they, instead of entering into it with acclamations of joyful consent, protest against him; they will not have a king of God's choosing.

[2.] They cried out with the greatest indignation, Away with him, away with him, which speaks disdain as well as malice, έξελθοντες έξ αυτου, εξ αυτον—“Take him, he is none of ours; we disown him for our kinsman, much more for our king; we have not only no veneration for him, no, nor compassion, away with him out of our sight.” For so it was written of him, he is one whom the nation abhors, (Isa. 49. 7.) and they hid it as were their faces from him, (Isa. 53. 2, 3. Away with him from the earth, Acts 22. 22. This shews, First, How we deserved to have been treated at God's tribunal; we were by sin become odious to God's holiness, which cried, Away with them, away with them, for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and we were also become obnoxious to God's justice, which cried against us, “Crucify them, crucify them, let the sentence of the law be executed.” Had not Christ interposed, and been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God. Secondly, It shews how we ought to treat our sins; we are often in scripture said to crucify sin, in conformity to Christ's death; now that Christ is crucified, we ought to crucify our sins, (Rom. 6. 11.) as much as we might. Thirdly, In a grand manner he shews that the time we should have run down sin in us, as they with an impious indignation ran him down, who was made sin for us. The true penitent casts away from him his transgressions, Away with them, away with them, (Isa. 2. 20.—30. 22.) crucify them, crucify them; it is not fit that they should live in my soul, Hos. 14. 1. 

Pilate, willing to have Jesus released, and yet that it should be their doing, asks them, Shall I crucify your king? In saying this, he designed either, First, To stop their mouths, by shewing them how absurd it was for them to reject one who offered himself to them to be their king, at a time when they needed one more than ever. Have they no sense of slavery? No desire of liberty? No value for a deliverer? Though he saw no cause to crucify him, they might see cause to hope for something from him; since crushed and sinking interests are ready to catch at any thing. Or, Secondly, To stop the mouth of his own conscience; “If this Jesus be a king,” (thinks Pilate,) “he is only king of the Jews, and therefore I have nothing to do but to make a fair tender of him to them; if they refuse him, and make it their king, what is it to me?” He banters them for their folly in expecting a Messiah, and yet running down one that bid so fair to be he.
than Caesar, and never have they had any other to this day, but have now abode many days without a king, and without a prince, (Hos. 3. 4.) without any of their own, but the kings of the nations have ruled over them; since they will have no king but Caesar, so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it.

16. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. 17. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: 18. Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

We have here sentence of death passed upon our Lord Jesus, and execution done soon after. A mighty struggle Pilate had had within him between his convictions and his corruptions; but at length his convictions yielded, and his corruption prevailed, the fear of man having a greater power over him than the fear of God.

I. Pilate gave judgment against Christ, and signed the warrant for his execution, v. 16. We may see here,

1. How Pilate sinned against his conscience; he had again and again pronounced him innocent, yet at last condemned him as guilty. Pilate, since he came to be a judge, was in much necessity and obliged and exasperated the Jewish nation, for he was a man of a haughty implacable spirit, and extremely wedded to his humour. He had seized upon the Corban, and spent it upon a water-work; he had brought in shields stamped with Caesar's image, which was very provoking to the Jews; he had sacrificed the lives of many to his resolutions herein; fearing therefore he should be explained of, for those and other insenecies, he was willing to gratify the Jews. Now this makes the matter much worse. If he had been of an easy soft and pliable disposition, his yielding to so strong a stream had been the more excusable; but for a man that was so wilful in other things, and of so fierce a resolution, to be overcome in a thing of this nature, shews him to be a bad man indeed, that could better bear the wronging of his converse than the crossing of his humour. This was an instance of the weakness of the human frame,

2. How he endeavoured to transfer the guilt upon the Jews. He delivered him, not to his own officers, (as usual,) but to the prosecutors, the chief priests and elders; so excusing the wrong to his own conscience with this, that it was but a peremptory condemnation, and that he did not put Christ to death, but only committed those that did it.

3. How Christ was made sin for us. We deserved to be here condemned, but Christ was condemned for us, that to us there might be no condemnation. God was now entering into judgment with his Son, that he might not enter into judgment with his servants.

II. Judgment was no sooner given, than with all possible expedition the prosecutors, having gained their point, resolved to lose no time. 1. Lest Pilate should change his mind, and order a reprieve. Those are enemies to our souls, the worst of enemies, that hurry us to sin, and then leave us no room to undo what we have done amiss. 2. Lest there should be an uproar among the people, and there should have been a greater number against them, than they had with so much artifice got to be for them.

It were well if we would be thus expedients in that which is good, and not stay for more difficulties.

1. They immediately hurried away the prisoners. The chief priests greedily flew upon the prey which they had been long waiting for; now it is drawn into their net. Or they, that is, the soldiers who were to attend the execution, they took him, and led him away. It was not a hurry, nor a chance, and thence to the place of execution, as is usual with us, but directly to the place of execution.

Both the priests and the soldiers joined in leading him away. Now was the Son of man delivered into the hands of men, wicked and unreasonable men. By the law of Moses (and in appeals by our law) the prosecutors were to be the executioners, Deut. 17. 7. And the priests here were proud of the office.

His running away, and his falling to that place, for he had made any opposition, but the scripture must be fulfilled, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, Acts 8. 32. We deserved to have been led forth with the workers of iniquity as criminals to execution, Ps. 109. 5. But he was led forth for us, that we might escape.

2. To add to his misery, they obliged him, as long as he was able, to carry his cross, (v. 17,) according to the custom among the Romans; hence Fairefier was among them a name of reproach. Their crosses did not stand up constantly, as our gibbets do in the places of execution; because the malefactor was nailed to the cross as it lay along upon the ground, and then it was lifted up, and fastened in the earth, and removed when the execution was over, and commonly buried with the body; so that every one, who was the sufferer of the cross, had the cross renewed his smart, and be apt to strike the thorns he was crowned with into his head; yet all this he patiently underwent, and it was but the beginning of sorrows. 2. As answering the type which went before him; Isaac, when he was to be offered, carried the wood on which he was to be bound, and with which he was to be burned. 3. As very significant of his undertaking, the Father having laid upon him all, (Isa. 53. 6.) and he being to take away sin, by bearing it in his own body upon the tree, 1 Pet. 2. 24. He had said in effect, On me be the curse; for he was made a curse for us, and therefore on him was the cross. 4. As very instructive to us. Our Master hereby taught all his disciples to take up their cross, and follow him. Whatever cross he calls us out to bear at any time, we must remember that he bore the cross first, by bearing it for us, bears it off from us in a great measure, for thus he hath made his yoke easy, and his burden light. He bore that end of the cross that had the curse upon it, that was the heavy end; and thence all that is, are enabled to call their afflictions for him light, and out for a moment.

3. They brought him to the place of execution; he went forth, not dragged against his will, but voluntarily in his sufferings. He went forth out of the city, for he was crucified without the gate, Heb. 13. 12. And to put the greater infamy upon his sufferings, he was brought to the common place of execution, as one in all points numbered among the transgressors; a place called Golgotha, the place of a skull, where they threw dead men's skulls and bones, or where the heads of beheaded malefactors were left. They thought, and would have thought, that Christ suffered, because he was made sin for us, that he might purge our consciences from dead works, and the pollution of them. If one would
take notice of the traditions of the elders, there are two which are mentioned by many of the ancient writers concerning this place. [1.] That Adam was buried here, and that this was the place of his skull, and they observed that there where death triumphed over the first Adam, death triumphed over him. Gerhard quotes for this tradition, Origin, Cyprian, Epiphanius, Austin, Jerome, and others. [2.] That this was that mountain in the land of Moriah, on which Abraham offered up Isaac, and the ram was a ransom for Isaac.

(4.) There they crucified him, and the other malefactors with him; (a.) There they crucified him. Observe, First, What death Christ died. The death of the cross, a bloody, painful, shameful death, a cursed death. He was nailed to the cross, as a sacrifice bound to the altar, as a Saviour fixed for his undertaking; his ear nailed to God’s doorpost, to serve him for ever. He was lifted up, as the brazen serpent, hung between heaven and earth, because we were unworthy of either, and abandoned by both. His hands were stretched out to invite and embrace us; he hung upon the tree some hours, dying gradually in the full use of reason and speech, that he might actually resign himself a sacrifice. Secondly, In what company he died; two others with him. Probably, those had not been executed at that time, but at the request of the chief priests, to add to the disgrace of our Lord Jesus; which might be done by such a proof of his revelation him, because their death was hastened for his sake. Had they taken two of his disciples, and crucified them with him, it had been an honour to him; but if such as they had been partakers with him in suffering, it would have looked as if they had been undertakers with him in satisfaction. Therefore it was ordered that his fellow-sufferers should be the worst of sinners, that he might bear our reproach, and that the merit might appear to be his only. This exposed him much to the people’s contempt and hatred, who are apt to judge of persons by the lump, and are not curious in distinguishing, and would conclude him not only a malefactor because he was voked with malefactors, but the worst of the three, because put in the midst. But thus the scripture was fulfilled; he was numbered among the transgressors. He did not die at the altar among the sacrifice, nor mingle his blood with that of bulls and goats; but he died among the criminals, and mingled his blood with their’s who were sacrificed to public justice.

And now let us pause a while, and with an eye of faith look upon Jesus. Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow? See him, who was clothed with glory, stripped of it all, and clothed with shame; him, who was the praise of angels, made a reproach of men; him, who had been with eternal delight and joy in the bosom of his Father, now in the extremities of pain and agony. See him bleeding, see him struggling, see him dying, see him and love him, love him and live to him, and study what we shall render. 19. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. 21. Then said the Chief Priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. 22. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. 23. Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part: and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. 24. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did. 25. Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother; and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. 26. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! 27. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home. 28. After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. 29. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. 30. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Here are some remarkable circumstances of Christ’s dying, more fully related than before, which they will take special notice of, who covet to know Christ, and him crucified.

I. The title set up over his head. Observe,

1. The inscription itself which Pilate wrote, and ordered to be fixed to the top of the cross, declaring the cause for which he was crucified, v. 19. Matthew called it, σήμα— the accusation; Mark and Luke called it, ἡ γραφή— the inscription; John calls it by the proper Latin name, πλειόνα— the title: and it was this, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Pilate intended this for his reproach, that he, being Jesus of Nazareth, should pretend to be King of the Jews, and set up in competition with Caesar, to whom Pilate would thus recommend himself, as very jealous for his honour and interest, when he would treat but a titular king, a king in metaphor, as the worst of malefactors; but God overruled this matter, (1.) That it might be a further testimony to the innocence of our Lord Jesus; for here was an accusation, which, as it was worded, condemned him. If this be that, if this be all they have to lay to his charge, surely he has done nothing worthy of death or of bonds. (2.) That it might shew forth his dignity and honour. This is Jesus the Saviour, Naosigios, the blessed Nazarete, sanctified to God; this is the King of the Jews, Messiah the Prince, the sceptre that should rise out of Israel, as Balaam had foretold; dying for the good of his people, as Caiaphas had foretold. Thus all these three bad men witnessed to Christ, though they meant not so.

2. The notice taken of this inscription; (v. 20.) Many of the Jews read it, not only those of Jerusalem, but those out of the country, and from other countries, strangers and proselytes, that came up to worship at the feast. Multitudes read it, and it oc-
casoned a great variety of reflections and speculations, as men stood affected. Christ himself was set for a sign, a title.

Here are two reasons why the title was so much read.

(1.) Because the place where Jesus was crucified, though without the gate, was yet nigh the city; which intimates that if it had been any great distance off, they would not have been led, no not by their curiosity, to go and see it, and read it. It is an advantage to have the means of knowing Christ brought to our doors.

It is written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin, which made it legible by all; they all understood one or other of these languages, and none were more careful to bring up their children to read than the Jews generally were. It likewise made it the more considerable; every one would be curious to inquire what it was, which was so industriously published in the three most known languages. In the Hebrew, the oracles of God were recorded; in Greek, the learning of the philosophers; and in Latin, the laws of the empire. In each of these Christ is proclaimed king, in whom are hid all the treasures of revelation, wisdom, and power: God so ordering it, that this should be written in the three then most known tongues; it was intimated thereby, that Jesus Christ should be a Servitor to all nations, and not to the Jews only; and also that every nation should have something in this, to give the wonderful works of the Redeemer. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, were the vulgar languages at that time in this part of the world; so that this is so far from intimating (as the Papists would have it) that the scripture is still to be retained in these three languages, that on the contrary it teaches us that the knowledge of Christ ought to be diffused throughout every nation in their own tongue, as a proper vehicle of it, that people may converse as freely with the scriptures as they do with their neighbours.

3. The offence which the prosecutors took at it, v. 21. They would not have it written, the King of the Jews; but that he said of himself, I am the King of the Jews. Here they shewed themselves, (1.) Very spiteful and malicious against Christ. It was not enough to have him crucified, but they must have some criminal charge to justify themselves in giving him such bad treatment. (2.) They shewed themselves concerned to give him a bad character, and to represent him as an usurper of honours and powers that he was not entitled to. (3.) Foolishly jealous of the honour of their nation; though they were a conquered and enslaved people, yet they stood so much upon the punctilio of their reputation, that they scrupled to have it said, that this was their king. (3.) They shew themselves very impatient and troublesome to Pilate; they could not but be sensible that they had forced him, against his mind, to condemn Christ, and yet, in such a trivial thing as this, they continue to tease him. It was so much the worse, in that, though they had charged him with pretending to be the King of the Jews, yet that did not prove it, nor had he ever said so.

The judge’s resolution to adhere to it; "What I have written I have written, and will not alter it to humour them." (1.) Hereby an affront was put upon the chief priests, who would still be dictating. It seems, by Pilate’s manner of speaking, that he was uneasy in himself for yielding to them, and vexed at them for forcing him to it; and therefore he was resolved to be explicit with them; and by this inscription in sinuisses. [1.] That, notwithstanding their pretences, they were not sincere in their affections to Caesar and his government; they were willing enough to have a king of the Jews, if they could have one to their mind. [2.] That such a king as this, so mean and despicable, was good enough to be the king of the Jews; and this would be the fate of all that should dare to oppose the Roman power.

[3.] That they had been very unjust and unreasonable in prosecuting this Jesus, when there was no fault to be found in him.

(2.) Hereby the mourner was done to the Lord Jesus. Pilate stuck to it with resolution; that he was the King of the Jews; what he had written was true; though God had first written, and therefore he could not alter; for thus it was written, that Moses the Prince shall be cut off, Dan. 9. 26. This therefore is the true cause of his death; he dies, because the King of Israel must die, must thus die. When the Jews were to reject Christ, and will not have him for their king, Pilate, the Gentile, sticks to it to that he is a king; which was an earnest of what came to pass later, when the Gentiles submitted to the kingdom of Messiah, which the unbelieving Jews had rebelled against.

11. The dividing of his garments among the executioners, v. 23, 24. Four soldiers were employed, who, when they had crucified Jesus, had nailed him to the cross. They divided his garments, and cast lots for what was to be done, and nothing more was to be done with him, excepting through the extremity of pain, as, with others, when the prisoner is turned off, then they went to make a dividend of his clothes, each claiming an equal share, and so they made four parts, as near of the same value as they could, to every soldier a part; but his coat, or upper garment, whether sleek down, being a pretty piece of curiosity, without seam, was cast in the lot. Throughout, they agreed to cast lots for that. Here observe,

1. The shame they put upon our Lord Jesus, in stripping him of his garments before they crucified him. The shame of nakedness came in with sin. He therefore who was made sin for us, bare that shame, to roll away our reproach. He was stripped, that we might be clothed with white raiment, (Rev. xvi. 11.) and that when we are unclothed, we may not be found naked.

2. The wages with which these soldiers paid themselves for crucifying Christ. They were willing to do it for his old clothes. Nothing is to be done so bad, but there will be found men bad enough to do it for a trifle. Probably, they hoped to make more than ordinary advantage of his clothes, having heard of cures wrought by the touch of the hem of his garments. Being succeeding in his admirers would give any money for them.

3. The sport they made about his seamless coat; we read not of any thing about him valuable or remarkable but that, and that not for the richness, but only the variety of it, for it was woven from the top throughout; there was no curiosity therefore in the shape, but a contrived plainness. Tradition says, his mother wore it him, and adds this further, that it was made for him when he was a child, and like the Israelites’ clothes in the wilderness was white and old; but that is a groundless fancy. The soldiers thought it pity to rend it, for then it would unravel, and a piece of it would be good for nothing; they would therefore cast lots for it. While Christ was in his dying agonies, they were merrily dividing his sins.

The preserving of Christ’s seamless coat is commonly alluded to, to shew the care all Christians ought to take, that they read not the church of Christ with strifes and divisions; yet some have observed, that the reason why the soldiers would not rend Christ’s coat, was not out of any respect to Christ, but because each of them hoped to have it entire for himself. And so many cry out against suchism, only that they may engross all the wealth and power to themselves. Those who opposed Luther’s separation from the church of Rome, urged...
much the tunica inconsoluta—the seamless coat; and some of them laid so much stress upon it, that they were called the Inconsolutists. The

4. The fulfilling of the prophecy concerning the Messiah had, and have, their full accomplishment. These things therefore the soldiers did.

III. The care that he took of his poor mother.

1. His mother attends him to his death; (v. 25.) There stood by the cross, as near as they could get, his mother, and some of his relations and friends with her. At first, they stood near, as it is said here; but, it is probable, afterward the soldiers forced them to stand far off, as it is said in Matthew and Mark: or they themselves removed out of the ground.

(1.) See here the tender affection of these pious women to our Lord Jesus in his sufferings. When all his disciples, except John, had forsaken him, they continued their attendance on him. Thus the feeble were as David, (Zech. 12: 8.) they were not deterred by the hardiness of the enemy, or the weakness of the sight; they could not rescue him or relieve him, yet they attended him, to shew their good-will. It is an impious and blasphemous construction which some of the popish writers put upon the Virgin Mary standing by the cross, that thereby she contributed to the satisfaction he made for sin, no less than he did, and so became a joint-mediatrix and co-adju­trix in our salvation.

(2.) We must easily suppose what an affliction it was to these poor women, to see him thus abused, especially to the blessed virgin. Now was fulfilled Simeon's word, 'A sword shall pierce through thine own soul,' Luke 2. 35. His torments were her tortures; she was upon the rack, while he was upon the cross; and her heart bled with his wounds; and the reproaches wherewith they reproached him, fell on them that attended him.

(3.) We may justly admire the power of divine grace in sustaining these women, especially the Virgin Mary, under this heavy trial. We do not find his mother wringing her hands, or tearing her hair, or rending her clothes, or making an outcry; but, with a wonderful composure, standing by the cross, and her heart bleeds with him. Surely she and they were strengthened by a divine power to this degree of patience; and surely the Virgin Mary had a fuller expectation of his resurrection than the rest had, which supported her thus. We know not what we can hear till we are tried, and then we know who has said, My grace is sufficient for thee.

2. He tenderly provides for his mother at his death. It is probable that Joseph, her husband, was with her here, and the Virgin Mary, his mother, had supported her, and her relation to him had been her maintenance; and now that he was dying, what would become of her? He saw her standing by, and knew her cares and griefs, and he saw John standing not far off, and so he settled a new relation between his beloved mother, and his beloved disciple; for he said to her, 'Woman, behold thy son; for whom henceforth shall I have no care, is thy son. And he said to John, 'Behold thy mother;' to whom thou must pay a filial duty.' And so from that hour, that hour never to be forgotten, that disciple took her to his own home. See here.

(1.) The care Christ took of his dear mother. He was not so much taken up with a sense of his sufferings as to forget his friends; all whose concerns he bore upon his heart. His mother, perhaps was so taken up with his sufferings, that she thought not what would become of her; but he admitted that thought. Silver and gold he had none to leave, no state, real or personal; what he had seized, and we hear no more of the bag since Judas, who had carried it, hanged himself. He had therefore no other way to provide for his mother, than by his interest in a friend, which he does here.

[1.] He calls her woman, not mother, not out of any disrespect to her, but because mother would have been a cutting word to her that was already stung with the heart with grief: like Isaac saying to Abraham, My father. He speaks as one that was now no more in this world, but was already dead to those in it that were dearest to him. His speaking in this seemingly slight manner to his mother, as he had done formerly, was designed to obviate and give check to the undue honours which he foresaw would be given her in the Romish church, as if she were a joint-purchaser with him in the honours of the Redeemer.

[2.] He directs her to look upon John as her son; 'Behold him as thy son, who stands there by thee, and be as a mother to him.' See here, First, An instance of divine goodness, to be observed for our encouragement. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, perhaps more than was the object of our expectation. Thus the church of children which the church shall have after she has lost the other, Isa. 49. 20. Let none therefore re­ckon all gone with one cistern dried up, for from the same fountain, another may be filled. Secondly, An instance of filial duty, to be observed for our imitation. Christ has here taught children, to the utmost of their power, to provide for the comfort of their aged parents. When David was in distress, he took care of his parents, and found out a shelter for them; (1 Sam. 22. 3.) so the Son of David here. Children, at their death, according to their ability, should provide for their parents, if they survive them, and need their kindness.

(2.) The confidence he reposed in the beloved disciple. It is to him he says, Behold thy mother, I recommend her to thy care; be thou a son to her, to guide her, (Isa. 51. 18.) and forsake her not when she is old, Prov. 23. 22. Now, [1.] This was an honour put upon John, and a testimony both to his prudence and to his fidelity. If he, who knows all things, had not known that John loved him, he would not have made him his mother's guardian. It is a great honour to be employed for Christ, and to be trusted with the concerns of his church in the world. But, [2.] It would be a care and some charge to John; but he cheerfully accepted it, and took her to his own home, not objecting the trouble or expense, or his obligations to his own family, or the ill-will he might contract by it. Note, Those that truly love Christ, and are loved of him, will be glad of an opportunity to do any service to him, or his. "Necpehorus's huncel. Hist. cap. 3. saith, that the son of Men, who lived with John during eleven years, and then died. Others, that she lived to remove with him to Ephesus.

IV. The fulfilling of the scripture, in the giving of him vinegar to drink, v. 28, 29. Observe, 1. How much respect Christ shewed to the scripture; (v. 28.) Knowing that all things hitherto were accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled; and also because of his concern for his mother, he saith, I thirst, that is, he called for drink.

[1.] It was not at all strange that he was thirsty; we find him thirsty in a journey, (ch. 4. 6, 7.) and now thirsty when he was just at his journey's end. Well might he thirst, after all the toil and hurry which he had undergone; and being now in the agonies of death, ready to expire purely by the loss of blood and extremity of pain. The torrents of
It is finished, that is, the malice and enmity of his persecutors had now done its worst; when he had received that last indignity in the vinegar they gave him, he said, "This is the last; I am now going to the place of their reach, where the wicked cease from troubling."

(2.) It is finished, that is, the counsel and commandment of his Father concerning his sufferings were now fulfilled: it was a determinate counsel, and he took care to see every iota and tittle of it exactly answered, Acts 2:23. He had said, when he entered upon his sufferings, Father, thy will be done; and now he saith with pleasure, It is done. It was his sweat and drink to finish his work, (ch. 4:34,) and the meat and drink refreshed him, when they gave him gall and vinegar.

(3.) It is finished, that is, all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament, which pointed at the sufferings of the Messiah, were accomplished and answered. He speaks as if, now that they had given him the vinegar, he could not bethink himself of any word in the Old Testament that was to be fulfilled between him and his death, but it had its accomplishment; such as, his being sold for thirty pieces of silver, his hands and feet being pierced, and his garments being divided; and now that this is done, It is finished.

(4.) It is finished, that is, the ceremonial law is abolished, and a period put to the obligation of it. The substance is now come, and all the shadows are gone away. It must now be concluded that partition is taken down, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, Eph. 2:14, 15. The Mosaic economy is dissolved, to make way for a better hope.

(5.) It is finished, that is, sin is finished, and an end made of transgression, by the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness. It seems to refer to Dan. 9:24. The Lamb of God was sanctified to take away the sin of the world, and it is done, Heb. 9:26.

(6.) It is finished, that is, his sufferings were now finished, both those of his soul, and those of his body; the storm is over, the worst is past; all his pains and agonies are at an end, and he is just going to paradise, entering upon the joy set before him. Let all that suffer for Christ and with Christ, comfort themselves with this, that yet a little while, and they also shall say, It is finished.

(7.) It is finished, that is, his life was now finished, he was just ready to breathe his last, and now he is no more in this world, ch. 17:11. This is like that of blessed Paul, (2 Tim. 4:7,) I have finished my course, my race is run, my glass is out, mene, mene—numbered and finished. This we must all come to shortly.

(8.) It is finished, that is, the work of man's redemption and salvation is now completed, at least the hardest part of the undertaking is over; a full satisfaction is made to the justice of God, a fatal blow given to the power of Satan, a fountain of grace opened, that shall ever flow, a foundation of peace and happiness laid, that shall never fail. Christ had now gone through with his work, and finished it, ch. 17:4. For, as for God, his work is perfect; when we say, he finished it, it was the work of God. And as in the purchase, so in the application of the redemption, he that has begun a good work, will perform it; the mystery of God shall be finished.

2. What he did; He bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. He was voluntary in dying; for he was not only the sacrifice, but the priest and the offerer; and the animus offerenti—the mind of the offerer will be all in all in the sacrifice. Christ showed his will in his sufferings; by the which will we are sanctified.

(1.) He gave up the ghost. His life was not forcibly extorted from him, but freely resigned. He
had said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit; thereby expressing the intention of this act. I give up myself as a ransom for many; and, accordingly, he did give up his spirit, paid down the price of pardon and life at his Father's hands. Father, glorify thy name.

2. He bowed his head. They that were crucified, in dying stretched up their heads to gasp for breath, and did not drop their heads till they had breathed their last; but Christ, to shew himself active in dying, bowed his head first, composing himself, as it were, to fall asleep. God had told him the majesty of us all, putting them upon the head of his great sacrifice; and some think that by this bowing of his head he would intimate his sense of the weight upon him. See Ps. 38. 4—40. 12. The bowing of his head shews his submission to his Father's will, and his obedience to death. He accommodated himself to his dying work, as Jacob, who gathered up his feet into the bed, and then yielded up the ghost.

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath-day, (for that sabbath-day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. 33. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. 35. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. 36. For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37. And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on whom they pierced.

This passage concerning the piercing of Christ's side after his death, is recorded only by this evangelist.

1. Observe the superstition of the Jews which occasioned it; (v. 31.) Because it was the preparation for the sabbath, and that sabbath-day, because it fell in the passover-week, was a high day, that they might shew a veneration for the sabbath, they would not have the dead bodies to remain on the cross on the sabbath-day, but besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, which would be a certain, but cruel dispatch, and that then they might be buried out of sight.

Note here, 1. The esteem they would be thought to have for the approaching sabbath, because it was one of the high days, and a great day, but this was a high day, passover-week—a great day. Passover sabbaths are high days; sacrament-days, supper-days, communion-days, are high days, and there ought to be more than ordinary preparation for them, that these may be high days indeed to us, as the days of heaven.

2. The reproach which they reckoned it would be to that day, if the dead bodies should be left hanging upon the cross. Dead bodies were not to be left at any time; (Deut. 21. 23.) yet, in this case, the Jews would have left the Roman custom to take place, had it not been an extraordinary day; and many strangers from all parts being then at Jerusalem, it would have been an offence to them; nor could they well bear the sight of Christ's crucified body, for, unless their consciences were quite seared, he that had muscle and flesh of their rage was a little over; they would upbraid them.

3. Their petition to Pilate, that their bodies, now as good as dead, might be dispatched; not by strangling or beheading them, which would have been a compassionate hastening them out of their misery, like the coup de grace (as the French call it) to them that are broken upon the wheel, the stroke of death, or rather, the mop, which would carry them off in the most exquisite pain. Observe, (1.) The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. (2.) The pretended sanctity of hypocrites is abominable. These Jews would be thought to bear a great regard to the sabbath, and yet had no regard to justice and righteousness; they made no conscience of bringing an innocent and excellent person to the cross, and yet scrupled letting a dead body hang upon the cross.

II. The dispatch of the two thieves that were crucified with him, v. 32. Pilate was still gratifying the Jews, and gave orders as they desired; and the soldiers came, hardened against all impressions of pity, and broke the legs of the two thieves, which, no doubt, extended from them hideous outcries, and made them die according to the bloody disposition of Nero, so as to feel themselves die. One of these thieves repented, and had the assurance of an assurance that he should shortly be with him in paradise, and yet died in the same pain and misery that the other thief did; for all things come alike to all; many go to heaven, that have hands in their death, and die in the bitterness of their soul. The extremity of dying agonies is no obstruction to the living comforts that wait for holy souls on the other side death. Christ died, and went to paradise, but appointed a guard to convey him thither. This is the order of going to heaven—Christ, the first-fruits and forerunner, afterward they that are Christ's.

III. The trial that was made whether Christ was dead or no, and the putting of it out of doubt.

1. They supposed him to be dead, and therefore did not break his legs, v. 33. Observe here, (1.) The Jews were in less haste than those crucified ordinarily did. The structure of his body, legs, right and left, being extraordinarily fine and tender, was the sooner broken by pain; or, rather, it was to shew that he laid down his life of himself, and could die when he pleased, though his hands were nailed. Though he yielded to death, yet he was not conquered. (2.) That his enemies were satisfied he was really dead. The Jews, who stood by to see the execution effectually done, would not have omitted this piece of cruelty, if they had not been sure he was got out of the reach of it.

(2.) Whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand. It was fully designed to break his legs, but, God's counsel being otherwise, see how it was prevented.

2. Because they would be sure he was dead, they made such an experiment as would put it past dispute. All the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, aiming at his heart, and forthwith came there out blood and water, v. 34.

(1.) The soldier hereby designed to decide the question whether he was dead or no, and, by this honourable wound in his side, to supersede the ignominious method of dispatch they took with the other. Tradition says that this soldier's name was Longinus, one of them that had for many years kept his eyes, he was immediately cured of it, by some drops of blood that flowed out of Christ's side lighting on them: significant enough, if we had any good authority for the story.

(2.) But God had a further design therein, which was,
[1.] To give an evidence of the truth of his death, in order to the proof of his resurrection. If he was only in a trance or swoon, his resurrection was a sham; but, by this experiment, he was certainly dead, for this spear broke up the very fountains of life, and, accepting of the death and curse of nature, it was impossible a human body should survive such a wound in the vitals, and such an evacuation thence.

[2.] To give an illustration of the design of his death. There was much of mystery in it, and its being so solemnly attested, (v. 35.) intimates there was something miraculous in it, that the blood and water should come out together, and separate for the same wound; however, that was very significant; this same apostle refers to it as a very considerable thing, 1 John 5. 6, 8.

First, The opening of his side was significant. When we would protest our sincerity, we wish there were a window in our hearts, that the thoughts and intents of them might be visible to all. Through this window, opened in Christ's side, you may look into his heart, and see love flaming there, love strong as death; see our own names written there. Some make it an allusion to the opening of Adam's side in innocency. When Christ, the second Adam, was fallen into a deep sleep upon the cross, then was his side opened, and out of it was his church taken, which he espoused to himself. See Eph. 5. 30, 32. Our devout poet, Mr. George Herbert, in his poem called The Bough, very affectingly brings in our Saviour, when his side was pierced, thus speaking to his disciples:

If ye have any thing to send, or write, (I have no bag, but here is room,) Unto my Father's hands and sight (Believe me) it shall safely come. That is all I mean, and what you impart, Look, you may put it very near my heart; Or if hereafter any of my friends Will use me in this kind, the door Shall still be open; what he sends I will present, and somewhat more, Not to his hurt. Sighs will convey Any thing to me. Hark, Despair, away.

Secondly, The blood and water that flowed out of it were significant:

1. They signified the two great benefits which all believers partake of through Christ—justification and sanctification to all the law and course of regeneration; blood foratonement, water for purification. Blood and water were used very much under the law. Guilt contracted must be expiated by blood; stains contracted must be done away by the water of purification. These two must always go together. Ye are sanctified, ye are justified, 1 Cor. 6. 11. Christ has joined them together, and we must not think we can put them asunder. They both flowed from the pierced side of our Redeemer. To Christ crucified we owe both merit for our justification, and Spirit and grace for our sanctification; and we have as much need of the latter as of the former, 1 Cor. 1. 30.

2. They signify the two great ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, by which these benefits are represented, sealed, and applied to believers; they both owe their institution and efficacy to Christ. It is not the water in the font that will be to us the washing of regeneration, but the water out of the side of Christ; not the blood of the grape that will pacify the conscience and refresh the soul, but the blood out of the side of Christ. Now was the rock smitten, (1 Cor. 10. 4.) now was the fountain opened, (Zech. 13. 1.) now were the wells of salvation digged, Isa. 12. 3. Here is the river, the streams wherein make glad the city of our God.

IV. The attestation of the truth of this by an eyewitness, (v. 35.) the evangelist himself. Observe,

1. What a competent witness he was of the matters of fact. (1.) What he bare record of he saw; he had it not by hearsay, nor was it only his own conjecture, but he was an eye-witness of it; it is what we have seen and looked upon, (1 John 1. 1. 2.) and had perfect understanding of it; Luke 1. 3. (2.) What he saw he faithfully bare record of; as a faithful witness, he told not only the truth, but the whole truth; and did not only attest it by word of mouth, but left it upon record in writing, in perpetuum, rei memoria—unfading memory. (3.) His record is undoubtedly true; for he wrote not only from his own personal knowledge and observation, but from the dictates of the Spirit of truth, that leads into all truth. (4.) He had himself a full assurance of the truth of what he wrote, and did not persuade others to believe that which he did not believe himself; he knows that he saith true. (5.) He therefore witnessed these things, that we might believe; he did not record them merely for his own satisfaction or the private use of his friends, but made them public to the world; not to please the curious or entertain the ingenious, but to draw men to believe the gospel in order to their eternal welfare.

2. What care he shewed in this particular instance. That we may be well assured, both of the truth of Christ's death, he saw his heart's blood, his life's blood, let out; and also of the benefits that flow to us from his death, signified by the blood and water which issued from his side. Let this silence the fears of weak Christians, and overthrow our sloth: there is no hope, iniquity shall not be their ruin, for there came both water and blood out of Christ's pierced side, both to justify and sanctify them; and if you ask, How can we be sure of this? You may be sure, for he that saw it bare record.

V. The accomplishment of the scripture in all this; (v. 36.) that the scripture should be fulfilled, as also both of the Old Testament preserved, and the truth of the New Testament confirmed. Here are two instances of it together.

1. The scripture was fulfilled in the preserving of his legs from being broken; therein that word was fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. (1.) There was a promise of this made indeed to all the righteous, but principally pointing at Jesus Christ the righteous; (Ps. 34. 20.) He keepeth all his bones, not one of them is broken. And David, in inspiration, All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? Ps. 35. 10.

(2.) There was a type of this in the paschal lamb, which seems to be especially referred to here, (Exod. 12. 46.) Neither shall ye break a bone thereof: and it is repeated, (Numb. 9. 12.) Ye shall not break any bone of it; for which law the will of the law-maker is the reason, but the antitype must answer the type. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5. 7. He is the Lamb of God, (ch. 1. 59.) and, as the true passover, his bones were kept unbroken. This commandment was given concerning his bones, when dead, as of Joseph's, Heb. 11. 22.

(3.) There was a significance in it; the strength of the hody is in the bones. The Hebrew word for the bones signifies the strength, and therefore not a bone of his shall be broken; but though he be crucified in weakness, his strength to save is not at all broken. Sin breaks our bones, it broke David's, (Ps. 51. 8.) but it did not break Christ's bones; he stood firm under the burden, mighty to save.

2. The scripture was fulfilled in the piercing of his side; (v. 37.) They shall look on him whom they have pierced; so it is written, Zech. 12. 10. And there the same that pours out the spirit of grace, and can be no less than the God of the holy prophets, says, They shall look upon me, which is here
applied to Christ, They shall look upon him. (1.) It is here implied that the Messiah shall be pierced; and here it had a more full accomplishment than in the piercing of his hands and feet; he was pierced by his betters and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, wounded in the house of his friends, as it follows, Zech. 13. 6. (2.) It is promised that when the Spirit is poured out, they shall look on him and mourn. This was in part fulfilled, when many of those that were his betrayers and murderers, were trampled under foot, and brought to believe in him; it will be further fulfilled in mercy, when all Israel shall be saved; and in wrath, when they who persisted in their infidelity, shall see him whom they have pierced, and wail because of him, Rev. 1. 7. But it is applicable to us all; we have all been guilty of piercing the Lord Jesus, and are all concerned with suitable affections to look on him.

38. And after this Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews', preparation-day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

We have here an account of the burial of the blessed body of our Lord Jesus. The solemn funerals of great men are looked at with curiosity; the mournful funerals of dear friends are attended with concern. Come and see an extraordinary funeral; never was the like! Come and see a burial that conquered the grave, and buried it, a burial that beautified the grave, and softened it for all believers! Let us turn aside now, and see this great sight.

Here we have:

I. The body begg'd, v. 38. This was done by the interest of Joseph of Arimathea, or Arimathea, of whom no mention is made in all the New Testament story, but only in the narrative which each of the evangelists gives us of Christ's burial, wherein he was chiefly concerned. Observe

1. The character of this Joseph. He was a disciple of Christ incognito—in secret, a better friend to Christ than he would be known to be. It was his honour that he was a disciple of Christ; and some such there are, that are themselves great men, and unavoidably linked with bad men; but it was his weakness that he was so secretly, when he should have confessed Christ before men, yea though he had lost his preferment by it. Disciples should openly own themselves, yet Christ may have many that are his disciples sincerely, though secretly; better secretly than not at all, especially if, like Joseph here, they grow stronger and stronger. Some who in lesser trials have been timorous, yet in greater have been very courageous; so Joseph here. He concealed his affection to Christ, for fear of the Jews, lest they should put him out of the synagogue, at least out of the Sanhedrim, which was all they could do. To Pilate the governor he went boldly, and yet feared the Jews. The impotent malice of those that can but censure, and revile, and clamour, is sometimes more formidable even to wise and good men than one would think.

The body be bore in this affair. He, having by his place access to Pilate, desired leave of him to dispose of the body. His mother and dear relations have neither spirit nor interest to attempt such a thing. His disciples were gone; if nobody appear, the Jews or soldiers would bury him with the thievies; therefore God raised up this gentleman to interpose in it, that the scripture might be fulfilled, and the Crucification to his approaching resurrection maintained. Note, When God has work to do, he can find out such as are proper to do it, and spirit them for it. Observe it as an instance of the humiliation of Christ, that his dead body lay at the mercy of a heathen judge, and must be begg'd before it could be buried; and also that Joseph would not take the body of Christ till he had asked and obtained leave of the governor; for in those things wherein the power of the magistrate is concerned, we must even pay a deference to that power, and peaceably submit to it.

II. The embalming prepared, v. 39. This was done by Nicodemus, another person of quality, and in a public post. He brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, which, some think, were bitter ingredients, to embalm the body, others fragrant ones, to perfume it. Here is

1. The character of Nicodemus, which is much the same with that of Joseph; he was a secret friend to Christ, though not his constant follower. He at first came to Jesus by night, but now owned him publicly, as before, ch. 7. 50, 51. That grace which at first is like a bruised reed, may afterward become like a strong shoot; and the trembling lamb may be a lion. See Rom. 14. 4. It is a wonder that Joseph and Nicodemus, men of such interest, did not appear sooner, and solicit Pilate not to condemn Christ, especially seeking him so loath to do it. Begging his life would have been a nobler piece of service than begging his body. But Christ would have none of his friends to endeavour to prevent his death when his hour was come. While his persecutors were forwarding the accomplishment of the scriptures, his followers must not obstruct it.

2. The kindness of Nicodemus, which was considerable, though of a different nature. Joseph served Christ with his interest, Nicodemus with his purse. Probably, they agreed it between them, that while one was procuring the grant, the other should be preparing the spices; and that for expediency, because they were straitened in time.

But why did they make this ado about Christ's dead body?

(1.) Some think we may see in it the weakness of their faith. A firm belief of the resurrection of Christ the third day, would have saved them this care and cost, and have been more acceptable than all spices and perfumes; for the glory of the grave is a fast home. Need to be clad accordingly; but what need of such furniture of the grave for one that, like a way-faring man, did but turn aside into it, to tarry for a night or two?

(2.) However, we may plainly see in it the strength of their love. Hereby they shewed the value they had for his person and doctrine, and that it was not lessened by the reproaching of the cross. They that had been so industrious to profane his crown, and lay his honour in the dust, may already see that they imagine a vain thing; for as God had done him honour in his sufferings, so did men too, even great men. They shewed not only the charitable respect of committing his body to the earth, but the honourable respect shewed to great men. This
they might do, and yet believe and look for his resurrección; nay, this they might do in the belief and expectation of it. Since God designed honour for this body, they would put honour upon it. However, we must do our duty according as the present day and opportunity are, and leave it to God to fulfil his promises in his own time.

III. The body got ready, v. 40. They took it into some house adjoining, and, having washed it from blood and dust, wound it in linen clothes very decently, with the spices melted down, it is likely, into an ointment, as the manner of the Jews is to bury, or to embalm, (so Dr. Hammond,) as we see dead bodies are done.

Here was care taken of Christ's body; it was wound in linen clothes. Among other clothing that belongs to us, Christ put on even the grave-clothes, to make them easy to us, and to enable us to call them our wedding-clothes. They wound the body with the spices, for all his garments, his grave-clothes not excepted, smell of myrrh and aloes, (the spices here mentioned,) out of the ivory palaces; (Ps. 44. 8.) and an ivory palace the sepulchre hewn out of a rock, was given to Christ. Dead bodies and graves are noisome and offensive; hence sin is compared to a body of death and an open sepulchre; but Christ's sacrifice, being to God as a sweet-smelling savour, hath taken away our pollution. No ointment or perfume can rejoice the heart, as the grave of our Redeemer does, where there is faith to perceive the fragrant odours of it.

We see, from this example, we ought to have regard to the dead bodies of Christians; not to enshrine and adore their relics, nor to those of the most eminent saints and martyrs, (nothing like that was done to the dead body of Christ himself,) but carefully to deposite them, the dust in the dust, as those who believe the dead bodies of the saints are still united to Christ, and designed for glory and immortality at the last day. The resurrection of the saints will be in virtue of Christ's resurrection, and therefore in burying them we should have an eye to Christ's burial, for he, being dead, thus speaketh, Thy dead men shall live, Isa. 26. 19. In burying our dead, it is not necessary, that in all circumstances we imitate the burial of Christ, as if we must be buried in linen, and in a garden, and be embalmed as he was; but he being buried after the manner of the Gentiles, the same form we must conform to the usages of the countries where we live, except in those that are superstitions.

IV. The grave pitchèd upon in a garden which belonged to Joseph of Arimathæa, very near the place where he was crucified. There was a sepulchre, or vault, prepared for the first occasion, but not yet used. Observe,

1. That Christ was buried without the city, for thus the manner of the Jews was to bury, not in their cities, much less in their synagogues, which some have thought better than our way of burying; yet there was then a peculiar reason for it, which does not hold now, because the touching of a grave contracted a ceremonial pollution; but now that the resurrection of Christ has altered the property of the grave, and done away its pollution for all believers, we need not continue to follow it. The grave is not an impediment, but a help to us, it makes it incapable of a good improvement, to have the congregation of the dead in the church-yard, encompassing the congregation of the living in the church, since they also are dying, and in the midst of life we are in death. Those that would not superstitionishly, but by faith, visit the holy sepulchre, must go forth out of the noise of this world.

2. That a sepulchre is buried in a garden. Observe,

(1.) That Joseph had his sepulchre in his garden; so he contrived it, that it might be a memorandum, [1.] To himself while he lived; when he was taking the pleasure of his garden, and reaping the profits of it, let him think of dying, and be quickened to prepare for it. The garden is a proper place for meditation, and a sepulchre there may furnish us with a proper subject for thanksgiving, and so refresh us as we walk to admit in the midst of our pleasure.

(2.) To his heirs and successors when he was gone. It is good to acquaint ourselves with the place of our father's sepulchres; and perhaps we might make our own less formidable, if we made their's more familiar.

(2.) That in a sepulchre in a garden Christ's body was laid. In the garden of Eden, death and the first death having taken place there, it was there they were buried, (Gen. 3. 19.) and the garden they are conquered, disarmed, and triumphed over. In a garden Christ began his passion, and from a garden he would rise, and begin his exaltation. Christ fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, (ch. 12. 24.) and therefore was sown in a garden among the seeds, for his dew is as the dew of herbs, Isa. 60. 19. He is the fountain of gardens, Cant. 4. 17.

3. That he was buried in a new sepulchre. This was so ordered, (1.) For the honour of Christ; he was not a common person, and therefore must not mix with common dust. He that was born from a virgin-womb, must rise from a virgin-tomb. (2.) For the confirming of the truth of his resurrection; that it might not be suggested that it was not he, but some other that rose now, when many beings of the resurrection have not been described as he was of some other, as the man that was raised by the touch of Elia's bones, and not by his own power. He that has made all things new, has made new the grave for us.

V. The funeral solemnized; (v. 42.) There laid they Jesus, that is, the dead body of Jesus. Some think the calling of that Jesus, intimates the inseparable union between the soul and body. But of this dead body was Jesus—a Saviour, for his death is our life; Jesus is still the same, Heb. 13. 8. There they laid him because it was the preparation day.

1. Observe here the deference which the Jews paid to the sabbath, and to the day of preparation. Before the passover-sabbath they had a solemn day of preparation. This day had been ill kept by the chief priests and scribes, and was well kept by the disciples of Christ, who were branded as dangerous to the church; and it is often so. (1.) They would not put off the funeral till the sabbath-day, because the sabbath is to be a day of holy rest and joy, with which the business and sorrow of a funeral do not well agree. (2.) They would not drive it too late on the day of preparation for the sabbath. What is to be done on the evening before the sabbath, should so contrive it, that it may neither introuble upon sabbath-time, nor indispose for sabbath-work.

2. Observe the convenience they took of an adjoining sepulchre; the sepulchre they made use of, was nigh at hand. Perhaps, if they had had time, they would have carried him to Bethany, and buried him among his friends there. And I am sure he had more right to have been buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the sons of David than any of the kings of Judah had; but it was so ordered, that he should be laid in a sepulchre nigh at hand. (1.) Because he was to lie there but a while, as in an inn, and therefore he took the first that offered itself. (2.) Because this was a new sepulchre. They that prepared it, little thought who should handel it; but the wisdom of God has reaches infinitely beyond ours, and makes what use he pleases of us all, as we have. (3.) We are hereby taught not to be over-curious in the place of our burial. Where the
tree fall, why should it not die? For Christ was buried in the sepulchre that was next at hand. It was faith in the promise of Canaan, that directed the Patriarchs' desires to be carried thither for a burying-place; but now that that promise is superseded by a better, that care is over.

Thus without pomp or solemnity is the body of Jesus laid in the cold and silent grave. Here lies our Saviour unburdened for our debts, so that if he be released, his discharge will be our's. Here is the sun of righteousness set for a while, to rise again in greater glory, and set no more. Here lies a seeming captive to death, but a real conqueror over death; for here lies death itself slain, and the grave conquered. Thanks be to God who gave us the victory.

CHAP. XX.

This evangelist, though he began not his gospel as the rest did, yet concludes it as they did, with the history of Christ's resurrection; not of the thing itself; for none of them describe how he rose, but of the proofs and evidences of it, which demonstrate that he was risen. The proofs of Christ's resurrection, which we have in this chapter, are 1. Such as occurred immediately at the sepulchre. 1. The sepulchre found empty, and the grave-clothes in good order, v. 1—10. 2. Two angels appearing to Mary Magdalen at the sepulchre, v. 11—13. 3. Christ himself appearing to her, v. 14—16. II. Such as occurred afterward at the meetings of the apostles. 1. At one, the same day at evening that Christ rose, when Thomas was absent, v. 19—25. 2. At another, that day seven-night, when Thomas was with them, v. 26—31. What is related here, is mostly what was omitted by the other evangelists.

1. THE first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalen early, when it was yet dark unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

2. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. 3. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did out-run Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. 5. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, 7. And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. 8. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. 9. For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. 10. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

There was no one thing which the apostles were more concerned to produce substantial proof of, than the resurrection of their Master. 1. Because that was it which he himself had appealed to as the last and most cogent proof of his being the Messiah. They that would not believe other signs were referred to this sign of the prophet Jonas. And therefore his enemies were most solicitous to stifle the notice of this, because it was put on this issue; and if he be risen, they are not only murderers, but murderers of the Messiah. 2. Because this was that upon which the performance of his undertaking for our redemption and salvation did depend. If he give his life a ransom, and do not resume it, it does not appear that his giving of it was accepted as a satisfaction. If he be imprisoned for our debt, and lie by it, we are undone, 1 Cor. 15. 17. 3. Because he never showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection. Acts 10, 40, 41. We should have said, "Let his ignominious death be private, and his glorious resurrection public." But God's thoughts are not as our's; and he ordered it that his death should be public before the sun, by the same token that he blushed and hid his face upon it. But the demonstrations of his resurrection should be reserved as a favour for his particular friends, and by them be published to the world, that they might be blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.

The method of proof is such as gives abundant satisfaction to those who are piously disposed to receive the doctrine and law of Christ, and yet leaves room for those to object, who are willingly ignorant and obstinate in their unbelief. And this is a fair trial, suited to all sorts of men and their dispositions.

In these verses, we have the first step toward the proof of Christ's resurrection, which is, that the sepulchre was found empty. He is not here, and if so, they must tell us where he is, or we conclude him risen.

1. Mary Magdalen, coming to the sepulchre, finds the stone taken away. This evangelist does not mention the other women that went with Mary Magdalen, but her only, because she was the most active and forward in this visit to the sepulchre, and in her appeared the most affection; and, 1. It was an affection kindled by a good cause, in consideration of the great things Christ had done for her. Much was forgiven her, therefore she loved much. 2. She had shewed her affection to him while he lived, attended his doctrine, ministered to him of her substance, Luke 8. 2, 3. It does not appear that she had any business now at Jerusalem, but to wait upon him, for the women were not bound to go up to the feast, and, probably, she and others now followed him the closer, as Elisha did Elijah, now that they knew their master should shortly be taken from their head, 2 Kings 2. 1, 2. 3. The continued instatements to her at the sepulchre are to prove the sincerity of her love. Note, Love to Christ, if it be cordial, will be constant. Her love to Christ was strong as death, the death of the cross, for it stood by that; cruel as the grave, for it made a visit to that, and was not deterred by its terrors.

1. She came to the sepulchre, to wash the dead body with her tears, for she went to the grave to mourn there, and to anoint it with the ointment she had prepared. The grave is a house that people do not care for making visits to. That they are free among the dead, are separated from the living; and it must be an extraordinary affection to the person, which will endure his grave to us. It is especially fruitful to the weak and timorous soul. Could she, that had not strength enough to roll away the stone, pretend to such a thing as the grave? The Jews' religion forbade them to meddle any more than needs must with graves and dead bodies. In visiting Christ's sepulchre she expressed herself, and perhaps the disciples, to the suspicion of a design to steal him away; and what real service could she do him by it? But her love answers these and a thousand such objections. Note, [1.] We may study to do honour to Christ in those things wherein yet we cannot be profitable to him. [2.] Love to Christ will take off the terror of death and the grave. If we cannot come to Christ but
through that darksome valley, even in that, if we love him, we will fear no evil.

2. She came as soon as she could, for she came,

1. Upon the first day of the week, as soon as
the sabbath was gone, longing not to set corn
and to set forth wheat; (as Amos 8. 5.) but to be at
the sabbath comfort. The sabbath that love Christ, will take
the first opportunity of testifying their respect to him.
This was the first christian sabbath, and she begins
it accordingly with inquiries after Christ. She
had spent the day before in commemorating the work
of creation; and therefore rested; but now she is
upon search into the work of redemption, and there-
fore makes a visit to Christ, and him crucified.

2. The time early was, when it was yet dark; and
early did she see it.

Note, Those who would seek
Christ so as to find him, must seek him early; First,
Seek him solicitously, with such a care as even
breaks the sleep; be up early for fear of missing
him. Secondly, Seek him industriously; we must
deny ourselves and our own repose in pursuit of
Christ. Thirdly, Seek him betimes, early in our
days, early every day. My voice shall thou hear
in the morning, and in the evening shall thy
heed be ready to be called up; that is, thus they
think. But that diligently inquire after Christ while it is yet dark, shall have
such light given them concerning him as shall shine
more and more.

3. She found the stone taken away, which she
had seen rolled to the door of the sepulchre. Now
this was,

1. A surprise to her, for she little expected it.
Christ crucified is the fountain of life, his grave
one of the wells of salvation, if we come to it in faith,
thought to a carnal heart be it a spring shut up; we
shall find the stone rolled away, (as Gen. 29. 10.)
and free access to the comforts of it. Surprising
comforts are the frequent encouragements of early
seekers.

2. It was the beginning of a glorious discovery;
the Lord was risen, though she did not at first ap-
prehend it so. Note, First, That they are most
constant in their adherence to Christ, and most dili-
gent in their inquiries after him, have commonly
the first and sweetest notices of the divine grace.
Mary Magdalen, who followed Christ to the last
of his humiliation, met him with the first in his ex-
altation. Secondly, God ordinarily reveals himself
and his comforts to us by degrees; to raise our ex-
pectations and quicken our inquiries.

2. Finding the stone taken away, she hastens
back to Peter and John, who, probably, lodged to-
gether at that end of the town, not far off, and
acquaints them with it; * They have taken the
Lord out of the sepulchre, conveying him the honour
of such a decent burying place, and we know not
where they have laid him, nor where to find him, that
we may say him the remainder of our last respects.

Observe here,

1. What a notion Mary had of the thing as it now
appeared; she found the stone gone, looked into the
grave, and saw it empty. Now one would expect
that the first thought that offered itself, should have
been, Surely the Lord is risen; for whenever he had
told them that he should be crucified, which she had
now seen accomplished in such manner, by the same
breath, that the third day he should rise again.
Could she feel the great earthquake that happened as she was coming to the sepulchre, or
getting ready to come, and now see the grave empty,
and yet have no thought of the resurrection enter
into her mind; what, no conjecture, no suspicion
of it? So it seems by the construction she puts upon
the opening of the stone, which was very far
fetched. Note, When we come to reflect upon
our own conduct in a cloudy and dark day, we shall
stand amazed at our dulness and forgetfulness, that
we could miss of such thoughts, as afterward ap-
pear obvious, and how they could be so far out of
the way, when we had occasion for them. She
suggested, They have taken away the Lord; either
the chief priests have taken him away, to put him
in a worse place; or Joseph and Nicodemus have,
upon second thoughts, taken him away, to avoid the
ill-will of the Jews. Whatever was her suspicion, it
seems, it was a great vexation and disturbance to her,
that the body was gone; whereas, if she had under-
stood it rightly, nothing could be more happy. Note,
Weak believers often make that the matter of their
complaint, which is really just ground of hope, and
matter of joy. We cry out that this and the other
outstanding instances of our hope, how to retrieve
them, when indeed the removal of our temporal comforts, which we lament, is in order
to the resurrection of our spiritual comforts, which
we should rejoice in too.

2. What a narrative she made of it to Peter and
John. She did not stand poring upon the grief her-
self, but acquaints her friends with it. Note, The
communication of sorrows is one good improvement
in the connection of saints. Observe, Peter, though
he had denied his Master, had not deserted his Mas-
ter's friends; by this appears the sincerity of his
repentance, that he associated with the disciple
whom Jesus loved. And the disciples keeping up
their intimacy with him as formerly, notwithstanding
his fall, teaches us to restore those with a spirit
of meekness, that have been faulty. If God has
provoked them upon their repentance, why should not we?

III. Peter and John go with all speed to the sepul-
chre, to satisfy themselves of the truth of what was
told them, and to see if they could make any fur-
ther discoveries, v. 3, 4. Some think that the other
disciples were with Peter and John when the news
came; for they told these things to the eleven, Luke
24. 2. Others think that Mary Magdalene told her
story only to Peter and John, and that the other
women told their's to the other disciples; yet none
of them went to the sepulchre but Peter and John,
who were two of the first three of Christ's disciples,
often distinguished from the rest by special favours.
Note, It is well when those that are more honour-
ed than others with the privileges of disciples, are
more active than others in the duty of disciples,
moving willing to take pains, and run hazards in a
good work.

1. See here what use we should make of the ex-
perience and observations of others. When Mary
told them what she had seen, they would not in this
sense take her word, but would go and see with their
own eyes. Do others tell us of the comfort and
benefit of ordinances? Let us be engaged thereby to
make trial of them. Come and see how good it is
to draw near to God.

2. See how ready we should be to share with
our friends in their cares and fears. Peter and John
hasten to the sepulchre, that they might be able to
give Mary a satisfactory answer to her jealousies.
We should not grudge any pains we take for the
succouring and comforting of the weak and timorous
followers of Christ.

1. See how we should make in a good work,
and when we are going on a good errand. Peter
and John consulted neither their ease nor their
enmity, but ran to the sepulchre, that they might shew
the strength of their zeal and affection, and might
lose no time. If we are in the way of God's com-
mendations, we should run that way.

4. See what a dreadful thing it is to have good com-
mandments. By the number of these verses it is
very evident these disciples would have ventured to
the sepulchre alone, but, being both together, they made no difficulty of
it. See Exe. 4. 9.
5. See what a hallowed emulation it is among disciples to strive which shall excel, which shall exceed, in that which is good. It was no breach of all manners for John, though the younger, to out-run Peter, and get before him. We must do our best, and either easy those that can do better, nor despise those that do as they can, though they come behind. (1. He that got foremost in this race, was the disciple whom Jesus loved in a special manner, and who therefore in a special manner loved Jesus. Note, Sense of Christ's love to us, kindling love in us to him again, will make us to excel in virtue. The love of Christ will constrain us more than any thing to abound in duty. (2. He that was cast behind, was Peter, who had denied his Master, and was in sorrow and shame for it, and this clogged him as a weight; sense of guilt crucips us, and hinders our enlargements in the service of God. When conscience is offended, we lose ground.)

IV. Peter and John being come to the sepulchre, prosecute the inquiry, yet improve little in the discovery. 1. John went no further than Mary Magdalene had done. 1. He had the curiosity to look into the sepulchre, and saw it was empty. He stooped down, and looked in. Those that would find the knowledge of Christ, will stoop down, and look in, must with an humble heart veil to the authority of divine revelation; and must look wisely. (2. Yet he had not courage to go into the sepulchre. The warmest affections are not always accompanied with the boldest resolutions; many are swift to run religion's race, that are not stout to fight heaven's battles.)

2. Peter, though he came last, went in first, and made a more exact discovery than John had, v. 6, 7. Though John out-ran him, he did not therefore turn back, or stand still, but made after him as fast as he could; and while John was with a deal of caution looking in, he came, and with a deal of courage went into the sepulchre. (1. Observe here the boldness of Peter, and how God preserves his gifts variously. John could out-run Peter, but Peter could out-dare John. It is seldom true of the same persons, what David says politically of Saul and Jonathan, that they were swifter than eagles, and yet stronger than lions, 2 Sam. 1. 27. Some discipes are quick, and they are useful to quicken them that are slow; others are bold, and they are useful to hearten them that are timorous; diversities of gifts, but one Spirit. Peter's venturing into the sepulchre may teach us. [1.] That those who in good earnest seek after Christ, must not frighten themselves with bugbears and foolish fancies; "There is a lion in the way, a ghost in the grave." [2.] That good Christians need not be afraid of the grave, since Christ has lain in it; for to them there is nothing in it frightful; it is the abode of rest, of quietness, and safety, even for ever-dying worms. Let us therefore not indulge, but conquer the fear we are apt to conceive upon the sight of a dead body, or being alone among the graves; and, since we must be dead and in the grave shortly, let us make death and the grave familiar to us, as our near kindred, Job 17. 14. [3.] We must be willing to go through the grave to Christ; this is the joy of his people. We must not consider, and apply, and duly improve, what they knew of the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. The Old Testament spake of the resurrection of the Messiah; they believe him to be the Messiah; he himself had often told them that, according to the scriptures of the Old Testament, he should rise again; but they had not presence of mind sufficient to come to the present appearances. Observe here, First, How unapt the disciples themselves were, at first, to believe the resurrection of Christ, which confirms the testimony they afterward gave with so much assurance concerning it; for by their backwardness to believe it, it appears that they were not Mr. Henry would not express himself thus, were he now living.—Ed.)
credulous concerning it, nor of those simple ones that believe every word. 1. If they had had any design to advance their own interest by it, they would greedily have caught at the first spark of its evidence, would have raised and supported one another's expectations of it, and have prepared the minds of those that followed them to receive the notices of it; but we find, on the contrary, that their hopes were frustrated, it was to them as a strange thing, and one of the furthest things from their thoughts. Peter and John were so shy of believing it at first, that nothing less than the most convincing proof the thing was capable of, could bring them to testify it afterward with so much assurance. Hereby it appears that they were not only honest men, who would not deceive others, but cautious men, who would not themselves be imposed upon.

Secondly, What was the reason of their slowness to believe; because as yet they knew not the scripture. This seems to be the evangelist's acknowledged of his own fault among the rest; he does not say, "For as yet Jesus had not appeared to them, had not shewed them his hands and his side," but, "As yet he had not opened their understandings to understand the scriptures." (Luke 24. 44, 45.) for that is the sentence of the 39th. verse.

2. Peter and John pursued their inquiry no further, but desisted, hovering between faith and unbelief; (v. 10.) The disciples went away, not much the wiser, to their own home, περιθαλμοντες, to their own friends and companions, the rest of the disciples; to their own lodgings, for they had none at Jerusalem. They went away,

(1.) For fear of being taken up upon suspicion of a design to steal away the body, or of being charged with it now that it was gone; instead of improving their faith, their care is to secure themselves, to shift for their own safety. In difficult dangerous times, it is hard even for good men to go on in their work with the resolution that becomes them.

(2.) Because they were at a loss, and knew not what to do next, nor what to make of what they had seen; and therefore, not having courage to stay at the grave, they resolve to go home, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto them; which is an instance of their weakness as yet.

(3.) It is probable that the rest of the disciples were together; to them they return, to make report of what they had discovered, and to consult with them what was to be done; and, probably, now they appear at their meeting in the evening, when Christ came to them.

It is observable that before Peter and John came to the sepulchre, an angel had appeared there, rolled away the stone, frightened the guard, and comforted the women; as soon as they were gone from the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene here sees two angels in the sepulchre, (v. 12.) and yet Peter and John come to the sepulchre, and go into it, and see none; what shall we think of this? It is presumptuous to inquire; but that they do so is plain from this story.

[2.] This favour was showed to those who were early and constant in their inquiries after Christ, and was the reward of them that came first, and staid last, but denied to them that made a transient visit. [3.] The apostles were not to receive their instructions from the angels, but from the Spirit of grace. See Heb. 2. 5.

11. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, 12. And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13. And they say unto her, Woman why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. 14. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabbi; which is to say, Master. 17. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. 18. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

St. Mark tells us, that Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene; (Mark 16. 9.) that appearance is here largely related; and we may observe,

The constancy and fervency of Mary Magdalene's affection to the Lord Jesus, v. 11.

1. She stood at the sepulchre, when Peter and John were gone, because there her Master had lain, and there she was likeliest to hear some tidings of him. Note, (1.) Where there is a true love to Christ, there will be a constant adherence to him, and a resolution with purpose of heart to cleave to him. This good woman, though she has lost him, yet rather than seem to desert him, will abide by his grave for his sake, and continue in his love, even then when she wants the comfort of it. (2.) Where there is a true desire of acquaintance with Christ, there will be a constant attendance on the means of knowledge. See Hos. 6. 2, 3. The third day, he will raise us up; and then shall we know the meaning of that resurrection, if we follow on to know, as Mary here.

2. She stood there weeping, and these tears loudly speak her affection to her Master. They that have lost Christ, have cause to weep; she wept at the remembrance of his bitter sufferings; wept for his death, and the loss which she and her friends and the country sustained by it; wept to think of returning home without him; wept because she did not now find his body. They that seek Christ, must be prepared to weep. (Luke 2. 48.) must weep, not for him, but for themselves.

3. As she wept, she looked into the sepulchre, that her eye might affect her heart. When we are in search of something we have lost, we look again and again in the place where we last left it, and expected to have found it; she will look yet seven times, not knowing but that at length she might see some encouragement. Note, (1.) Weeping must not hinder seeking. Though she wept, she stooped down,
and looked in. (2.) Those are likely to seek and find, this seek with affection, that seek in tears.

11. The vision she had of two angels in the sepulchre was here.
1. The description of the persons she saw. They were two angels in white, sitting, (probably, on some benches or ledges hewn out in the rock,) one at the head, and the other at the feet, of the grave. Here we have,
(1.) Their nature; they were angels, messengers from God; they were seated on purpose, on this great occasion,

[1.] To honour the Son, and to grace the solemnity of his resurrection. Now that the Son of God was again to be brought into the world, the angels have a charge to attend him, as they did at his birth, Heb., 1. 6. [2.] To comfort the saints; to speak good words to them that were in sorrow, and, by giving them notice that the Lord was risen, to prepare them for the sight of him.
(2.) Their number; two, not a multitude of the heavenly host, to sing praise, only two, to bear witness; for out of the month of two witnesses this word would be established.
(3.) Their array; they were in white; denoting,

[1.] Their purity and holiness. The best of men, standing before the angels, and compared with them, are like to the vipers; (Deut. 32. 3.) but angels are spotless; and glorified saints, when they come to be as the angels, shall walk with Christ in white. [2.] Their glory, and glorying, upon this occasion. The white in which they appeared, represented the brightness of that state into which Christ was now risen.
(4.) Their posture and place. They sat, as it were, reposing themselves in Christ's grave; for angels, though they needed not a restoration, were obliged to Christ for their establishment. These angels went into the grave, to teach us not to be afraid of it, nor to think that our resting in it awhile, will be any prejudice to our immortality; no, matters are so ordered, that the grave is not much out of our way to heaven. It intimates likewise that angels are to be employed about the saints, not only at their death, to carry their souls into Abraham's bosom, but at the great day, to raise their bodies, Matt. 24. 31. These angelic guards, (and angels are called watchmen, Dan. 4. 23.) keeping possession of the sepulchre, when they had frightened away the guards which the enemies had set, represents Christ victorious over the powers of darkness, rout- ing and defeating them. These cherubims are more than conquerors. Their sitting to face one another, one at his head's head, the other at his bed's feet, denotes their care of the entire body of Christ, his mystical as well as his natural body, from head to foot; it may also remind us of the two cherubims placed one at either end of the mercy-seat, looking one to the other, and from, Exod. 25. 18. Christ crucified was the great principal, which the head and feet of which were these two cherubims, not with flaming swords, to keep us from, but welcome messengers, to direct us to the way of life.
2. Their compassionate inquiry into the cause of Mary Magdalene's grief; (v. 13.) Woman, why wearest thou? This question was, (1.) A rebuke to her. It is well to make an occasion of informing her of that which would turn her mourning into rejoicing, would put off her sackcloth, and gird her with gladness.
3. The melancholy account she gives them of her present distress; Because they have taken away the blessed body I came to embalm, and I know not where it is laid. The same story she had told, v. 2. In it we may see,

(1.) The weakness of her faith. If she had had faith as a grain of mustard-seed, this mountain would have been removed; but we often perplex ourselves needlessly with imaginary difficulties, which faith would discover to us as real advantages. Many good people complain of the clouds and darkness they lie under; which are the necessary means of grace for the humbling of their souls, the mortifying of their sins, and the enduring of Christ to them.
(2.) The strength of her love. They that have a true affection for Christ, cannot but be in great affliction when they have lost either the comfortable tokens of his love in their souls, or the comfortable opportunities of conversing with him, and doing him honour, in his ordinances. Mary Magdalene is not diverted from her inquiries by the surprise of the vision, nor satisfied with the honour of it; but still she harps upon the same string; They have taken away my Lord, A sight of angels and their smiles, will not suffice without a sight of Christ, and some assurance of his presence with us. It is an opportunity of pursuing her inquiries after Christ. All creatures, the most excellent, the most dear, should be used as means, and but as means, to bring us into acquaintance with God in Christ. The angels asked her, Why wearest thou? I have cause enough to weep, says she, for they have taken away my Lord, and, like Meah, What have I more? Do you ask, Why I weep? My beloved has withdrawn himself, and is gone. Note, None knew, but they that have experienced, the sorrow of a deserted soul, that has had comfortable evidences of the love of God in Christ, and hopes of heaven, but has now lost them, and walks in darkness; such a wounded heart who can bear?
III. Christ's appearing to her while she was talking with the angels, and telling them her case; before they had given her any answer, Christ steps in himself, to satisfy her inquiries, for God now speaketh to us by his Son; none but he himself can direct us to himself. Mary would fain know where her Lord is, and behold, he is at her right hand. Note, 1. Those that will be content with nothing short of a sight of Christ, shall be put off with nothing less. He never said to the least of his people, Seek in vain. "Is it Christ that thou wouldest have? Christ thou shalt have." 2. Christ, in manifesting himself to those that seek him, often outdoes their expectations. Many hope to see the dead body of Christ, and complains of the loss of that, and behold, she saw him alive. Thus he does for his praying people more than they are able to ask or think. In this appearance of Christ to Mary, chap. 22. 2-34.

[1.] How he did at first conceal himself from her.

1. He stood as a common person, and she looked upon him accordingly, v. 14. She stood expecting an answer to her complaint from the angels; and either seeing the shadow, or hearing the tread of some person behind her, she turned herself back from talking with the angels, and said Jesus stood standing in the door, and his disciples were looking for, and yet she knew not that it was Jesus. Note, First, The Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, (Ps. 34. 18.) nearer than they are aware. They that seek Christ, though they do not see him, may yet be sure he is not far from them. Second, Those that diligently seek the Lord, will turn every way in their search; they after him. Many turnここで

(2.) To visit us in our state of weakness. To visit us in our state of weakness. To visit us in our state of weakness.
obedience to the Lord Jesus, whom they saw before Mary did; and that she looked back to see who it was they paid such a profound reverence to. But if so, it is not likely that she would have taken him for the gardener; rather, therefore, it was her earnest desire in seeking, that made her turn every way.

Thirdly, Christ is often near his people, and they are not aware of him. She knew not that it was Jesus; not that he appeared in any other likeness, but either it was a careless transient look she cast upon him, and, her eyes being full of care, she could not so well distinguish, or they were hidden, that she should not know him, as those of the two disciples, Luke 24. 16.

They are not the least common question, and she answered him accordingly, ver. 15. First, The question he asked her was natural enough, and what any one would have asked her; "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom wekest thou? What business hast thou here in the garden so early? And what is all this noise and ado for?"

Perhaps, it was spoken with some roughness, as Joseph spake to his brethren when he made himself known to them before he revealed his name. And she should seem, this was the first word Christ spake after his resurrection; "Why weepest thou? I am risen." The resurrection of Christ has enough in it to allay all our sorrows, to check the streams, and dry up the fountains, of our tears. Observe here, Christ takes cognizance, 1. Of his people's griefs, and inquires, Why weep ye? He bottles their tears, and upbraids me with my tears? You know why I weep, and whom I seek; and therefore supposing him to be the gardener, the person employed by Joseph to dress and keep his garden, who, she thought, was come thither thus early to his work, she said, Sir, if thou hast carried him hence, pray tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. See here,

The error of her understanding; she supposed our Lord Jesus to be the gardener, perhaps, because he asked what authority she had to be there. Note, Troubled spirits, in a cloudy and dark day, are apt to misrepresent Christ to themselves, and to put wrong constructions upon the methods of his providence and grace.

2. The truth of her affection. See how her heart was upon it to find Christ. She puts the question to every one she meets, like the careful spouse, Say ye him whom my soul loveth? She speaks respectfully to a gardener, and calls him Sir, in hopes to gain some intelligence from him concerning her beloved. When she speaks of Christ, she does not name him; but, If thou hast borne him hence, taking it for granted that this gardener was full of thoughts concerning this Jesus as well as she, and therefore could not but know whom she meant. Another evidence of the strength of her affection was, that, wherever he was laid, she would undertake to remove him. Such a body, with such a weight of spices about it, was much more than she could pretend to carry; but true love thinks it can do more than it can, and makes nothing of difficulties. She supposed this gardener judged that the body of one that was ignominiously crucified, should have some respect to it, and therefore he had removed it to some sorry place, which he thought fitter for it. Yet Mary does not threaten to tell his master, and get him turned out of his place for it; but undertakes to find out some assurance of his resurrection, to which he might be welcome. Christ needs not to stay where he is thought a burthen.

Observe, [1.] How Christ discovered himself to this good woman that was seeking him in tears; (ver. 16.) Jesus saith unto her, Mary. It was said with an emphasis, and that air of kindness and freedom, as which those are spoken, to whose ears Christ had changed his voice, and spoke like himself, not like the gardener. Christ's way of making himself known to his people is by his word, his word applied to their souls, speaking to them in particular. When those, whom God knew by name in the counsels of his love, (Ezra. 33. 12.) are called by name in the efficacy of his grace, then he reveals his Son in them, as in Paul, (Gal. 1. 16.) when Christ called him by name, Timothy, Saul. Christ's sheep know his voice, ch. 10. 4. This one word Mary, was like that to the disciples in the storm, I is 1. Then the word of Christ does us good, when we put our names into the precepts and promises. "In this Christ calls me, and speaks to me."

[2.] How readily she received this discovery, when Christ said, Mary, doth thou not know me called thee thou and me yeres at strangers? She was presently aware who it was, as the spouse; (Cant. 2. 8.) It is the voice of my beloved. She turned herself, and said, Rabboni, My master. It might properly be read with an interrogation, "Rabboni? Is it my master? Nay, but is it indeed? Observe,

First, The title of respect she gives him; My Master; οὗτος—a teaching master. The Jews called their doctors Rabbanis, great affection. Their critics tell us, that Rabboni was with them a more honourable title than Rabbi; and therefore Mary chooses that, and adds a note of approbation, My great Master. Note, Notwithstanding the freedom of communion which Christ is pleased to admit us to with himself, we must remember that he is our Master, and to be approached with a godly fear.

Secondly, What delight was it to Mary to give this title to Christ. She turned herself from the angels whom she had in her eye, to look unto Jesus. We must take off our regards from all creatures, even the brightest and best, to fix them upon Christ, from whom nothing must divert us, and with whom nothing must interfere. When she thought it had been the gardener, she looked another way when she spake to him; but now that she knew the voice of Christ, she turned herself. The soul that hears Christ's voice, and is turned to him, calls, him, with joy and triumph, My Master. See with what pleasure those who love Christ, speak of his authority over them! My Master, my great Master.

[3.] See the further instructions that Christ gave her; (ver. 17.) Touch me not, but go carry the news to the disciples. First, He diverts her from the expectation of familiar society and conversation with him at this time; Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended. Mary was so transported with the sight of her dear Master, that she forgot herself, and that state of exaltation of which he was now entering, and was ready to express her joy by affectionate embraces of him, which Christ here forbids at this time. Then, at and to this time, for I am to ascend to heaven. He bid the disciples touch him, for the confirmation of their faith; he allowed them the women to take hold of his feet, and worship him; (Matt. 28.)
9.) but Mary, supposing that he was risen, as Lazarus was, to live among them constantly, and converse with them freely as he had done, upon that presumption was about to take hold of his hand with her usual fondness; this mistake Christ rectified; she must believe him, and adore him, as exalted, but must not expect to be familiar with him as formerly. See 2 Cor. 5. 16. He forbids her to dote upon his bodily presence, to set her heart on that, or expect the continuance of that, and leads her to the spiritual converse and communion which she should have with him after he was ascended to his Father; the greatest joy of his resurrection was, that it was a step toward his ascension. Mary thought, now that her Master was risen, he would presently set up a temporal kingdom, such as they had long promised themselves. "No," says Christ, "touch me not, with any such thought; think not to lay hold on me, so as to detain me here; for though I am not yet ascended, go to my brethren, and tell them, I am to ascend." As before his death, so now after his resurrection, he still harps upon this, that he was going away, was no more in the world; and therefore they must look higher than his bodily presence, and look further than the present state of things.

"Touch me not, do not stay to touch me now, stay not now to make any further inquiries; or do now any further expressions of joy, for I am not yet ascended, I shall not presently depart, it may as well be done another time; the best service thou canst do now, is, to carry the tidings to the disciples; lose no time therefore, but go away with all speed." Note, Public service ought to be preferred before private satisfaction. It is more blessed to give than to receive. For the greater part of Christ's days in the world, it was a day of good tidings, which she must not engross the comfort of, but hand it to others. See that story, 2 Kings 7. 9.

Secondly, He directs her what message to carry to his disciples; But go to my brethren, and tell them, not only that I am risen, she could have told them that of herself, for she had seen him, but that I ascended. Observe,

1. To whom this message is sent; Go to my brethren with it; for he is not ashamed to call them so. (1.) Though he was now entering upon his glory, and was declared to be the Son of God with greater freedom than ever, yet he owns his disciples as his brethren, and expresses himself with more tender affection to them than before; he had called them friends, but never brethren till now. Though Christ be high, yet he is not haughty. Notwithstanding his elevation, he disclaims not to own his poor relations. (2.) Though his disciples had lately carried themselves very disingenuously toward him; he had not forgotten it, nor yet when his disciples as his brethren, and expresses himself with more tender affection to them than before; he had called them friends, but never brethren till now. Though Christ be high, yet he is not haughty. Notwithstanding his elevation, he disclaims not to own his poor relations.

2. By whom it is sent; by Mary Magdalene; not by him who had cast seven devils, yet now thus favoured. This was her reward for her constancy in adhering to Christ, and inquiring after him; and a tacit rebuke to the apostles, who had not been so close as she was in attending on the dying Jesus, nor so early as she was in meeting the rising Jesus; she becomes an apostle to the apostles.

3. What the full breasts of consolation here are in these words:

(1.) Our joint relation to God, resulting from our union with Christ, is an unseparable comfort. Speaking of that inexhaustible spring of life, light, and bliss, he says, I am your Father, and your Father; my God, and your God. This is very expressive of that near relation that is between Christ, and believers; he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are but one; for they agree in one, Heb. 2. 11. Here are such an advancement of christians, and such a consolatio of Christ, as bring them very near together. So admirably well is the matter contrived, in order to their union.

(2.) It is the great condescension of Christ, that he is pleased to own the believer's God for his God; a testimony of Christ's Father's love to the believing soul, that he may be your's; the God of the Redeemer to suppose himself your's, (Ps. 89. 26.) that he might be the God of the redeemed, to save them. The summary of the new covenant is, that God will be to us a God; and therefore Christ being the Surety and Head of the covenant, who is primarily dealt with, and believers only through him as his spiritual seed, this covenant relation takes effect first upon him, God becomes his God, and so our's; and he partaking of a diviner nature, Christ's Father is our Father; and he partaking of the human nature, our God is his God.

(2.) Christ's ascension into heaven in further prosecution of his undertaking for us, is likewise an unseparable comfort; "Tell them I must shortly ascend; that is the next step I am to take." Now this was intended to be,

[1.] A word of caution to these disciples, not to expect the continuance of his bodily presence on earth, nor the setting up of his temporal kingdom among men, which they dreamed of. "No, tell them, I am risen, not to stay with them, but to go on their errand to heaven." Thus they who are raised to a spiritual life, in conformity to Christ's resurrection, must reckon that they rise; and as they are quickened with Christ, that they may sit with him in heavenly places, Eph. 2. 5. 6. Let them not think that this earth is to be their home and rest; no, being born from heaven, they are bound for heaven; their eye and aim must be upon another world, and this ever upon their hearts, I ascend; therefore must I seek things above.

[2. 3.] A word of defense to him, and to all that should believe in him through their word; he was then ascending, he is now ascended to his Father, and our Father. This was his advancement, he ascended, to receive those honours and powers which were to be the recompense of his humiliation; he says it with triumph, that they who love him may rejoice. This is our advantage; for he ascended: he ascended is the first word that is spoken in all the New Testament; for us; (Ps. 68. 18.) he ascended as our forerunner, to prepare a place for us, and to be ready to receive us. This message was like that which Joseph's brethren brought to Jacob concerning him, (Gen. 45. 26.) Joseph is yet alive, and not only so, visit me, et in se naturn venit—he lives, and comes into the senate too; he is governor over all the land of Egypt; all power is in his.

Some make these words, I ascend to my God, and
your God, to include a promise of our resurrection, in the virtue of Christ's resurrection; for Christ had proved the resurrection of the dead from these words, I am the God of Abraham, Matt. 22. 32. So that Christ here inquires, "As he is my God, and hath therefore raised me, so he is your God, and will therefore raise you, and be your God, Rev. 21. 3. Because I live, ye shall live also. I now ascend, to honour my God, and ye shall ascend to him as your God."

Lastly, here is Mary Magdalene's faithful report of what she had seen and heard, to the disciples; (v. 18.) She came and told the disciples, whom she found together, that she had seen the Lord. Peter and John had left her seeking him carefully with tears, and would not stay to seek him with her; and now she comes, to tell them that she had found him, and to rectify the mistake she had led them into, by inquiring after the dead body, for now she found it was a living body, and a glorified one; so that she found what she sought; and, what was infinitely better, she had joy in her sight of the Master herself, and was willing to communicate of her joy, for she knew it would be good news to them. When God comforts us, it is with this design, that we may comfort others.

And as she told them what she had seen, so also what she had heard; she had seen the Lord alive, of which this was a token, and a good token it was, that he had spoken these things unto her, as a message to be delivered to them, and she delivered it faithfully. They that are acquainted with the word of God, themselves, should communicate their knowledge for the good of others, and not grudge that others should know as much as they do.

19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 20. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. 21. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. 22. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HolyGhost: 23. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. 24. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

The infallible proof of Christ's resurrection, was, his showing himself alive, Acts 1. 3. In these verses, we have an account of his first appearance to the college of the disciples, on the day on which he rose. He had sent them the tidings of his resurrection by trusty and credible messengers; but, to shew his love to them, and confirm their faith in him, he came himself, and gave them all the assurances they could desire of the truth of it, that they might not have it by hearsay only, and at second hand, but might themselves be eye-witnesses of his being alive, because they must attest it to the world, and build the church upon that testimony. Now observe here,

1. When, and where, this appearance was, v. 19. It was the same day that he rose, being the first day of the week, the day after the Jewish sabbath, at a private meeting of the disciples, ten of them, and some more of their friends with them, Luke 24. 33.

There are three secondary ordinances (as I may call them) instituted by our Lord Jesus, to continue in his church, for the support of it, and for the due administration of the principal ordinances—the word, sacraments, and prayer; these are, this day solemnly observed, and this day solemnly administered; the mind of Christ concerning each of these is plainly intimated to us in these verses, and of the two first, here, in the circumstances of this appearance, the other v. 21. Christ's kingdom was to be set up among men, immediately upon his resurrection; and, accordingly, we find the very day he rose, though but a day of small things, yet graced with those solemnities which should help to keep up a face of religion throughout all the ages of the church.

1. Here is a christian sabbath observed by the disciples, and owned by our Lord Jesus. The visit Christ made to his disciples, was, on the first day of the week. And the first day of the week is (I think) the only day of the week, or month, or year, that is ever mentioned by number in all the New Testament; and that is several times spoken of as a day religiously observed. Though it was holy, expressly, (v. 1.) that Christ rose the first day of the week, and it might have been sufficient to say here, (v. 19.) he appeared the same day at evening; yet, to put an honour upon the day, it is repeated, being the first day of the week; not that the apostles designed to put honour upon the day, (they were yet in doubt concerning the occasion of it,) but God designed to put honour upon it, by ordering it. And they should keep it, as God had directed. Christ's first visit on that day. Thus, in effect, he blessed and sanctified that day, because in it the Redeemer rested.

2. Here is a christian assembly solemnized by the disciples, and that also owned by the Lord Jesus. Probably, the disciples met here for some religious exercise, to pray together; or, perhaps, they met, to compare their several reports of Christ, and to give sufficient evidence of their Master's resurrection, and to consult what was now to be done: whether they should keep together, or scatter: they met, to know one another's mind, strengthen one another's hands, and concert proper measures to be taken in the present critical juncture.

This meeting was private, because they durst not appear publicly, especially not in a body; they met in the house, as if they kept their eyes upon the storm; but sheep are sociable, and will come together again. It is no new thing for the assemblies of Christ's disciples to be driven into corners, and forced into the wilderness. Rev. 12. 14. Prov. 28. 12. (2.) God's people have been often obliged to enter into their chambers, and shut their doors, as here, for fear of the Jews. Persecution is allotted them, and retirement from persecution is allowed them; and then where shall we look for them but in dens and caves of the earth? It is a real grief,
but no real reproach, to Christ's disciples, thus to abstain.

11. What was said and done in this visit Christ made to his disciples, and this interview between them.

1. When they were assembled, Jesus came among them, in his own likeness, yet, drawing a veil over the brightness of his body, now begun to be glorified, else it would have dazzled their eyes, as in his transfiguration. Christ came among them, to give them a specimen of the performance of his promise, that, where two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them.

2. He came, though the doors were shut. This does not at all weaken the evidence of his having a real human body after his resurrection; though the doors were shut, he knew how to open them without any noise, and come in so that they might not hear him, as formerly he had walked on the water, and yet had a true body. It is a comfort to Christ's disciples, when their solemn assemblies are reduced to privacy, that no doors can shut out Christ's presence from them.

We have five things in this appearance of Christ:

(1.) His kind and familiar salutation of his disciples: he said, Peace be unto you. This was not a word of course, though commonly used so at the meeting of friends, but a solemn uncommon benediction, conferring upon them all the blessed fruits and effects of his death and resurrection. The phrase was common, but the sense was now peculiar. Peace be unto you, is as much as, All good be to you. He had left them his peace for their legacy, ch. 14. 27. By the death of the testator the testament was become of force, and he was now risen from the dead, to prove the will, and to be himself the executor of it; accordingly, he here makes prompt payment of the legacy; Peace be unto you. His speaking peace, makes peace, creates the fruit of the lips, peace; peace with God, peace in your own conscience; peace with one another; all this peace be with you;

not peace with the world, but peace in Christ. His sudden appearing in the midst of them, when they were full of doubts concerning him, full of fears concerning themselves, could not but put them into some disorder and consternation, the noise of which waves he stills with this word, Peace be unto you. (2.) His clear and undeniable manifestations of himself to them, v. 20. And here observe,

[1.] The method he took to convince them of the truth of his resurrection. They now saw him alive, whom multitudes had seen dead two or three days before. Now the only doubt was, whether this that they saw alive, was the same individual body that had been seen dead; and none could desire a further proof than that it was so, than the scars or marks of the wounds in the body. Now,

First, The marks of the wounds, and very deep marks, (though without any pain or soreness,) remain in the body of the Lord Jesus even after his resurrection, that they might be demonstrations of the truth of it. Conquerors glory in the marks of their wounds. Christ's wounds were to speak on earth that it was he, and therefore he rose with them; they were to speak in heaven, in the intercession he must ever live to make, and therefore he ascended with them, and appeared in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain, and bleeding fresh, Rev. 5. 6. Nay, it should seem, he will come again with his scars, that they may look on his wounds, and declare it.

Secondly, The marks he shewed to his disciples, for their conviction. They had not only the satisfaction of seeing him look with the same comeliness, and hearing him speak with the same voice they had been so long accustomed to, Sic occulso, sic ille manus, sic ora, foreha—Such were his gestures, such his eyes and hands! but they had the further evidence of those peculiar marks; he opened his hands to them, that they might see the marks of the wounds on them; he opened his breast, as the nurse her's to the child, to shew them the wound there. Note, The exalted Redeemer will ever shew himself open-handed and open-hearted to all his faithful friends. When Christ manifests his love to believers by the communion of his Spirit, assures them that because he lives, they shall live also, then he shews them his hands and his side.

[2.] The impression it made upon them, and the good it did them.

First, They were convinced that they saw the Lord; so was their faith confirmed. At first, they thought they saw an apparition only, a phantasm; but now they knew it was the Lord himself. So many true believers, who, while they were weak, feared their comforts were but imaginary, afterward find them, through grace, real and substantial. They ask not, Is it the Lord? but are assured, It is he.

Secondly, Then they were glad; that which strengthened their faith, raised their joy, believing, they rejoice. The evangelist seems to write it with something of transport and triumph. Then! then! were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. If it revived the spirit of Jacob, to hear that Joseph is yet alive; how would it revive the heart of those disciples, to hear that Jesus is in alive! it is life from the dead to them. Now that word of Christ was fulfilled, to be, I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice. This wiped away all tears from their eyes. Note, A sight of Christ will glad the heart of a disciple at any time; the more we see of Christ, the more we shall rejoice in him; and our joy will never be perfect till we come there where we shall see him as he is.

(3.) The honourable and ample commission he gave them to be his agents in the planting of his church, v. 21. Here is,

[1.] The preface to their commission, which was the solemn repetition of the salutation before; Peace be unto you. This was intended, either, First, To raise their attention to the commission he was about to give them. The former salutation was to still the tumult of their fear, that they might calmly attend to the part he was about to perform in his resurrection; this was to reduce the transport of their joy, that they might sedately hear what he had further to say to them; or, Secondly, To encourage them to accept of the commission he was giving them. Though it would involve them in a great deal of trouble, yet he designed their honour and comfort in it, and, in the issue, it would be peace to them. Gideon received his commission with this word, Peace be unto thee, Judg. 6. 22, 23. Christ is our peace; if he be with us, peace is to us. Christ was now sending the disciples to publish peace to the world; (Isa. 52. 7.) and Christ here not only confers it upon them for their own satisfaction, but commits it to them as a trust to be by them transmitted to all the sons of peace, Luke 10. 5. 6.

[2.] The commission itself, which sounds very great; As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. First, It is easy to understand how Christ sent them; he appointed them to go on with his work upon earth, and to lay out themselves for the spreading of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom, among men. He sent them authorized with a divine warrant, armed with a divine power; sent them as ambassadors to treat of peace, and as heralds to proclaim it; sent them as servants to bid to the marriage. Hence they were called apostles—men sent.

Secondly, But how Christ sent them as the Father sent him, is not so easily understood; certainly then
commissions and powers were infinitely inferior to his; but,
1. Their work was of the same kind with his, and they were to go on where he left off. They were not sent to be equals of kings, like him, or his prophets. As he was sent to bear witness to the truth, so were they; not to be mediators of the reconciliation, but only preachers and publishers of it. Was he sent, not to be minished to, but to minister; not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fill them up? So were they. As the Father sent him into the world as the shepherd of the house of Israel, so he sent them into all the world.
2. He had a power to send them, equal to that which the Father had to send him. Here the force of the comparison seems to lie. By the same authority that the Father sent me, do I send you. This proves the Godhead of Christ; the commissions he gave, were of equal authority with those which the Father gave, and as valid and effectual to all intents and purposes; equal with those he gave to the Old Testament prophets in visions. The commissions of Peter and John by the plain word of Christ, are as good as those of Isaiah and Ezekiel, by the Lord sitting on his throne; nay, equal with that which was given to the Mediator himself for his work. He had an incontestable authority, and an irresistible right, to give what he pleases; so had they for their's. Or thus, As the Father had in his sole discretion, the recital of his power; by virtue of the authority, given him as Mediator, he gave authority to them, as his ministers, to act for him, and in his name, with the children of men; so that they who received them, or rejected them, received or rejected him, and him that sent him. ch. 13. 20.

(4.) The qualifications of them for the discharge of their office, are given by him in them by their commission (v. 22.) He breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, Observe,

[1.] The sign he used to assure them of, and affect them with, the gift he now about tobestow upon them; he breathed on them; not only to show them by this breath of life, that he himself was really alive, but to signify to them the spiritual life of the trust they should receive from him for all the services that law before them. Probably, he breathed upon them all together, not upon each severally; and though Thomas was not with them, yet the Spirit of the Lord knew where to find him, as he did Eldad and Medad, Numb. 11. 26. Christ here seems to refer to the creation of man at first, by the breathing of the breath of life into him, (Gen. 2. 7.) and to intimate that he himself was the author of that work, and that the spiritual life and strength of ministers and christians are derived from him, and depend upon him, as much as the natural life of Adam and his seed. As the breath of the Almighty gave life to man and began the old world, so the breath of the mighty Saviour gave life to his ministers, and began a new world, Job 33. 4. The breath of God: the breath of Christ, proceeding from the Son. The Spirit, in the Old Testament, is compared to breath; (Ezek. 37. 9.) Come, O breath; but the New Testament tells us, it is Christ's breath. The breath of God is put for the power of his wrath, (Isa. 11. 4.—30. 33.) but the breath of Christ signifies the power of his grace; the breathing of threatenings is changed into the breathings of love by the mediation of Christ, as they are uttered by our breath, so the word of Christ is spirit and life. The word comes from the Spirit, and the Spirit comes along with the word. Secondly, That the Spirit is the gift of Christ. The apostles communicated the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, those hands being first lifted up in prayer, for they could only beg this blessing, and

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carry it as messengers; but Christ conferred the Holy Ghost by breathing, for he is the author of the gift, and from him it comes originally. Moses could not give his Spirit, God did it; (Numb. 11. 17.) but Christ did it himself, ch. 2. 8. But all is not over; afterwards he breathed on them, and this grace was communicated to others. 

[2.] The solemn grant he made, signified by this sign, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, in part now, as an earnest of what you shall further receive not many days hence. They now received more of the Holy Ghost than they had yet received. Thus spiritual blessings are given gradually; so him that has shall be given. Now that Jesus began to be glorified, more of the Spirit began to be given; see ch. 7. 39. Let us see what is contained in this sign.

First, Christ hereby gives them assurance of the Spirit's aid in their future work; in the execution of the commission now given them; I send you, and you shall have the Spirit to go along with you. Now the Spirit of the Lord rested upon them, to qualify them for all the services that lay before them. Whom Christ employs he will clothe with his Spirit, and furnish with all needful powers.

Secondly, He hereby gives them experience of the Spirit's influences in the present case. He had showed them his hands and his side, to convince them of the truth of his resurrection; but the plainest evidences will not of themselves work faith, witness the infidelity of the soldiers, who were the only eye-witnesses of the resurrection. Therefore receive ye the Holy Ghost, (v. 23.) in order to fit you, and to open your understandings. They were now in danger of the Jews; Therefore receive ye the Holy Ghost, to work courage in you. What Christ said to them, he says to all true believers, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, Eph. 1. 13. What Christ gives we must receive, must submit ourselves and our whole souls to the quickening sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit; receive his motions, and conform ourselves to receive his powers, and make use of them; and they who thus obey his word as a precept, shall have the benefit of it as a promise; they shall receive the Holy Ghost as the guide of their way, and the earnest of their inheritance.

(5.) One particular branch of the power given them by their commission, particularized, (v. 23.) "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, and ye shall receive power to be witnesses unto me and to these mysteries, signifying that the powers ye are entrusted with, they are remitted to, and they may take the comfort of it. And whose soever sins ye retain, pronounce unappointed, and the guilt of them bound on, they are retained, and the sinner may be sure of it, to his sorrow." Now this follows upon their receiving the Holy Ghost; for if they had not an extraordinary spirit of discerning, they had not been fit to be entrusted with such an authority; for, in the strictest sense, this is a special commission to the apostles themselves, and the first preachers of the gospel, who could distinguish who were in the gall of iniquity and bond of slavery, and who were not. By virtue of this power, Peter struck Ananias and Saphira dead, and Paul struck Elymas blind. Yet must it be understood as a spiritual discernment, and not by external signs. Not securing an infallibility of judgment to any man or company of men, in the world, but encouraging the faithful stewards of the mysteries of God to stand to the gospel they were sent to preach, for that God himself will stand to it. The apostles, in preaching remission, must begin at Jerusalem, though she had lately brought upon herself the guilt of Christ's blood: Yet you may declare their sins remitted upon gospel-terms. And Peter did so, Acts 2. 38. — 3. 19. Christ, being risen for our justification, sends his gospel-heralds to proclaim the jubilee begun, the act of indemnity now passed; and by this rule men shall be judged, ch. 12. 43. Rom. 2. 16. Jan. 2. 12. God will never alter this rule of judgment, nor vary from it; those
whom the gospel acquits, shall be acquitted; and those whom that condemns, shall be condemned; which puts immense honour upon the ministry, and should put immense courage into ministers. Two ways the apostles and ministers of Christ remit and retain sin, and both as having authority. [1.] By sound doctrine. They are commissioned to tell the world, that salvation is to be had upon gospel-terms, and no other, and they shall find God will give Amen to it; so shall their doom be. [2.] By a strict discipline, applying the general rule of the gospel to particular persons. "Whom you admit into communion with you, according to the rules of the gospel, God will admit into communion with himself; and whom you cast out of communion, as impenitent and obstinate in scandalous and infectious sins, shall be bound over to the righteous judgment of God."

III. The incredulity of Thomas, when the report of this was made to him, which introduced Christ's second appearance.

1. Here is Thomas's absence from this meeting, \(n. 24.\) He is said to be one of the twelve, one of the college of the apostles, who, though now eleven, had been twelve, and necessary to be seen but eleven, and one of them was missing; Christ's disciples will never be all together till the general assembly at the great day. Perhaps it was Thomas's unhappiness that he was absent; either he was not well, or had not notice; or perhaps it was his sin and folly; either he was diverted by business or company, which he preferred before this opportunity. The burst not come for fear of the Lord, and he called that his prudence and caution which was his cowardice. However, by his absence he missed the satisfaction of seeing his Master risen, and of sharing with the disciples in their joy upon that occasion. Note, Those know not what they lose, who carelessly absent themselves from the stated solemn assemblies of Christians. The account which the other disciples gave him of the visit their Master had made them, \(n. 25.\) The next time they saw him, they said unto him, with joy enough, \("We have seen the Lord;" and, no doubt, they related to him all that had passed, particularly the satisfaction he had given them, by showing them his hands and his side. It seems, though Thomas was there, and was not long from those absenters for a time must not be condemned as apostates for ever; Thomas is not Judas. Observe with what exaltation and triumph they speak it: "We have seen the Lord, the most comfortable sight we ever saw." This they said to Thomas, (1.) To upbraiid him with his absence; "We have seen the Lord, but thou hast not." Or rather, (2.) To inform him: "We have seen the Lord, and we wish thou hadst been here, to see him too, for thou wouldest have seen enough to satisfy thee." Note, The disciples of Christ should endeavour to build up one another in their most holy faith, both by repeating what they have heard, to those that were absent, that they may hear it at second hand; also by communicating what they have experienced. They that by faith have seen the Lord, and tasted the good gift, should tell others what God had done for their souls; only let boasting be excluded. 3. The objections Thomas raised against the evidence, to justify himself in his loathness to admit it. "Tell me not that you have seen the Lord alive, you are too credulous, somebody has made fools of you; for my part, except I shall not only see in his hand the print of the nails, but put my finger into it, and thrust my hand into the wound in his side, I am resolved I will not believe." Some, by comparing this with what he said, \((ch. 11. 16.-14. 5.)\) conjecture him to have been a man of a rough, morose temper, apt to speak peevishly; for all good people are not alike happy in their temper; however, there was certainly much amiss in this here. (1.) He had either not heeded, or not duly regarded, what Christ had so often said, and that too according to the Old Testament, that he would rise again the third day; so that he ought to have said, \("He is risen, though he had not seen him, nor spoken with an angel that had." (2.) He did not pay a just deference to the testimony of his fellow-disciples, who were men of wisdom and integrity, and ought to be credited. He knew them to be honest men; they all ten of them concurred in the testimony with great assurance; and yet he cannot persuade himself to say that their record is true. Christ had chosen them to be his witnesses of this very thing to all nations; and yet Thomas, one of their own fraternity, will not now them to be competent witnesses, nor trust them further than he can see them. It was not, however, their veracity that he questioned, but their prudence; he feared they were too credulous.

(3.) He tempted Christ, and limited the Holy One of Israel, when he would be convinced by his own hand, or not at all. He was not sure that the print of the nails, which the apostles told him they had seen, would admit the failure of his finger into them, or the wound in his side the thrusting in of his hand; nor was it fit to deal so roughly with a living body; yet Thomas ties up his faith to this evidence; either he will be humoured, and have his fancy gratified, or he will not believe; see Matt. 16. 1. 27.

(4.) The open avowing of this in the presence of the disciples, was an offense and discouragement to them. It was not only a sin, but a scandal. As one coward makes many, so does one unbeliever, one sceptic, making his brethren's heart to faint like his heart, Dent. 20. 8. Had he only thought this evil, and then laid his hand upon his mouth, to suppress it, his error had remained with himself; but his proclaming of his infidelity, and that so peremptorily, might be of ill consequence to the rest, who were as yet weak and wavering.

26. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe. 30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

We have here an account of another appearance of Christ to his disciples, after his resurrection, when Thomas was now with them. And concerning this we may observe.

I. When it was that Christ repeated his visit to his disciples, after eight days; that day seven-night after he rose, which must therefore be, as that was, the first day of the week.
1. He deferred his next appearance for some time, to shew his disciples that he was not risen to such a life as he had formerly lived, to converse constantly with them, but was as one that belonged to another world, and visited this only as angels do, now and then, when there was occasion. Where Christ was during these eight days, and the rest of the time of his abode on earth, is folly to inquire, and presumption to determine. Wherever he was, no doubt angels ministered unto him. In the beginning of his life, he had been for days unseen, tempted by the evil spirit, Matt. 4. 1. 2. And now at the beginning of his glory he was forty days, for the most part unseen, attended by good spirits.

2. He deferred it so long as seven days. And why so? (1.) That he might put a rebuke upon Thomas for his incredulity; he had neglected the former meeting of the disciples: and to teach them to prize those seasons of grace better for the future, he cannot have such another opportunity for several days. He that slips one tide, must stay a good while for another. A very melancholy week, we have reason to think, Thomas had of it, drooping and in suspense, while the other disciples were full of joy; and it was owing to himself and his own folly.

(2.) That he might try the faith and patience of the disciples. Thus Thomas was dealt with a fair point when they were satisfied that they had seen the Lord; then were the disciples glad; but he would try whether they could keep the ground they had got, when they saw no more of him for some days. And thus he would gradually wean them from his bodily presence, which they had doted and depended too much upon.

(3.) That he might put an honour upon the first day of the week, and give a plain intimation of his will, that it should be observed in his church as the Christian sabbath, the weekly day of holy rest and holy convocations. That one day in seven should be religiously observed, was an appointment from the beginning, as old as innocency; and that in the kingdom of the Messiah the first day of the week should be that solemn day, this was indication enough, that Christ on that day once and again met his disciples in a religious assembly; and it is highly probable that in his former appearance to them he appointed them that day sevennight to be together again, and promised to meet them; and also, that he appeared to them every first day of the week, beside other times, during the forty days. The religious observance of that day has been from thence transmitted down to us through every age of the church. This therefore is the day which the Lord has made.

II. Where and how, Christ made them this visit; it was at Jerusalem, for the doors were shut now, as before, for fear of the Jews. There they stayed, to keep the feast of unleavened bread seven days, which expired the day before this; yet they would not set out on their journey to Galilee on the first day of the rest, because as the Christian sabbath, had still the latter part. Now:

1. That Thomas was with them; though he had withdrawn himself once, yet not a second time. When we have lost one opportunity, we should give the more earnest heed to lay hold on the next, that we may recover our losses. It is a good sign if such a loss what our desires, and a bad sign if it cool them. The disciples admitted him among them, and did not insist upon his holiness the without the approbation of Christ, as they did, because as yet it was darkly revealed; they did not receive him to doubtfull disputation, but bid him welcome to come and see. But observe, Christ did not appear to Thomas, for his satisfaction, till he found him in society with the rest of his disciples, because he would countenance the meetings of christians and ministers, for there will be he in the midst of them. And besides, he would have all the disciples witnesses of the rebuke he gave to Thomas, and yet wthal of the tender care he had of him.

2. That Christ came in among them, and stood in the midst, and they all knew him, for he shewed himself now, just as he had shewed himself before, (v. 19.) still the same, and no changeling. See the condensation of our Lord Jesus! The gates of heaven, which cannot be approached to him, and there might have been in the midst of the adorations of a world of angels; yet, for the benefit of his church, he lingered on earth, and visited the little private meeting of his poor disciples, and is in the midst of them.

3. He saluted them all in a friendly manner, as he had done before; he said, Peace be unto you. This was no vain repetition, but significant of the abundant and assured peace which Christ gives, and of the continuance of his blessings upon his people, for they fail not, but are new every morning, new every meeting.

III. What passed between Christ and Thomas at this meeting; and that only is recorded, though we may suppose he said a deal to the rest of them. Here is,

1. Christ's gracious condensation to Thomas, v. 27. He singled him out from the rest, and sollicited himself particularly to him; **Reach hither thy finger, and since thou wilt have it so, behold my hands, and satisfy thy curiosity to the utmost about the print of the nails; reach hither thy hand, and if nothing less will convince thee, thrust it into my side.”

Here we have,

(1.) An implicit rebuke of Thomas's incredulity, in the plain reference which is here had to what Thomas had sworn to be a word for word, for he had heard it, though unseen; and one would think that his telling him of it should put him to the blush. Note, There is not an unbelieving word in our tongues, no, nor thought in our minds, at any time, but it is known to the Lord Jesus, Ps. 78. 21.

(2.) An express condensation to his weakness, which appears in two things. [1.] That he suffers his wisdom to be presupposed to. Great spirits will not be dictated to by their inferiors, no more in their acts of grace; yet Christ is pleased here to accommodate himself even to Thomas's fancy in a needless thing, rather than break with him, and leave him in his unbelief. He will not break the braised reed, but, as a good shepherd, gathers that which was driven away, Ezek. 34. 16. We ought thus to bear the infirmities of the weak, Rom. 15. 1, 2. [2.] He suffers his wounds to be raked into, allows Thomas even to thrust his hand into his side, if then at last he would believe. Thus, for the confirmation of our faith, he hath instituted an ordinance on purpose to keep his death in remembrance, though it was an ignominious shameful death, and one would think, should rather have been forgotten, and no more said of it; yet because it was such an evidence of love, as would be an encouragement to our faith, he hath put the ordinance to be celebrated. And in that ordinance wherein we show the Lord's death, we are called, as it were, to put our finger into the print of the nails. Reach hither thy hand to him, who reacheth forth his helping, inviting, giving hand to thee. It is an affecting word with which Christ closes up what he had to say to Thomas, Be not faithless but believing, or believe—do not this become an unbelief; as if he should have been sealed up under unbelief, had he not yielded now. This warning's given to us all, Be not faithless; for, if we are faithless, we are Christless and graceless, hopeless and joyless; let us therefore say, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.
2. Thomas’s believing consent to Jesus Christ. He is here exalted on an immortality; as it is said, My Lord and my God, v. 28. We are not told whether he did put his finger into the print of the nails; it should seem, he did not, for Christ says, (v. 29.) Thou hast seen and believed; seeing sufficed. And now faith comes off a conqueror, after a struggle with unbelief.

(1.) Thomas is now fully satisfied of the truth of Christ’s resurrection, that the same Jesus that was crucified, is now alive, and this is he. His sloveness and backw ardness to believe may help to strengthen our faith; for hereby it appears that the witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, who attested it to the world, and pawned their lives upon it, were not easy credulous men, but cautious enough, who suspended their belief of it till they saw the utmost evidence of it they could desire. Thus out of the eater came forth meal.

(2.) He therefore believed him to be Lord and God, and we are to believe him so. [1.] We must believe his deity—that he is God; not a man made God, but God made man, as this evangelist had laid down his thesis at first, ch. 1. 1. The author and head of our holy religion has the wisdom, power, sovereignty, and glory of God, who was always so, because he was to be not only the founder of it, but the foundation of it for its constant support, and the fountain of life for its supply. [2.] His mediation—that he is the Lord, the one Lord, 1 Cor. 8. 6. 1 Tim. 2. 5. He is sufficiently authorized, as plenipotentiary, to settle the great concerns that lie between God and man; to take up the controversy which would inevitably have been our ruin, and to establish the correspondence that was necessary to our happiness; see Acts 2. 36. Rom. 14. 9.

(3.) He consented to him as his Lord and his God. In faith there must be the consent of the will to gospel-terms, as well as the ascent of the understanding to gospel-truths. We must accept of Christ to be that to us, which the Father hath appointed him. My Lord refers to Adonai—my foundation and stay; My God, to Elohim—my prince and judge. God having constituted him the umpire and referee, we must approve the choice, and entirely refer ourselves to him. This is the vital act of faith, He is mine, Cant. 2. 16.

(4.) He made an open profession of this, before those that had been the witnesses of his unbelieving doubts. He says it to Christ, and, to complete the sentence, he says it to God, Thus saith my Lord and my God; or, speaking to his brethren, This is my Lord and my God. Do we accept of Christ as our Lord and God? We must go to him, and tell him so, as David, (Ps. 16. 2.) deliver the surrender to him as our act and deed, tell others so, as those that triumphed in our relation to Christ; This is my beloved. Thomas speaks with an ardency of affection, as one that was a child of Christ with all his might, My Lord and my God.

3. The judgment of Christ upon the whole; (v. 29.) “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, and it is well thou art brought to it at last upon any terms; but blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Here,

(1.) Christ owns Thomas a believer. So and such believers, though they be weak, shall be graciously accepted of the Lord Jesus. They who have long stood it out, if at last they yield, shall find him ready to forgive. No sooner did Thomas consent to Christ, than Christ gives him the comfort of it, and lets him know that he believes.

(2.) He upbraids him with his former incredulity. He might well be ashamed to think, [1.] That he had been so backward to believe, and came so slowly to his own comforts. They that in sincerity have closed with Christ, see a great deal of reason to lament that they did not do it sooner. [2.] That it was not without much ado that he was brought to believe at all. If thou hast not seen me alive, thou wouldest not have believed; but if no evidence must be admitted but that of our own senses, and we must believe nothing but what we ourselves are eye-witnesses of, farewell all commerce and conversation. If this must be the only method of proof, how must the world be converted to the faith of Christ? He is therefore justly blamed for laying so much stress upon the visible presence of Christ.

(3.) He commends the faith of those who believe upon easier terms. Thomas, as a believer, was truly blessed; but rather blessed are they that have not seen. It is not meant of not seeing the objects of faith, (for those are invisible, Heb. 11. 1. 2 Cor. 4. 18.) but the motives of faith—Christ’s miracles, and especially his resurrection; blessed are they that see not these, and yet believe in Christ. This may look, either backward, upon the Old Testament saints, who had not seen the things which they saw, and yet believed the promise made unto the fathers, and lived by that faith; or forward, upon them who should afterward believe; the Gentiles; who had never seen Christ in the flesh, as the Jews had. This faith is more laudable and praise-worth y than that of the Lord’s disciples; and because faith is a better temper of mind in those that do believe. Not to see, and yet to believe, argues greater industry in searching after truth, and greater ingenuity of mind in embracing it. He that believes upon that sight, has his resistance conquered by a sort of violence; but he that believes without that, like the Bereans, is more noble. [2.] It is a greater instance of the power of divine grace. The less sensible the evidence is, the more does the work of faith appear to be the Lord’s doing. Peter is blessed in his faith, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to him, Matt. 16. 17. Flesh and blood contribute more to their faith that see and believe, than to their who see not, and yet believe. Dr. Lightfoot quotes a saying of one of the Rabbins, That one proselyte is more acceptable to God than all the thousands of Israel that stood before mount Sinai; for they saw and received the law, but a proselyte sees not, and yet receives it.

IV. The remark which the evangelist makes upon his narrative, like an historian drawing towards a conclusion, v. 30. 31. And here

1. He assures us that many other things occurred, which were not written in the book; but are as written in the book; many signs. Some refer this to all the signs that Jesus did during his whole life, all the wondrous words he spoke, and all the wondrous works he did. But it seems rather to be confined to the signs he did after his resurrection, for these were in the presence of the disciples only, which are here spoken of, Acts 10. 41. Divines of his appearances are not recorded, as appears, 1 Cor. 15. 5. So Acts 1. 3.

(1.) We may here improve this general assurance, that there were other signs, many other, for the confirmation of our faith; and, being added to the particular narratives, they very much strengthen the evidence. They that recorded the resurrection of Christ, were not put to fish for evidence, to take up such short and scanty proofs as they could find, and many who rest with conjecture: no, they had evidence enough and to spare, and more witnesses to produce than they had occasion for. The disciples, in whose presence these other signs were done, were to be preachers of Christ’s resurrection to others, and therefore it was requisite they should have proofs of it ex abundanti—in abundance, that they might have a strong consolation, who ventured life and all upon it.

(2.) We need not ask why they were not all writ-
ten, or why not more than these, or other than these; for it is enough for us, that so it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this was given. Had this history been a mere human composition, it had been swelled with a multitude of depo-
sitions and affinities, to prove the contested truth of Christ's resurrection, and long arguments drawn up for the demonstration of it; but, being a divine history, we may very safely, with a little security, re-
ating what amounted to a competent proof, sufficient to convince those that were willing to be taught, and
to condemn those that were obstinate in their unbel-
ief; and if this satisfy not, more would not. Men produce all they have to say, that they may gain credit; but God does not, for he can give faith. Had this history been written for the entertainment of men, and the following chapter, 1 Thess. 5. 18., the liimself in his eye,
tration, given. But we are told what the great gospel-truth is, which we are to believe—that Jesus is that Christ, that Son of God. First, That he is the Christ; the person who, under the title of the Messiah, was pro-
mised to, and expected by, the Old Testament saints. But who, according to the signification of the name, is anointed of God to be a Prince and a Saviour. Secondly, That he is the Son of God; not only as Mediator, (for then he had not been greater than Moses, who was a prophet, intercessor, and lawgiver,) but antecedent to his being the Med-

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[2] What the great gospel-blessedness is, which we are to hope for—That believing we shall have life through his name. This is, First, To direct our faith; it must have an eye to the life, the crown of life, the tree of life, set before us. Life through Christ's name, by his merit and power, and both indefinitely sure to all true believers.

**CHAP. XXI.**

The evangelist seemed to have concluded his history with the foregoing chapter; but, as (St. Paul sometimes in his eyes-

ers, now matter occurring, he begins again. He had said,

that there were many other signs which Jesus did for the proof of his resurrection. And in this chapter he mentions one of those many, which was Christ's appearance to some of his disciples at the sea of Tiberias, in which we have an account. 1. How he discovered himself to them as they were fishing, filled their net, and then very familiarly came and dined with them upon what they had caught, v. 9. 14. H. What discourse he had with Peter after dinner, 1. Concerning himself, v. 15. 19. 2. Concerning John, v. 20. 23. III. The solemn conclusion of this gospel, v. 24, 25. It is strange that any should suppose that this chapter was

1. A FTER these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. 2. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. 3. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. 4. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. 5. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. 6. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. 7. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. 8. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. 9. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. 10. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. 11. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three; and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. 12. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. 13. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. 14. This is the third time that Jesus
shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.

We have here an account of Christ's appearance to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias. Now,

1. Let us compare this appearance with those that went before. In those Christ shewed himself to his disciples when they were met in a solemn assembly, (it should seem, for religious worship,) upon a Lord's day, and when they were all together, perhaps expecting his appearing; but in this he shewed himself to some of them occasionally, upon a week-day, when they were fishing, and little thought of it. Christ has many ways of making himself known to his people; usually in his ordinances, but sometimes by his Spirit he visits them when they are employed in common business, as the shepherds who were keeping their flock by night, (Luke 2. 8.) even so here also, Gen. 16. 13.

2. Let us compare it with that which followed at the mountain in Galilee, where Christ had appointed them to meet him, Matt. 28. 16. Thitherward they moved as soon as the days of unleavened bread were over, and disposed of themselves as they thought fit, till the time fixed for this interview, or general reunion, which appeared to them to be the time that they were waiting for, that they might not be weary of waiting. Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often prevents and outdoes the believing expectations of his people, but never disappoints them.

As to the particulars of the story, we may observe.

1. Who they were, to whom Christ now shewed himself; (v. 2.) not to all the twelve, but to seven of them only. Nathaniel is mentioned as one of them, whom we have not met with since ch. 1. But some think he was the same with Bartholomew, one of the twelve. The two not named, are supposed to be Philip of Bethsaida, and Andrew of Ca- pernaum. Observe here,

1. It is good for the disciples of Christ to be much together; not only in solemn religious assemblies, but in common conversation, and about common business. Good Christians should by this means both testify and increase their affectation to, and delight in, each other, and edify one another both by discourse and example.

2. Christ chose to manifest himself to them when they were together; not only to converse chiefl y with them, but as joint witnesses of the same matter of fact, and so might corroborate one another's testimony. Here were seven together, to attest this; on which occasion some observe, that the Roman law required seven witnesses to a testament.

3. Thomas was one of them, and is named next to Peter, as if he now kept closer to the meetings of the apostles than ever. It is well, if losses by our neglects more make careful afterward not to slip opportunities.

II. How they were employed, v. 3. Observe,

1. Their agreement to go a-fishing. They knew not well what to do with themselves. For my part, says Peter, I will go a-fishing: We will go with thee then, say they, for we will keep together. Though commonly two of a trade cannot agree, yet they could. Some think they did anisa in returning to their boats and nets which they had left; but then Christ would not have countenanced them in it with a visit. It was rather commendable in them; for they did it, (1.) To redeem time, and not be idle. They were not yet appointed to preach the resurrec tion of Christ. Their commission was in writing, but not perfected. The hour for entering upon action was not come. It is probable that their Master had directed them to say nothing of his resurrection till after his ascension, nay, not till after

the pouring out of the Spirit, and then they were to begin at Jerusalem. Now, in the mean time, rather than do nothing, they would go a-fishing; not for recreation, but for business. It is an instance of their humility; though they were advanced to be sent of Christ, as he was of the Father, yet they did not take state upon them, but remembered the rock out of which they were hewn. It is an instance likewise of their industry, and speaks them good husbands of their time. While they were waiting, they were not idling. Those who would give an account of their time with joy, should contrive to fill up the vacancies of it, to gather up the fragments of it. (2.) That they might help to maintain themselves, and not be burthensome to any. While their Master was with them, those who ministered to him were kind to them; but now that the bridegroom was taken from them they must fill in those days, and therefore their own hands, as Paul's, must minister to their necessities; and for that reason Christ asked them, Have ye any meat? This teaches us with quietness to work, and eat our own bread.

2. Their disappointment in their fishing. That night they caught nothing, though, it is probable, they toiled all night, as Luke 5. 3. See the vanity of this world, how it appears to be, while they were waiting for that, that they might not be weary of waiting. Christ is often better than his word, but never worse; often prevents and outdoes the believing expectations of his people, but never disappoints them.

To sho the manner Christ made himself known to them. It is said, (v. 1.) He shewed himself. His body, though a true and real body, was raised, as our will be, a spiritual body, and so was visible only when he himself was pleased to make it so; or, rather, came and removed so quickly, that it was here or there in an instant, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Four things are observable in the appearance of Christ to them.

1. He shewed himself to them seasonably, (v. 3.) When the morning was now come, after a fruitless night's toil, Jesus stood on the shore. Christ's time of making himself known to his people, is, when they are most at a loss. When they think they have lost themselves, he will let them know that they have not lost him. Weeping may endure for a night; but joy comes. When Christ comes, he of his own accord, not waiting upon the water, because, being risen from the dead, he was not to be with them as he had been; but standing upon the shore, because now they were to make toward him. Some of the ancients put this significance upon it, that Christ, having finished his work, was got through a stormy sea, a sea of blood, to a safe and quiet shore, where he was to begin his kingdom. Christ having their work before them, were yet at sea, in toil and peril. It is a comfort to us, when our passage is rough and stormy, that our Master is at shore, and we are hastening to him.

2. He shewed himself to them gradually. The disciples, though they had been intimately acquainted with him, knew not, all at once, that it was Jesus. Likewise, though he would to see him there, and not looking intently upon him, they took him for some common person waiting the arrival of their boat, to buy their fish. Note, Christ is often nearer us than we think he is, and so we shall find afterward, to our comfort.
3. He shewed himself to them by an instance of his pity, v. 5. He called to them, Children, rise:—"Lads, have ye any meat? Have ye caught any fish?" Here, (1.) The consolation is very familiar; he speaks unto them as unto his own, with the care and tenderness of a Father; Children. Though he was now entered upon his exalted state, he spake to his disciples with as much kindness and affection as ever. They were not children in age, but they were his children; the children which God had given him. (2.) The question is very kind; Have ye any meat? He asks as a tender father concerning his children, whether they be provided with that which is fit for them? That, if they be not, he may take care for their supply. Note, The Lord is for the body, 1 Cor. 6. 13. Christ takes cognizance of the temporal wants of his people, and has promised them not only grace sufficient, but food convenient. Verily they shall be fed, Ps. 57. 3. Christ looks into the cottages of the poor, and asks, Children, have ye any meat? Thereby inviting them to open their case before him, and by the prayer of faith to make their requests known to him: and then let them be careful for nothing; for Christ takes care of them, takes care for them. Christ has herein set us an example of compassionate concern for our brethren; there are many poor households disabled for labour, or disappointed in it, that are reduced to straits, whom the rich should inquire after thus, Have ye any meat? For the most of Christ's towns and villages were inhabited by fishermen. To this question the disciples gave a short answer, and, some think, with an air of discontent and peevishness. They said, No: not giving him any such friendly and respectful title as he had given them. So short do the best come in their returns of love to the Lord Jesus. Christ put the question to them, not because he did not know their wants; but he would know the reliance they put on him. They that would have supplies from Christ, must own themselves empty and needy.

4. He shewed himself to them by an instance of his power; and this perfected the discovery; v. 6. He ordered them to cast the net on the right side of the ship, the contrary side to what they had been casting it on; and then they who were going home empty-handed, were enriched with a great draught of fish. (1.) The orders Christ gave them, and the promise annexed to those orders; Cast the net there in such a place, and you shall find. He from whom nothing is hid, no not the inhabitants under the waters, (Job 26. 5.) knew on what side of the ship the shoal of fishes was, and to that side he directs them. Note, Divine Providence extends itself to things most minute and contingent; and they as well as the most trivial concerns of his creatures, that know how to take hints from thence in the conduct of their affairs, and acknowledge it in all their ways. (2.) Their obedience to these orders, and the good success of that. As yet they knew not that it was Jesus; however, they were willing to be advised by any body, and did not bid this supposed stranger mind his own business, or not meddle with their's, but took his counsel; in being thus observant of strangers, they were obedient to their Master's understandings. And it sped wonderfully well; now they had a draught that paid them for all their pains. Note, Those that are humble, diligent, and patient, (though their labours may be crossed,) shall be crowned; they sometimes live to see their affairs take a happy turn, after many struggles and fruitless toils. This is one of Christ's orders. Those are likely to speed well, that follow the rule of the word, the guidance of the Spirit, and the intimations of Providence; for that is casting the net on the right side of the ship.

Now the draught of fishes may be considered,

[1.] As a miracle in itself: and so it was designed, to prove that Jesus Christ was raised in power, though soon in weakness, and that all things were put under his feet, the fishes of the sea not excepted. Christ manifested himself to his people by doing that for them which none else can do, and things which they looked not for.

[2.] As a mercy to them; for the seasonal and abundant supply of their necessities. When their ingenuity and industry failed them, the power of Christ came in opportunely for their relief; for he would take care that they who had left all for him, should not want any good thing. When we are most at a loss, delights are sent to comfort us.

[3.] As the memorial of a former mercy, with which Christ had formerly recompensed Peter for the loan of his boat, Luke 5. 4, 8c. This miracle nearly resembled that, and could not but put Peter in mind of that, which helped him to improve this; for both that and this affected him much, as meeting him in his own element, in his own employment. Latter favours are designed to bring to mind former favours, that eaten bread may not be forgotten.

[4.] As a mystery, and very significant of that work to which Christ was now with an enlarged commission sending them forth. The prophets had been fishing for souls, and caught nothing, or very little; but the apostles, who let down the net at Christ's word, had wonderful success. Many were called fishes of men, 1 Tim. 3. 15. They were first made fishes of men, had had small success in comparison with what they should now have. When, soon after this, three thousand were converted in one day, then the net was cast on the right side of the ship. It is an encouragement to Christ's ministers to continue their diligence in their work. One happy draught, at length, may be sufficient to revive them. So they are fed after, as well as before, as was the case of the apostles.

IV. How the disciples received this discovery which Christ made of himself, v. 7, 8. Where we find,

1. That John was the most intelligent and quick-sighted disciple. He whom Jesus loved, was the first that said, It is the Lord; for those whom Christ loves he will in a special manner manifest himself to. This secret that he had for many years held from the other disciples, he now more closely to his Master in his sufferings than any of them; and therefore he has a clearer eye and a more discerning judgment than any of them, in recompence for his constancy. When John was himself aware that it was the Lord, he communicated his knowledge to those with him; for this dispensation of the Spirit is given to every one, that the secret of the Lord is written on his countenance. They that know Christ themselves, should endeavour to bring others acquainted with him, we need not enquire him, there is enough in him for us all. John tells Peter particularly his thoughts, that it was the Lord; knowing he would be glad to see him above any of them. Though Peter had denied his Master, yet, having repented, and being taken into the communion of the disciples again, they were as free and familiar with him as ever.

2. That Peter was the most zealous and warm-hearted disciple; for as soon as he heard it was the Lord, (for which he took John's word,) the ship could not hold him, nor could he stay the bringing of it to shore, but into the sea he throws himself presently, that he might come first to Christ.

(1.) He shewed his respect to Christ by girding his fisher's garment and they might appear before his Master in the best clothes he had and not rudely rush into his presence, stripped as he was to his waistcoat and drawers, because the work he was about was toilsome, and he was resolved to take pains in it. Perhaps this fisher's coat was made of
leather, or oil-cloth, and would keep out wet; and he got it to him, that he might make the best of his way through the water to Christ, as he used to do after his nets, which was intended for his fishing.

(2.) He studied the strength of his affection to Christ, and his earnest desire to be with him, by casting himself into the sea; and either wading or swimming to shore, to come to him. When he walked upon the water to Christ, (Matt. 14. 28, 29,) it was said, He came down out of the ship deliberately; but here it is said, He cast himself into the sea, which was intended for the word he would use, his good-will and aim to be with Jesus. "If Christ suffer me," (thinks he) "to drown, and come short of him, it is but what I deserve for denying him." Peter had had much forgiven, and made it appear he loved much by his willingness to run hazards, and undertake hardships, to come to him. They that have been with Jesus, will be willing to swim through a stormy sea, a sea of blood, to come to him. And it is a laudable contention among Christ's disciples, to strive who shall be first with him.

3. That the rest of the disciples were careful and honest-hearted. Though they were not in such a transport of zeal as to throw themselves into the sea, like Peter, yet they hastened in the boat to the shore, and made the best of their way; (v. 2.) The rest of the disciples discovered that it was Christ, came, slowly, yet they came to Christ. Now here we may observe,

(1.) How variously God dispenses his gifts. Some excel, as Peter and John; are very eminent in gifts and graces, and are thereby distinguished from their brethren; others are but ordinary disciples, that mind their duty, and are faithful to him, but do nothing to make themselves remarkable; and yet both the one and the other, the eminent and the obscure, shall sit down together with Christ in glory; nay, and perhaps the last shall be first. Of those that do excel, some, like John, are eminently contemplative, have great gifts of knowledge, and serve the church with that; others, like Peter, eminently active and courageous, are strong, and do exploits, and are thus very serviceable to their generation. Some are useful as the church's eyes, others as the church's hands, and all for the good of the body.

(2.) What a great deal of difference there may be between some good people and others in the way of their honouring Christ, and yet both accepted of him. Some serve Christ more in acts of devotion, and extraordinary expressions, to a religious zeal; and others, in the affairs of the world: Let them do it. Let them do it. Christ ought not to be censured for casting himself into the sea, but commended for his zeal and the strength of his affection; and so must we be, who, in love to Christ, quit the world, with Mary, to sit at his feet. But others serve Christ more in the affairs of the world: they continue in that ship, drag the net, and bring the fish to shore, as the other disciples here; and some of them shall be, as they were, in their place, as truly serving Christ as the other, even in serving tables. If all the disciples had done as Peter did, what had become of their fish and their nets? And yet if Peter had done as they did, we had wanted this instance of holy zeal. Christ was well pleased with both, and so must we be.

(3.) That there are several ways of bringing Christ's disciples to shore to him from off the sea of this world. Some are brought to him by a violent death, as the martyrs, who threw themselves into the sea, in their zeal for Christ; others are brought to him by a natural death, dragging the net, which is less terrible; but both meet at length on the safe and quiet shore with Christ.

V. What entertainment the Lord Jesus gave them when they came ashore.

1. He had provision ready for them. When they came to land, wet and cold, weary and hungry, they found a good fire there to warm them and dry them, and fish and bread; competent provision for a good meal.

(1.) We need not be curious in inquiring whence this fire, and fish, and bread, came, any more than whence the meat came, which the ravens brought Elisha. He who could multiply the loaves and fishes that were, could make new ones if he pleased, or turn stones into bread, or send his angels to fetch them from heaven. It is uncertain whether this provision was made in the open air, or in some fisher's cabin, or hut, upon the shore; here was nothing stately or delicate; we should be content with mean things, for Christ was.

(2.) We may be comforted in this instance of Christ's care of his disciples; he has wherewith to supply all their needs, and knows what things we need of. He kindly provided for those fishers, when they came weary from their work; forever they shall be fed, who trust in the Lord, and do good. It is encouraging to Christ's ministers, whom he hath made fishers of men, that they may depend upon him who employs them, to provide for them; and if they should miss of encouragement in this world, should know it was to be had. It is uncertain whether this provision was made in the open air, or in some fisher's cabin, or hut, upon the shore; here was nothing stately or delicate; we should be content with mean things, for Christ was.

2. He called for some of that which they had caught, and they produced it, v. 10, 11. Observe here,

(1.) The command Christ gave them to bring their draught of fish to shore; "Bring of the fish hither, which you have now caught, and let us have some of them," not as if he needed it, and could not make up a dinner for them without it; but, [1.] He would have them eat the labour of their hands, Ps. 128. 2. What is got by God's blessing on our own industry and honest labour, if withal God give us power to eat of it, and enjoy good in our labour, hath a peculiar sweetness in it. It is said of the slothful man, that he roasts not that which he took in hunting; he cannot find in his heart to enjoy the fruits of his labour. He that provideth much for himself, Prov. 12. 27. But Christ would hereby teach us to use what we have. [2.] He would have them taste the gifts of his miraculous bounty, that they might be witnesses both of his power and of his goodness. The benefits Christ bestows upon us, are not to be buried and laid up, but to be used and laid out. [3.] He would give a specimen of the spiritual entertainment he has for his people. If the multitudes of his disciples, the psalmist tells us, Ps. 21. 22, Multitudes of people shall fall on his lips. And Christ would hereby teach us to use what we have. [4.] Ministers, who are fishers of men, must bring all they catch to their Master, for on him their success depends.

(2.) The obedience to this command, v. 11. It was said, (v. 6.) They were not able to draw the net to shore, for the multitude of fishes; that is, they found it difficult, it was more than they could well do; but he that bade them bring it to shore, made it easy. Thus the fishers of men, when they have on closed souls in the gospel-net, cannot bring them to shore, cannot carry on and complete the good work begun, without the continued influence of the divine grace. If he that helped us to catch them, when, without his help, we should have caught nothing,
do not help us to keep them, and draw them to land, by building them up in their most holy faith, we shall lose them at last, 1 Cor. 3. 7.

Observe, [1.] Who it was, that was most active in landing the fishes; it was Peter; who, as in the former instance, (v. 7.) had shown a more zealous affection to his Master's person than any of them, so in this he showed a more ready obedience to his Master's commands; but all that are faithful, are not alike forward.

[2.] The number of the fishes that were caught. They had the curiosity to count them, and perhaps it was in order to the making of a dividend; they were in all a hundred and fifty and three, and all great fishes. These were many more than they needed for their present supply, but they might sell them, and the money would serve to bear their charges back to Jerusalem, whether they were shortly to return.

[3.] A further instance of Christ's care of them, to increase both the miracle and the mercy; for all there were so many, and great fishes too, yet was not the net broken; so that they lost none of their fish, nor damaged their net. It was said, (Luke 5. 6.) This was the Lord's doing, and great is the Lord's name. For they had long since left their own; and if so, Christ would teach us to take care of what we have borrowed, as much as if it were our own. It was well that their net did not break, for they had not now the leisure they had had, to mend their nets. The net of the gospel has enclosed multitudes, three thousand in one day, and yet is not broken; it is still as strong as when it was cast out by the Evangelist.

He invited them to dinner. Observing them to keep their distance, and that they were afraid to ask him, Who art thou? because they knew it was their Lord, he called to them very familiarly, Come, and dine.

(1.) See here how free Christ was with his disciples; he treated them as friends; he did not say, Come, and wait, come, and attend me, but Come, and dine; no. Do dine by yourselves, as servants are appointed to do, but Come, and dine with me. This kind invitation may be alluded to, to illustrate, [1.] The call Christ gives his disciples into communion with him in grace here. All things are now ready; Come, and dine. Christ is a feast; Come, dine upon him: his flesh is meat indeed, his blood drink indeed. Christ is a friend; come, dine with him.

[2.] Call he will give them into the fruition of him in glory hereafter; Come, ye blessed of my Father; come, and sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob. Christ has wherewithal to dine all his friends and followers; there is room and provisio enough for them all.

[3.] See how reverent the disciples were before Christ; they were somewhat shy of using the freedom he invited them to, and by his courting them to their meat, it should seem that they stood pauseing. Being to eat with a ruler, such a rulen they consider diligently what is before them. None of them durst ask him, Who art thou? Either, [1.] Because they would not be so bold with him. Though perhaps he appeared now in something of a disguise at first, as to the two disciples, when their eyes were opened, (v. 8.) when they knew; though they had yet had very good reason to think it was he, and could be no other. Or, [2.] Because they would not so far betray their own folly. When he had given them this instance of his power and goodness, they must be stupid indeed if they questioned whether it was he or no. When God, in his providence, has given us sensible proofs of his care for our bodies, and has given us, in his grace, manifest proofs of his good-will to our souls, and good work upon them, we should be ashamed of our distrusts, and not dare to question that which he has left us no room to question. Groundless doubts must be stifled, and not started.

4. He carved for them, as the Master of the feast, v. 13. Observing them to be still shy and timorous, he comes, and takes bread himself, and gives them, some to each of them, and fish likewise. No doubt, it was a grace and favor to be thus furnished, (as it is said, Mark 6. 44.) for three days they lacked meat, and were hungry. But he turns this to their warning and profit, (v. 17.) and therefore it is well known and constant practice, it did not need to be mentioned.

(1.) The entertainment here was but ordinary; it was but a fish-dinner, and ceasely dressed; here was nothing pompous, nothing curious; plentiful indeed, but plain and homely. Hunger is the best sauce. Christ, though he entered upon his exalted state, and reigned a king with all power and majesty, yet he never became a prince by fasting. Those that could not content themselves with bread and fish, unless they have sauce and wine, would scarcely have found in their hearts to dine with Christ himself here.

(2.) Christ himself began. Though, perhaps, having a glorified body, he needed not to eat, yet he would shew that he had a true body which was capable of eating. The apostles procured this as one proof of his resurrection, that they had eaten and drunk with him, Acts 10. 41.

(3.) He gave the meat about to all his guests. He not only provided it for them, and invited them to it, but he himself divided it among them, and put it into their hands. Thus to him we owe the application, as well as the purchase of the benefits of redemption. He gives us power to eat of them.

The evangelist leaves them at dinner, and makes this remark, (v. 14.) This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself alive to his disciples, or the greater part of them. This is the third day; so some. On the day he rose, he appeared five times; the second day was that day seven-night; and this was the third. Or this was his third appearance to any considerable number of his disciples together; though he had appeared to Mary, to the women, to the two disciples, to Cephas, yet he had but twice before this appeared to any company of them together. This is taken notice of, [1.] For the confirming the truth of his resurrection; the vision was doubled, was triplified, for the thing was certain. They who believed not the first sign, would be brought to believe the voice of the latter signs. [2.] As an instance of Christ's continued kindness to his disciples, in calling them to partake with him. [2.] Call he will give them into the fruition of him in glory hereafter; Come, ye blessed of my Father; come, and sit down with Abraham, with Isaac, and Jacob. Christ has wherewithal to dine all his friends and followers; there is room and provision enough for them all.

15. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 17. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all
things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18. Verily, verily, I say unto thee. When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkest wisteth thou whom I love? but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19. This speaketh, by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

We have here Christ's discourse with Peter after dinner, so much of it as relates to himself; in which,

... he examines his love to him, and gives him a charge concerning his flock, v. 15-17. Observe,

1. When Christ entered into this discourse with Peter; it was after they had dined; they had all eaten, and were filled, and it was probable, were entertained with such edifying discourse as our Lord Jesus used to make his table-talk. Christ foresaw that what he had to say to Peter, would give him some uneasiness, and therefore would not say it till they had dined, because he would not spoil his dinner. Peter was conscious to himself that he had incurred his Master's displeasure, and could expect no other than to be upbraided with his treachery and ingratitude. "Was this thy kindness to thy friend? Did not I tell thee what a coward thou wouldest prove?" Nay, he might justly expect to be struck out of the roll of the disciples, and to be expelled the sacred college. Twice, if not thrice, he had seen his Master since his resurrection, and he said not a word to him of it. We may suppose Peter full of doubt upon what terms he stood with his Master; sometimes hoping the best, because he had received favours from him in common with the rest; yet not without some fears, lest the chiding would come at last, that would pay for all. But now, at length, his Master put off his pain, said what he had to say to him, and confirmed him in his place as an apostle. He did not tell him of his fault hastily, but deferred it for some time; did not tell him of it unseasonably, to disturb the company at dinner, but when they had dined together in token of reconciliation, then discoursed with him about it, not as with a criminal, but as with a friend. Peter had reproached himself for it, and therefore Christ did not reproach him for it, nor tell him of it directly, but only by a tacit intimation; and being satisfied in his sincerity, the offence was not only forgiven, but forgotten; and Christ let him know that he was as dear to him as ever. Herein he has given us an encouraging instance of his tenderness toward penitents, and has taught us, in like manner, to restore such, in the spirit of meekness.

2. What was the discourse itself. Here was the same question three times asked, the same answer three times made, and the same reply three times given, with very little variation, and yet no vain repetition. It was repeated by our Saviour, in the speaking of it, the more to affect Peter, and the other disciples that were present; it is repeated by the evangelist, in the writing of it, the more to affect us, and all that read it.

(1.) Three times Christ asks Peter whether he loves him or no. The first time the question is, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? Observe,

[1] How he calls him: Simon, son of Jonas. He speaks to him by name, the more to affect him, as Luke 22. 31. Simon, Simon. He does not call him Cephas, or Peter, the name he had given him, for he had lost the credit of his strength and stability, which these names signified, but his original name, Simon.

Ver. 13. He gives him, in no hard language, does not call him out of his name, though he deserved it; but as he had called him when he pronounced him blessed, Simon Bar-jona, Matt. 16. 17. He calls him son of Jonas, or John, or Johnan, to remind him of his extraction, how mean it was, and unworthy the honour to which he was advanced.

[2.] How he catechises him; Lovest thou me more than these? First, Lovest thou me? If we would try whether we are Christ's disciples indeed, this must be the inquiry, Do we love him? But there was a special reason why Christ put it now to Peter.

1. His fall had given occasion to doubt of his love; "Peter, I have cause to suspect thy love; for if thou hadst loved me, thou wouldest not have been ashamed and afraid to own me in my sufferings. How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy heart was not with me?" Note, We must not reckon it an affront to have our sincerity questioned, when we ourselves have done that which makes it question-able; after a shaking full, we must take heed of setting too soon, lest we settle upon a wrong bottom. The question is affecting; he does not ask, "Dost thou fear what is said of me?" but, "Dost thou love me?" or, "Dost thou no longer wonder at my love to thee?" That it which will make the other expressions of repentance acceptable. The great thing Christ eyes in penitents, is, their eyeing him in their repentance. Much is forgiven her, not because she wept much, but because she loved much.

2. His function would give occasion for the exercise of his love. Before Christ would commit his sheep to his care, he asked him, Lovest thou me? Christ has such a tender regard to his flock, that he will not trust it with any but those that love him, and therefore will love all that are his for his sake. Those that do not truly love Christ, will never truly love the souls of men, nor will naturally care for their state as they should; nor will that minister love his work, that does not love his Master. Nothing is so true of the love that Christian ministers to others make a calling of. Those only love Christ indeed, that love him better than the best friend they have in the world, and make it to appear whenever they stand in comparison or in competition. Or, "more than thou lovest these things, these boats and nets; more than all the pleasure of fishing, which some make a recreation of, and others make a calling of. Those only love Christ indeed, that love him better than all the delights of sense and all the profits of this world. Lovest thou me more than thou lovest these occupation: thou art now employed in? If so, leave them, to employ thyself wholly in feeding my flock." So Dr. Whitby.

2. "Lovest thou me more than these love me, more
than any of the rest of the disciples love me?” And then it is either to upbraid him in some manner or other, or to lay open how much he sinned, and declare he yet will not. “Art thou still of the same mind?” Or to intimate to him, that he had now more reason to love him than any of them had, for more had been forgiven to him than to any of them, as much as his sin in denying Christ was greater than their’s in forsoaking him. ‘Tell me therefore which of them will love him most?’ Luke 7. 42. Note, We should all strive to be better than others, to excel in all Christian graces, that we may have a share of the peace, to strive which shall love Christ best; nor any breach of good manners, to go before others in this love.

The second and third time that Christ puts this question, (1.) He left out more than these; because Peter, in his answer, modestly left it out, not willing to compare himself with his brethren, much less to prefer himself before them. Though we cannot say, We love Christ more than others do, yet we shall be accepted, if we can say, We love him indeed. (2.) In the last he altered the word, as it is in the original. In the two first inquiries, the original word is, ᾠδεῖς μου ἡμῖν; but in the third, it is ὡς ὠφελεῖ; Dost thou retain a kindness for me? In answer to which, Peter uses another word, more emphatical, ἔμμοιοι ἡμῖν; I love thee dearly. In putting the question the last time, Christ uses that word; and it was not only a confirmation of his former expression, that he would love him; but also an answer, that he would be better than others, yet we must, in losiness of mind, esteem others better than ourselves; for we know more evil of ourselves than we do of any of our brethren.

Yet he professes again and again, that he loved Christ; “Yea, Lord surely I love thee; I was unworthy to live, if I did not.” He had a high esteem and value for him, a grateful sense of his kindness, and was entirely devoted to his honour and interest; his desire was to bee sure that he was not undone without; and his delight in him, as one should be unspeakably happy in. This amounts to a profession of repentance for his sin, for it grieves us to have affronted one we love; and to a promise of adherence to him for the future; Lord, I love thee, and will never leave thee. Christ prayed that his faith might not fail, (Luke 22. 32.) and because his faith did not fail, his love did not; for faith will work by love. Peter had forfeited his claim of relation to Christ; he was now to be re-admitted, upon his repentance; Christ puts his trial upon this issue; Dost thou love me? And Peter joins issue upon it; Lord, I love thee. Note, Those who can truly say, through grace, that they love Jesus Christ, may take the comfort of their interest in him, notwithstanding their daily infirmities; and go to Christ himself for the proof of it; Thou knowest that I love thee; and the third time yet more emphatically; Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. He does not vow his fellow-disciples to witness for him, they might be deceived in him; nor do he think his own word might be taken, the credit of that was destroyed already; but he calls Christ himself to witness. First, Peter was sure that Christ knew all things, and particularly that he knew the heart, and was a discoverer of the thoughts and intents of that, ch. 16. 30. Secondly, Peter was satisfied of this, that Christ, who knew all things, knew the sincerity of his love to him, and would be ready to attest it in his favour. It is a terror to a hypocrite, to think that Christ knows all things; for the divine omniscience will be a witness against him. But it is a comfort to a sincere christian, that he has that to appeal to, My errours in heaven are recorded on high. Christ knows us better than we know ourselves. Though we know not our own uprightness, he does.

[4.] He was grieved, when Christ asked him the third time, Lovest thou me? v. 17. First, Because it put him in mind of his threefold denial of Christ, and was plainly designed to do so; and when he thought thereon he wept. Every remembrance of sin is a secret and secret sorrow. What would become of me, if I should be again tempted? Godly sorrow works carefulness and fear, 2 Cor. 7. 11.

(3.) Three times Christ committed the care of his flock to Peter; Feed my lambs; feed my sheep; feed my sheep.

[1.] Those whom Christ committed to Peter’s care, were his lambs and his sheep. The church of the Lord is his flock, which he has redeemed with his own blood (1 Pet. 2. 28.) He is the Chief Shepherd of it; in this flock some are lambs, young and tender and weak, others are sheep, grown to some strength and maturity. The Shepherd here takes care of both, and of the lambs first, for upon all occasions he shewed a particular tenderness for them; the lambs he gathers in his arms, and carries in his bosom, Isa. 40. 11.

(2.) Those who he gives him concerning them, is to feed them. The word used, (v. 15, 17.) is βασιλεύω, which strictly signifies, to give them food; but the word used, (v. 16.) is προσφέρω, which signifies more largely to do all the offices of a shepherd to them; Feed the lambs with that which is proper for them, and the sheepe likewise with food convenient. The lost sheep of the house of Israel, seek and feed them, and the other sheepe also which are not of this fold. Note, The is the duty of all Christ’s ministers, to feed his lambs and sheepe. Feed them, that is, teach them; for the doctrine of the gospel is spiritual food. Feed them, that is, “Lead them to the green pastures, presiding in their religious assemblies, and ministering all the ordinances to them. Feed them by personal application to their respective state and case; not only lay meat before them, but feed them with it, that are willing and will not, or weak and cannot feed the treasure.” When Christ ascended on high, he gave pastors; left his flock with them that loved him, and would take care of them for his sake.

[3.] But why did he give this charge particularly to Peter? Ask the advocates for the pope’s supremacy, and they will tell you, that Christ hereby designed to give to Peter, and therefore to his successors, and therefore to the bishops of Rome, an absolute dominion over the church of Christ, and the christian church; as if a charge to serve the sheep, gave a power to lord it over all the shepherds; whereas, it is plain, Peter himself never claimed such a power, nor did the other discipites ever own it in him. This charge given to Peter to preach the gospel, is by a strange fetch made to support the usurpation of his pretended successors, that fleece the sheepe, and, instead of feeding them, feed upon them. But the particular application to Peter here, was designed, First, to restore him to his apostleship, now that he repented of his abjuration of it, and to renew his commission, both for his own satisfaction, and for the satisfaction of his brethren. A commission given to one convicted of a crime, is supposed to amount to a pardon; no doubt, this com-
mission given to Peter, was an evidence that Christ was reconciled to him, else he would never have reposed such a confidence in him. Of some that have deceived us we say, 'Though we forgive them, we will never trust them,' but Christ, when he forgave Peter, trusted him with the most valuable treasure he had on earth. Secondly, It was designed to quicken him to a diligent discharge of his office as an apostle. Peter was a man of a bold and zealous spirit, always forward to speak and act, and, lest he should be tempted to take upon him the directing of the shepherds, he is charged to feed the sheep, as his highest office. He is instructed, too, not to lord it over God's heritage. 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3. If he will be doing, let him do this, and pretend no further. Thirdly, What Christ said to him, he said to all his disciples; he charged them all, not only to be fishers of men, (though that was said to Peter, Luke 5. 10.) by the conversion of sinners, but feeders of the flock, by the edification of saints.

II. Christ, having thus appointed Peter his doing work, next cuts out to him his suffering work. Having confirmed to him the honour of an apostle, he now tells him of further preferment designed him— the honour of a martyr. Observe, 1. How his martyrdom is foretold; (v. 18.) Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, being compelled to it, and another shall gird thee, (as a prisoner that is punished,) and carry thee whither naturally thou wouldest not. (1.) He prefaces the notice he gives to Peter of his sufferings, with a solemn asseveration, verily, verily, I say unto thee. It was not spoken of as a thing probable, which perhaps might happen, but as a thing certain, I say it to thee. Others, perhaps, will say to thee, as thou didst to me, This shall not be so. But I say it shall. As Christ forewove all his own sufferings, so he foresees the sufferings of all his followers, and foretold them, though not in particular, as to Peter, yet in general, that they must take up their cross. Having charged him to feed his sheep, he bids him not to expect ease and honour in it, but trouble and persecution, and to suffer for doing well. (2.) He foretells particularly that he should die a violent death, by the hands of an executioner. The stretching out his hands, some think, points at the manner of his death by crucifying; and the tradition of the ancients, if we may rely upon that, informs us that Peter was crucified at Rome under Nero, A. D. 68. or as others say, 79. Others think, it points at the bonds and imprisonments which those are hampered with, that are sentenced to death. The pomp and solemnity of an execution add much to the terror of death, and to an eye of sense make it look doubly formidable. Death, in these horrid shapes, has often been the lot of Christ's faithful ones, who yet have overcome it by the blood of the Lamb. This prediction, though pointing chiefly at his death, was to have its accomplishment in his person, and to be fulfilled, precisely, when he was imprisoned, Acts 4. 3.—5. 18. —12. 4. No more is implied here in his being carried whither he would not, than that it was a violent death that he should be carried to; such a death as even innocent nature could not think of without dread, nor approach without some reluctance. He that puts on the christian, does not put off the man; Christ himself was, and is, as much as possible, to be fulfilled, or natural aversion to pain and death is well reconcileable with a holy submission to the will of God in both. Blessed Paul, though longing to be unloaded, owns he cannot desire to be unclothed, 2 Cor. 5. 4. (3.) He compares this with his former liberty. Time was, when thou knewest not any of these hardships, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest. Where trouble comes, we are apt to aggravate it with this, that it has been other wise; and to fret the more at the grievances of restraint, sickness, and poverty, because we have known the sweets of liberty, health, and plenty, Job 29. 2. Ps. 49. 4. But we may turn the thought away, and reason thus with ourselves, 'How many years of prosperity have I enjoyed more than I deserved and improved? And, having received good, shall not I receive evil also?' See here, [1.] What a change may possibly be made with us, as to our condition in this world! That we have girded ourselves with strength and honour, and indulge ourselves in the flesh. [2.] What a change will certainly be made with us, if we should live to be old! They who, when they were young, had strength of body and vigour of mind, and could easily go through business and hardship, and take the pleasures they had a mind to, when they shall be old, will find their strength gone, like Samson, when his hair was cut, and could no more hold himself up at other times. [3.] What a change will certainly be made with us, if Peter should suffer thus in his old age. First, Though he should be old, and, in the course of nature, not likely to live long, yet his enemies would hasten him out of the world violently then when he was about to retire out of it peaceably, and would put out his candle when it was almost burned down to the socket. See 2 Chron. 36. 17. Secondly, God would shelter him from the rage of his enemies till he should come to be old, that he might be made the fitter for sufferings, and the church might the longer enjoy his services.

2. The explication of this prediction; (v. 19.) This shake he to Peter, signifying by what death he should glorify God, when he had finished his course. Observe, (1.) That it is not only appointed to all once to die, but it is appointed to each what death he shall die, whether natural or violent, slow or sudden, easy or painful. When Paul speaks of so great a death, he intimates that there are degrees of death; there is one way into the world, but many ways out, and God has determined which way we should go. (2.) That it is the great concern of every good man, whatever death he dies, to glorify God in it; for what is our chief end but this, To die to the Lord, at the word of the Lord? When we die patiently, submitting to the will of God; die cheerfully, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God; and die usefully, witnessing to the truth and goodness of religion, and encouraging others, we glorify God in dying; and this is the earnest expectation and hope of all good christians, as it was Paul's, that Christ may be magnified in their body by death, 2 Cor. 4. (3.) That the death of the martyrs was in a special manner for the glorifying of God. The truths of God, which they died in the defence of, are hereby confirmed. The grace of God, which carried them with so much constancy through their sufferings, is hereby magnified. And the consolations of God, which have abounded toward them in their tribulations, and may perhaps, in some of their consolations, have hereby been recommended to the faith and joy of all the saints. The blood of the martyrs has been the seed of the church, and the conversion and establishment of thousands. Precious therefore in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints, as that which honors him; and those who thereby at such an expense honour him, he will honour.
3. The word of command he gives him hereupon: When he had spoken thus, observing Peter perhaps to look blank upon it, he saith unto him, Follow me. Probably, he rose from the place where he had sat down at dinner, walked off a little, and bid Peter attend him. This word, Follow me, was, (1.) A further confirmation of his restoration to his Master's favour, and to his apostleship; for, Follow me, was the first call. (2.) It was an explanation of the previous commission. It directed him to sufferings, which perhaps Peter at first did not fully understand, till Christ gave him that key to it, Follow me; "Expect to be treated as I have been, and to tread the same bloody path that I have trod before thee; for the disciple is not greater than his Lord." (3.) It was to excite him to, and encourage him in, faithfulness and diligence in his work as an apostle. He had bid him feed his sheep, and he had not failed in it; and what greater encouragement could they have than this, both in services and in sufferings? [1.] That herein they did follow him, and it was their present honour; who would be ashamed to follow such a leader? [2.] That hereafter they should follow him, and that would be their future happiness; and so it is a repetition of the promise Christ had given Peter, (ch. 13. 36.) Thou shalt follow me afterward. They that faithfully follow Christ in grace, shall certainly follow him to glory.

20. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? 21. Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? 22. Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. 23. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? 24. This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true. 25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

In these verses, we have,
I. The conference Christ had with Peter concerning John, the beloved disciple; in which we have,
1. The eye Peter cast upon him; (v. 20.) Peter, in obedience to his Master's orders, followed him, and, turning about, pleased with the honour his Master now did him, he sees the disciples whom Jesus loved following likewise. Observe here,
(1.) How John is described: he does not name himself, as thinking his own name not worthy to be preserved in these records; but gives such a description of himself as sufficiently informs us whom he meant, and withal gives us a reason why he follow-
things to come, concerning others, as well as himself. It seems, by Christ's answer, there was something amiss in the question; when Christ had given him the charge of such a treasure, and the notice of such a trial, it had well become him to have said, "Lord, and what shall I do then?" or it was his interest to prove himself faithful to such a trust, in such a trial? Lord, increase my faith. As my day is, let my strength be." But instead of this,

[1.] He seems more concerned for another than for himself. So apt are we to be busy in other men's matters, but negligent in the concerns of our own souls; quick-sighted abroad, but dim-sighted at home; just as wise, and as near-sighted, as they will do, when we have enough to do to prove our own work, and understand our own way.

[2.] He seems more concerned about event than about duty. John was younger than Peter, and, in the course of nature, likely to survive him; "Lord," says he, "what time shall he be reserved for?" Whereas, if God by his grace enable us to preserve to the end, and finish well, and get safe to heaven, we need not ask, "What shall be the lot of those that shall come after us?" Is it not well if peace and truth be in my days? Scripture-predications must be eyed for the directing of our consciences, not the satisfying of our curiosity.

3. Christ's reply to this inquiry; (v. 22.) "If I will that he tarry until I come, what is that to thee? Mind thou thy own duty, the present duty, follow thou me." (1.) There seems to be here an intimation of Christ's purpose concerning John, in two things.

[1.] That he should not die a violent death, like Peter, but should tarry till Christ himself came by a natural death to fetch him to himself. The most creditable historians and historians, that John was the only one of all the twelve that did not actually die a martyr. He was often in jeopardy, in bonds and banishments; but at length died in his bed in a good old age. Note, First, At death Christ comes to us to call us to account; and it concerns us to be ready for his coming. Secondly, Though Christ calls out some of his disciples to resist unto blood, yet not all. Though the crown of martyrdom is glorious, yet the belovèd disciple comes short of it.

[2.] That he should not die till after Christ's coming to destroy Jerusalem: so some understand his tarrying till Christ comes. All the other apostles died before that destruction; but John survived it many years. God wisely so ordered it, that one of the apostles should live so long as to close up the canon of the New Testament; which John did so eminently, Rev. 22. 18. And to obviate the design of the enemy that sowed tares even before the servants fell asleep, John lived to confront Eblion, and Ceritius, and other heretics, who rose betimes, speaking perverse things.

(2.) Others think it is only a rebuke to Peter's curiosity, and that his tarrying till Christ's second coming is, in truth, only the suppression of a thought that John was the only one of the twelve that did not actually die a martyr.

"Wherefore askest thou after that which is foreign and secret? Suppose I should design that John should never die; what does that concern thee? It is nothing to thee, when, or where, or how, John must die. I have told thee how thou must die for thy part; it is enough for thee to know that. Follow thou me." Note, It is the will of Christ, that his disciples should mind their duty, and mind their own duty, but not be over curious about other men's affairs, nor their inquiries about future events, concerning either themselves or others.

[1.] There are many things we are apt to be solicitous about, that are nothing to us. Other people's characters are nothing to us; it is out of our line to judge them: Rom. 14. 14. 4. Whatevery they are, saith Paul, it makes no matter to me. Other people's affairs are nothing to us to intermeddle in; we must quietly work, and mind our own business. Many nice and curious questions are put by the Scribes and disputers of this world concerning the counsels of God, and the state of the invisible world, concerning which we may say, What is that to me? What do you think will become of such and such? Is a common question, which may easily be answered with another; What is that to me?" To his own Master he stands or falls. What is it to us to know the times and the seasons? Secret things belong not to us. [2.] The great thing that is all in all to us is duty, and not event; for duty is our's, events are God's: our own duty, and not others'. It is for every man to do his own duty, which is the present duty, and not the duty of the time to come; for sufficient to the day shall be the directions thereof: a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord; (Ps. 37. 23.) he is guided step by step. Now all our duty is summed up in this one, of following Christ; we must attend his motions, and accommodate ourselves to them, follow him to do him honour, as the servant his master; "we must walk in the way in which he walked, and aim to be where he is. And if we will closely attend to the duty of following Christ, we shall find neither heart nor time to meddle with that which does not belong to us.

4. The mistake which arose from this saying of Christ, that that disciple should not die, but abide with the church to the end of time; together with the supposition of this being the repetition of Christ's words, v. 23. Observe here,

(1.) The easy rise of a mistake in the church by misconstruing the sayings of Christ, and turning a supposition to a position. Because John must not die a martyr, they conclude he must not die at all.

[1.] They were inclined to expect it, because they could not choose but desire it. Quod volumus facile eridimus—We easily believe what we wish to be true. For John to abide in the flesh when the rest were gone, and to continue in the world till Christ's second coming, they think, will be a great blessing to the church, which in every age might have recourse to him as an oracle; when they must lose Christ's bodily presence, they hope they shall have that of his words, which may supply the want of his; forgetting that the blessed Spirit the Comforter was to do that. Note, We are apt to dote too much on men and means, instruments and external helps, and to think we are happy, if we may but have them always with us; whereas God will change his workmen, and yet carry on his work, that the excellency of the power may manifest God, and not of men. There is no need of immortal ministers to be the guides of the church, while it is under the conduct of an eternal Spirit.

[2.] Perhaps they were confirmed in their expectations, when they now found that John survived all the rest of the apostles; because he lived long, they were ready to think he should live always: whereas God will change his workmen, and yet carry on his work, that the excellency of the power may manifest God, and not of men. There is no need of immortal ministers to be the guides of the church, while it is under the conduct of an eternal Spirit.

[3.] However, it took rise from a saying of Christ's, misunderstood, and then made a saying of the church. Hence learn,

First, The uncertainty of human tradition, and the futility of building our faith upon it. Here was a tradition, an apostolical tradition, a saying, that went abroad among the brethren; it was early, it was common, it was customary. How little then are those unwritten traditions to be relied upon, which the council of Trent hath decreed to be received with a veneration and pious affection equal to that which is owing to the holy scripture. Here was a traditional exposition of scripture; no new saying of Christ's advanced, but only a construction put by the brethren upon what he did really
say, and yet it was a misconception. Let the scripture be its own interpreter, and explain itself, as it is in a great measure its own evidence, and proves itself, for it is light.

Secondly, The aptness of men to misinterpret the sayings of Christ. The grossest errors have sometimes shrouded themselves under the unbrage of incontestable truths; and the scriptures themselves have been wrested by the unlearned and unstable. We must not think it strange, if we hear the sayings of Christ misinterpreted, vouch'd to patronize the errors of antichrist, and the impudent doctrine of transubstantiation, for instance, pretending to build upon that blessed word of Christ, This is my body.

(2.) The easy rectifying of such mistakes, by adhering to the word of Christ, and abiding by that. So the evangelist here corrects and controls that saying among the brethren, by repeating the very words of Christ. He did not say that that disciple should not die. Let us not say so then; but he said, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? He said so, and no more. Add thou not unto his words. Let the words of Christ speak for themselves, and let no sense be put upon them but what is genuine and natural; and in that let us agree. Note, The best end of men's controversies, would be to keep to the express words of scripture, and speak, as well as think, according to that word. Is scripture-language the safest and most proper vehicle of scripture truth: the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. 2. 13. As the scripture itself, duly attended to, is the best weapon where with to wound all dangerous errors, (and therefore Deists, Socinians, Papists, and Enthusiasts, do all they can to derogate from the authority of the scripture,) so the scripture itself, humbly submiss'd to, is the best weapon to heal the wounds that are made by different modes of expression concerning the same truths. Those that cannot agree in the same logics and metaphysics, and the propriety of the same terms of art, and the application of them, may yet agree in the same scripture-terms, and then may agree to love one another.

1. We have here the conclusion of this gospel, and with it of the evangelical story, v. 24, 25. This evangelist ends not so abruptly as the other three did, but leaves a few preludes. It concludes with an account of the author or penman of it, connected by a decent transition to that which went before; (v. 24.) This is the disciple which testifies of these things to the present age, and wrote these things for the benefit of posterity, even this same that Peter and his Master had that conference about in the foregoing verses—John the apostle.

(1.) Observe here, those who wrote the history of Christ, were not ashamed to put their names to it. John here does in effect subscribe his name. As we are sure who was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament, which were the foundation of that revelation, so we are sure who were the penmen of the Four Gospels and the Acts, the pentateuch of the New Testament. The record of Christ's life and death is not the report of we know not who, but was drawn up by men of known integrity, who were ready and able to oppose it upon oath, but, which was more, to seal it with their blood.

(2.) Those who wrote the history of Christ, wrote upon their own knowledge, not by hearsay, but what they themselves were eye and ear witnesses of. The penman of this history was a disciple, a beloved disciple, one that had leaned on Christ's breast, that had him self heard his sermons and conferences, had seen his miracles, and the proofs of his resurrection. This is he who testifies what he was well assured of.

(3.) Those who wrote the history of Christ, as they testified what they had seen, so they wrote what they had first testified. It was published by word of mouth, with the greatest assurance, before it was committed to writing. They testified it in the pulpit, testified it at the bar, solemnly averred it, stedfastly avowed it, not as travellers give account of their travels, to entertain the company, but as witnesses upon oath give an account of what they know in a matter of consequence, with the utmost caution and exactness, So that no mistake can be made. When the apostles wrote as an affidavit, which they would abide by. Their writings are standing testimonies to the world of the truth of Christ's doctrine, and will be testimonies either for us or against us, according as we do or do not receive it.

(4.) It was graciously appointed for the support and benefit of the church, that the history of Christ should be put into writing, that it might with the greater fulness and certainty spread to every place, and last through every age.

2. It concludes with an attestation of the truth of what had been here related; We know that his testimony is true. This may be taken either,

(1.) As speaking the common sense of mankind in matters of this nature, which is, that the testimony of one who is an eye-witness, is of unspeakable reputation, solemnly deposes what he had seen, and can show a collateral source of authority for that, which is a superlative manner of evidence. We know, that is, All the world knows, that the testimony of such a one is valid, and the common faith of mankind requires us to give credit to it, unless we can dispute it; and in other cases verdict and judgment are given upon such testimonies. The truth of the gospel comes confirmed by all the evidence we can rationally desire or expect in a thing of that nature. The matter of the first five books of the Old Testament is delivered clear, and work such miracles, and rise from the dead, is proved beyond contradiction, by such evidence as is always admitted in other cases, and therefore to the satisfaction of all that are impartial; and then let the doctrine recommend itself, and let the miracles prove it to be of God. Or,

(2.) As speaking the satisfaction of the churches at that time, concerning the truth of what is here related. Those churches would make it for the subscription of the church of Ephesus; others of the angels or ministers of the churches of Asia to this narrative. Not as if an inspired writing needed any attestation from men, or could from thence receive any addition to its credibility; but thereby they recommended it to the notice of the churches, as an inspired writing, and declared the satisfaction they received by it. Or,

(3.) As speaking the evangelist's own assurance of the truth of what he wrote, like that, (ch. 19. 35.) He knows that he saith true. He speaks of himself in the plural number, We know, not for majesty-sake, but for modesty-sake, as 1 John 1. 1. That which we have seen; and 2 Pet. 1. 16. Note, The evangelists themselves were entirely satisfied of the truth of what they have testified, and transmitted to us. They do not require us to believe what they did not believe themselves; no, they knew their testimony to be true, for they ventured both this life and the other upon it; threw away this life, and depended upon another, on the credit of what they spake and wrote.

3. It concludes with an et cetera; with a reference to many other things, very memorable, said and done by our Lord Jesus, which were well known by many then living, but not thought fit to be recorded for posterity, v. 25. There were many things very markable and improvable, which, if they should be written at large, with the several circumstances of them, even the world itself, that is, all the libraries
in it, could not contain the books that might be written. Thus he concludes like an orator, as Paul, (Heb. 11. 23.) What shall I more say? For the time would fail me.

If it be asked why the gospels are not larger, why they did not make the New Testament history as copious and as long as the old; it may be answered,

(1.) It was not because they had exhausted their subject, and had nothing more to write, that was worth writing; no, there were many of Christ’s sayings and doings not recorded by any of the evangelists, which yet were worthy to be written in letters of gold. For, (1.) Every thing that Christ said and did, was worth our notice, and capable of being improved. He never spake an idle word, nor did an idle thing; nay, he never spake or did any thing mean, or little, or trifling, which is more than can be said of the wisest or best of men.

(2.) His miracles were many, very many, of many kinds, and the same often repeated, as occasion offered. Though one true miracle might perhaps suffice to prove a divine commission, yet the repetition of the miracles upon a great variety of persons, in a great variety of cases, and before a great variety of witnesses, helped very much to prove them true miracles. Every new miracle rendered the report of the former the more credible; and the multitude of them render the whole report incontestable. (3.) The evangelists upon several occasions give general accounts of Christ’s preaching and miracles, inclusive of many particulars, as Matt. 4. 23, 24.—9. 35.—11. 1.—14. 14, 36.—15. 30.—19. 2, and many the like. When we speak of Christ, we have a copious subject before us, the reality exceeds the report, and, after all, the one half is not told us. St. Paul quotes one of Christ’s sayings, which is not recorded by any of the evangelists; (Acts 20. 35.) and doubtless there were many more. All his sayings were apothegms.

(2.) But it was for these three reasons,

[1.] Because it was not needful to write more. This is implied here; there were many other things, which were not written because there was no occasion for writing them. What is written, is a sufficient revelation of the doctrine of Christ, and the proof of it, and the rest was but to the same purpose. They that from hence argue against the sufficiency of the scripture, as the rule of our faith and practice, and for the necessity of unwritten traditions, ought to shew what there is in the traditions they pretend to, perfective of the written word; we are sure there is that which is contrary to it, and therefore reject them. By these therefore let us be admonished, for of writing many books there is no

end, Eccl. 12. 12. If we do not believe and improve what is written, neither would we if there had been much more.

[2.] It was not possible to write all. It was possible for the Spirit to indite all, but morally impossible for the penmen to pen all. The world could not contain the books. It is an hyperbole common enough and justifiable, when no more is intended than this, that it would fill a vast and incredible number of volumes. It would be such a large and overgrown history as never was; such as would justly out all other writings, and leave us no room for them. What volumes would be filled with Christ’s prayers, had we the record of all those he made, when he continued all night in prayer to God, without any vain repetitions? Much more if all his sermons and conferences were particularly related, his miracles, his cures, all his labours, all his sufferings; it would have been an endless thing.

[3.] It was not advisable to write much; for the world, in a moral sense, could not contain the books that should be written. Christ said not what he might have said to his disciples, because they were not able to bear it; and for the same reason the evangelists wrote not what they might have written. The world could not contain, χαριτωσα. It is the word that is used, ch. 8. 37. My word has no place in you; they would have been so many, that they would have found no room. All people’s time would have been spent in reading; and other duties would thereby have been crowded out. Much is overlooked of what is written, much forgotten, and much made the matter of doubtful disputation; this would have been the case much more, if there had been such a world of books of equal authority and necessity as the whole history would have swelled to; especially since it was requisite that what was written should be meditated upon, and expounded, which God wisely thought fit to leave room for. Parents and ministers, in giving instruction, must consider the capacities of those they teach, and, like Jacob, must take heed of over-driving. Let us be thankful for the books that are written, and not prize them the less for their plainness and brevity, but diligently improve what God has thought fit to reveal, and long to be there where our capacities shall be so elevated and enlarged, that there will be no danger of their being over-loaded.

The evangelist concluding with Amen, thereby sets to his seal, and let us set to our’s, an Amen of faith, subscribing to the gospel, that it is true, all true; and an Amen of satisfaction in what is written as able to make us wise to salvation. Amen; so be it.

END OF VOL. FIFTH.